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Seth Levin

*Dickinson College*

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*Venit, Vidit, Vicit, Scripsit:*  
Caesar's Conscious Manipulations in his *Commentarii*

Seth Levin  
Classical Studies  
Dickinson College  
2018-2019

## Introduction:

In the eighth book of the Gallic Wars, Aulus Hirtius, who continued writing Caesar's Gallic narrative after his assassination in 44 B.C., confesses that "we listen differently to events, which capture us with their novelty or wonder, and differently to those which we will discuss with evidence" (*tamen aliter audimus ea, quae rerum novitate aut admiratione nos capiunt, aliter, quae pro testimonio sumus dicturi*).<sup>1</sup> It is the former events which Hirtius describes which we listen to in more detail, as their narrative structures and story-arch enthrall us into inquiring about consequences. Therefore, it is that much more vital that as readers, we scrutinize these events even more closely, as the ostentation of the narrative might hide one or more subtexts below the surface. Thucydides attests to this when he notes "the search for truth for many men is so sluggish, and they turn more to what is ready at hand" (οὕτως ἀταλαίπωρος τοῖς πολλοῖς ἡ ζήτησις τῆς ἀληθείας καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ ἐτοῖμα μᾶλλον τρέπονται).<sup>2</sup> In Caesar's two *Commentarii*,<sup>3</sup> the events which Hirtius differentiates in his preface, can in most cases,<sup>4</sup> be amalgamated into a single category. Caesar, unlike Hirtius, is the source of his own evidence (again in most cases) and also depicts events which are awe-inspiring and unprecedented even to a modern reader. On the one hand, Caesar campaigned against strange and unfamiliar tribes of Gauls, Germans, and Britons, each with their own peculiar ways of life, and on the other, he fought against his own Roman brethren. These uncomfortable circumstances forced Caesar to commit what others saw

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<sup>1</sup> All translations of Greek and Latin are my own, with the Latin and Greek from the Loeb editions of the texts; Hirtius *BG* 8.*Prae*

<sup>2</sup> Thuc. 1.20

<sup>3</sup> The two sets of *Commentarii* which I will refer to throughout this paper are the Gallic Wars (*BG*) and the Civil Wars (*BC*).

<sup>4</sup> There are some parts of his *Commentarii* which Caesar never experienced firsthand, such as Curio's campaign and eventual defeat and death in Africa, and some where he was so immersed in the event that his perspective was limited. Luca Grillo (2011) notes that "in describing the siege of Massilia he [Caesar] narrated something he did not personally witness, but in describing Dyrrachium and Pharsalus he was so involved in the action that one may question his ability to grasp the larger picture and identify the facts that determined the outcome of the engagement" (255).

as treasonous acts, especially in the Civil War. These wars, waged in a period of intense internal strife amongst the Roman aristocracy, had strict opponents to their legitimacy and necessity. As Luca Grillo notes, “the *Bellum Civile* dealt with a civil war, a taboo for Romans, and it was biased, since Caesar played a major role in many (unpleasant) events.”<sup>5</sup> Additionally, Caesar yearned to match and even surpass the military legacy and cachet of Alexander the Great.

Plutarch notes that:

ἐν Ἰβηρίᾳ σχολῆς οὔσης ἀναγινώσκοντά τι τῶν περὶ Ἀλεξάνδρου γεγραμμένων σφόδρα γενέσθαι πρὸς ἑαυτῷ πολὺν χρόνον, εἶτα καὶ δακρῦσαι· τῶν δὲ φίλων θαυμασάντων τὴν αἰτίαν εἶπεῖν· “Οὐ δοκεῖ ὑμῖν ἄξιον εἶναι λύπης, εἰ τηλικούτος μὲν ὢν Ἀλέξανδρος ἤδη τοσούτων ἐβασίλευεν, ἐμοὶ δὲ λαμπρὸν οὐδὲν οὔπω πέπρακται;”<sup>6</sup>

“In Spain, when there was free time and he [Caesar] was reading something from the histories about Alexander, for a long time he was contemplating intensely, and then he became flooded with tears. His friends were dumbfounded and he told them the reason. ‘Does it not seem to you to be worthy of grief, if being at this age Alexander already was ruling so much, but I have achieved nothing similar?’”

Both this aspiration and the unorthodox characteristics of the war were important motivations for Caesar the author in writing his *Commentarii*.

Furthermore, Rome had just experienced a tumultuous period where ‘big-men’ appealed to the people in order to exceed the Roman Senate in *auctoritas* (these *Populares* were Marius, Sulla, and the Gracchi). After this period, and during the time he was writing, Caesar had been a part of the First Triumvirate (although it was merely a pact in order for Caesar, Crassus, and Pompey to enhance their own *auctoritas*, while Caesar, in addition, was able to receive *Gallia Cisalpina* for an abnormal period of five years, which allowed him to avoid prosecution for his outstanding debt, that he first accumulated during his campaign for the Pontifex Maximus). Even after Crassus had died in Syria, and the Triumvirate was virtually dissolved, the period of

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<sup>5</sup> Grillo 2011, 243

<sup>6</sup> Plut. *Caes* 11

the Civil War had many in Rome thinking that Caesar's endgame was some form of monarchy, although Caesar desperately refutes this claim in his *Commentarii*.<sup>7</sup>

Consequently, Caesar wrote his *Commentarii* to inform (and attempt to persuade) those in Rome why his actions were justified and unavoidable. At face value, his writings are precise and informative, as even Cicero, one of his most stringent adversaries during the Civil War, admits, "they are unadorned, straightforward and elegant, devoid of every adornment of oration as if a cloak had been withdrawn" (*nudi enim sunt, recti et venusti, omni ornatu orationis tamquam veste detracta*).<sup>8</sup> However, a simple style does not result in impartiality nor in transparent motives, and although Cicero praises Caesar for his succinct and elegant style, Caesar is often vague or misleading in his *Commentarii*, as the remarkable events he presents as facts could be intentionally manipulated, not to mention he exploits the conventions of the Commentary genre. For the reader, Caesar could be a suspicious figure because he writes about himself, which opens his *Commentarii* to increased skepticism. Cicero also recognized this facet of Caesar's genre, and in a letter to Lucius Luceius, he says:

haec sunt in hoc genere vitia: et verecundius ipsi de sese scribant necesse est si quid est laudandum et praetereant si quid reprehendendum est. accedit etiam ut minor sit fides, minor auctoritas, multi denique reprehendant et dicant verecundiores esse praecones ludorum gymnycorum, qui, cum ceteris coronas imposuerint victoribus eorumque nomina magna voce pronuntiarint, cum ipsi ante ludorum missionem corona donentur, alium praeconem adhibeant, ne sua voce se ipsi victores esse praedicent.<sup>9</sup>

"These are the defects in this genre: it is necessary for those authors to write about themselves modestly if something should be praised and disregard something if it should be rebuked. It even comes about that his believability and authority are less, and many will rebuke him and say that the heralds of gymnastic contests are more modest, who, when they place garlands upon the victors and announce their names with a loud voice, and when garlands are given to the heralds themselves before end of the contests, they turn towards another herald, lest they announce with their own voice that they themselves are the victors."

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<sup>7</sup> See Plut. *Caes* 28.4 for the belief that monarchy was Caesar's aim; See *B.C.* 1.9.5 and *Cic. Att.* IX 7 C for Caesar's commitment to the Republican government.

<sup>8</sup> *Cic. Brutus* 262

<sup>9</sup> *Cic. Fam* 5.12.8

However, as stated previously, Caesar did not have another writer to compose his *Commentarii* for him while he was on campaign, and thus, Caesar crowns himself ‘*inverecundius*’ (immodestly). Thus, Caesar is metaphorically acting as his own herald.

Caesar is able to manipulate his audience and praise himself *inverecundius* because he transformed the Commentary genre into a history,<sup>10</sup> which was popular in late-Republican Rome as a form of entertainment.<sup>11</sup> Adrian Goldsworthy points out that his *Commentarii* possess a special quality, mainly that they:

“recount Caesar’s own and his army’s campaigns in detail, telling of their triumphs over everything that the enemy or nature could throw at them. They are an inspiring read, and the reader is encouraged to identify with the victorious army. If that reader was a contemporary Roman, then it must have been natural for him to revel vicariously in prowess displayed and glory gained by *nostri*, ‘our men’ or ‘our side.’”<sup>12</sup>

Caesar’s *Commentarii* then were aimed at the Roman people at large, as members of the Senate and elite classes would have been familiar with Caesar’s undertakings before their publication.<sup>13</sup> However, in the *BC*, Caesar’s target audience must have included his opponents in the Senate, as “the first task his explanations faced was to defend himself...because his opponents had already begun their propaganda campaign to demolish Caesar before his march into Italy.”<sup>14</sup> Whether or not Caesar believed he could actually persuade his opponents that he was acting justly, his *Commentarii* at least allowed him to explain himself.

Thus, Caesar is able to exploit this biased presentation in his *Commentarii* that masks his

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<sup>10</sup> Mehl describes that among the basic characteristics of Roman historiography, which included narrating past events external and internal to Rome chronologically when one was in office (13), “chief among these was a *claim to truth* that rested on the investigation of facts, thus raising the expectation that the narrator was reliably able to recognize and describe past actions and situations as well as historical actors with conflicting points of view” (26).

<sup>11</sup> Wiseman 4-5

<sup>12</sup> Goldsworthy 2009, 193

<sup>13</sup> This is seen whenever Caesar receives a *supplicatio*, such as after the Nervian campaign; Ronald Mellor also notes that Caesar wrote the *BG* for the new Gallic elite as well in order to justify his movements in Gaul and explain the benefits of Roman rule (176).

<sup>14</sup> Mehl 75

true ambition. Through his meticulous use of narratological, lexical, and grammatical manipulations, as well as self-aggrandizement, Caesar presents himself and his undertakings as straightforward and pro-Roman, attempting to nudge the reader into siding with him in every circumstance, even though he is vague, misleading, and contradictory in many circumstances, as well as treasonous towards Rome. Caesar's works are history in the guise of the Commentary genre, as they describe Caesar's actions while in a position of power, but also have a narrative structure crucial for the interpretation of facts. Caesar's style might be *nudus*, but his underlying intention is *obscurus* to a pro-Roman audience. Therefore, my view of Caesar's *Commentarii* is that his narratological manipulations expose him as nakedly ambitious.

Before analyzing Caesar's narrative, in order to show this double-sided nature of the text, I will briefly lay out my research methodology as related to first the *Commentarii* as a genre of writing, and second, my theoretical framework which follows a narratological approach. Through the manipulation of genre and narratological devices, Caesar reveals his purpose and subtly influences his audience.

### **Commentaries as a Genre:**

Although similar in nature, the Commentary genre is not history. While both genres describe actions (or *res gestae*) of the past, true *Commentarii* catalog events, and are more closely related to a logbook, whereas a history (such as Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*) utilizes to a greater extent historiographic methods, such as an overarching theme connecting the events, as well as rhetorical devices and strategies to accomplish its task. Those writing history "refer to a rational interpretive process that attributes different meanings to established facts, depending on the context or framework within which a scholar works,"<sup>15</sup> unlike those writing *Commentarii*,

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<sup>15</sup> Scott 66

which instead refers to simple events. *Commentarii* “were not apologetic, or literary in any way.”<sup>16</sup> They recount facts which are true because they are unambiguously true and are devoid of any inherent bias because they actually happened. Thus, the generic pose is not one of an ‘interpretive process’ (using Scott’s terminology) to guide the reader to a desired opinion. This is not to say, however, that *Commentarii* were devoid of historiographical decision-making. When discussing the content of Augustus’ *Res Gestae*, Ronald Mellor notices that “there is a remarkable absence of discussion on the vital decade between Philippi (42) and Actium (31 BCE)...while that was the turning point in his ascent to power, it was also the time of proscriptions and civil war as Romans killed other Romans.”<sup>17</sup> This omission, while an historiographical choice, does not trivialize Augustus’ work because the *Res Gestae* present itself as a list of undisputable facts. Augustus’ goal is not a complete history, but a record of his accomplishments, and including facts from this episode would not serve his purpose. Therefore, the *Res Gestae* are considered a Commentary because they are unadorned (referring back to Cicero’s usage of the word)<sup>18</sup> and stripped of a narrative structure, meaning it could be rewritten by later authors into a more complete history, which Suetonius and Cassius Dio eventually did.

Literally meaning “records”<sup>19</sup> or “memorandum,” “[*Commentarii*] were a Field-Marshal’s account of the campaigns which he had fought.”<sup>20</sup> It was also common for prominent Roman politicians to compose *Commentarii* in order to maintain a ledger concerning the policies they enacted and supported, the experiences they encountered, and “often included basic principles, guidelines, and instructions for the office they had held.”<sup>21</sup> *Commentarii* were useful

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<sup>16</sup> Mellor 168

<sup>17</sup> Ibid 182

<sup>18</sup> See footnote 8

<sup>19</sup> Batstone and Damon 8

<sup>20</sup> Balsdon 19

<sup>21</sup> Mehl 70

for both generals and politicians because they allowed these statesmen to remember events they partook in. Usually, each *Commentarius* pertained to a single year, which lined up nicely for Roman generals and statesmen like Caesar, as the campaigning season “had an annual cycle of summer fighting and winter encampment” and “the political calendar was predicated on one-year terms of office.”<sup>22</sup> Because of this, *Commentarii* had annalistic tendencies, which Aulus Gellius mentions quoting Sempronius Asellio:<sup>23</sup>

“Nam neque alacriores,” inquit, “ad rempublicam defendendam, neque segniore ad rem perperam faciendam annales libri commovere quicquam possunt.”<sup>24</sup>

“He writes: ‘For annales cannot in any way arouse people to be more eager to defend their state, nor to be more opposed towards doing an injustice.’”

For Asellio, the *Annales* genre, and therefore the traditional *Commentarii* genre as well, cannot produce emotions in their audience. There is no moral stance or propagandistic quality present within them. They cannot inspire a reader to fight for Rome or lead a more virtuous life because that is not their function. Their function then was to inform its audience about the maintenance of whatever political office its author held. In Caesar’s case, he certainly informs his audience about his yearly campaigns throughout the Gaulic and Civil Wars, but takes his text a step further by showing his own emotions and coaxing opinions on his audience.

Moreover, the *Commentarii* genre also shares traits with the Hellenistic Greek *hypomnemata*, which like the *Commentarius*, were composed by politicians as recollections of their political activities. However, the one crucial difference was that “*Hypomnemata*, as private sketches and explanations, could be shaped by the authors as they saw fit. They could address longer periods of time, and were thus appropriate for exploring larger political connections and

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<sup>22</sup> Batstone and Damon 8-9

<sup>23</sup> Sempronius Asellio was a Roman Historian who lived during the Numantine Wars. His book, *Rerum gestarum libri* is lost, but a few of his quotations survive in Gellius’ work (Kierdorf).

<sup>24</sup> Aulus Gellius *Noctae Atticae* 5.18

circumstances,” and usually contained justification for certain actions; in other words, they used the full capabilities of rhetoric.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, *hypomnemata* were more historiographical and less annalistic than *Commentarii*, as Mehl notes that “the requirement of immediate publication rendered impossible any interpretation and reinterpretation in the light of subsequent events.”<sup>26</sup>

As discussed earlier, *Commentarii* have annalistic tendencies.<sup>27</sup> However, Aulus Gellius, quoting Verrius Flaccus,<sup>28</sup> makes an important distinction that:

Historiam ab annalibus quidam differre eo putant, quod, cum utrumque sit rerum gestarum narratio, earum tamen proprie rerum sit historia, quibus rebus gerendis interfuerit is qui narret; eamque esse opinionem quorundam, Verrius Flaccus refert in libro De Significatu Verborum quarto. Ac se quidem dubitare super ea re dicit, posse autem videri putat nonnihil esse rationis in ea opinione, quod ἱστορία Graece significet rerum cognitionem praesentium.<sup>29</sup>

“Certain people think that history is different from annales in the following way, that, although each is a narrative of events, history nevertheless is properly about its own events, in which he who is narrating partakes; Verrius Flaccus relates that this is the opinion of some people in the fourth book of *About the Significance of Words*. And concerning this he says that he certainly has his doubts, however he thinks that this view may seem to have something of reason, because ἱστορία in Greek means knowledge of present events.”

According to Flaccus, *Annales* are usually written by an author who did not experience the events first hand, such as Tacitus when writing about the first emperors of the Principate.

Therefore, it is important to note that *Commentarii* are not entirely synonymous with *Annales*, as those who wrote *Commentarii* were the agents of the discussed material and experienced them firsthand. Going with this description, *The History of the Peloponnesian War* by Thucydides, and the *Anabasis* by Xenophon qualify as histories, and in a similar vein, Caesar’s *Commentarii*.

Additionally, quoting from Sempronius Asellio, Gellius adds that:

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<sup>25</sup> Mehl 70-71

<sup>26</sup> Ibid 71

<sup>27</sup> See footnote 24

<sup>28</sup> Verrius Flaccus was a Roman grammarian who lived during the late-Republic (born c.60 B.C.E). His book *De significatu verborum* survives through quotations by Gellius (Schmidt).

<sup>29</sup> Aulus Gellius *Noctae Atticae* 5.18

qui annales relinquere voluissent, et eos qui res gestas a Romanis perscribere conati essent, omnium rerum hoc interfuit. Annales libri tantummodo quod factum quoque anno gestum sit, ea demonstrabant, id est quasi qui diarium scribunt, quam Graeci ἐφημερίδα vocant.<sup>30</sup>

“For those who have wished to leave behind *Annales*, and those who had tried to write a history from Roman events, this of all things was the difference. Annales only are what had been done as well as in what year it happened, they pointed out these things, it is written as if by those who wrote a diary, which the Greeks call ἐφημερίδα.”

What Gellius has indicated with these distinctions between a more ‘historical’ genre such as *hypomnemata* and yearly composition such as annales or *Commentarii*, is that the author of a ‘history’ is not simply reproducing a list of events.<sup>31</sup> Instead, the author is writing an *expositio* about his topic, which allows him to transmit more personal emotions and opinions. Gellius notes that “thus they say that history is the explanation of events or their description or whatever other term could be used” (*Ita historias quidem esse aiunt rerum gestarum vel expositionem vel demonstrationem vel quo alio nomine id dicendum est*).<sup>32</sup> The *expositio* is a key feature of the history genre which is all but absent in the annalistic genres. Therefore, we can conclude that *Commentarii* as a genre were meant to be similar to (but not synonymous with) annales due to their yearly chronological coverage and absence of emotion and rhetoric, whereas *hypomnemata* were meant to be similar to a ‘history,’ or something which utilizes historiographical techniques.

The inclusion of historiographical techniques is where Caesar’s development of the genre takes its form. Caesar’s *Commentarii* are not only yearly installments of his military exploits, having annalistic tendencies which relate the geography, peoples, tactics, and outcomes of the campaigns in the regions in which he was present every year, but also contain imported concepts of historiography, traits which were more common in the *hypomnemata* genre, as the genre

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid

<sup>31</sup> A trait of Augustus’ *Res Gestae* which I discuss later.

<sup>32</sup> Aulus Gellius *Noctae Atticae* 5.18

focused on “recollections and justification toward fellow citizens.”<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, *Commentarii* as a whole were rarely published,<sup>34</sup> but instead, as Vincent Cleary points out, they were used as primary sources to inform authors writing a more elegant literary history later on, and served as an ‘*aide-memoire*’ of sorts.<sup>35</sup> However, as mentioned earlier, Cicero praises Caesar’s *Commentarii* as already elegant and the fact that Cicero was able to read them meant that they must have been published.<sup>36</sup> They are fleshed out and full of detail, and do not read like mundane field notes. As Mellor notes, “it seems that Caesar was stretching the limits of the genre of *commentarius*; he wished his books to be taken as objective reports, but he certainly did not expect another historian to adapt them. It was a very skillful literary and political invention of a new form.”<sup>37</sup> They are not comparable to a genre-conforming text such as Augustus’ *Res Gestae*. The key element that separates Caesar’s writings from Augustus’ is the underlying purpose of the writing: the justification of his actions.

One trait of Caesar’s *Commentarii* which, while not unique to Caesar himself, are heavily rhetorical is his use of indirect (*oratio obliqua*) and direct speeches (*oratio recta*). Indirect speeches are more common than direct speeches in Caesar’s *Commentarii*, and Grillo notes that “to the 191 instances of *oratio obliqua* correspond only twenty-four instances of *oratio recta*, and these instances are unequally distributed throughout the *BG* and the *BC*.”<sup>38</sup> Although both

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<sup>33</sup> Mehl 70

<sup>34</sup> Ibid

<sup>35</sup> Cleary 346

<sup>36</sup> T.P. Wiseman also adds that “the phrase *populus Romanus* occurs no fewer than forty-one times in Book 1. Caesar presents himself as upholding the honor of the Roman people, protecting its empire, avenging its defeats, helping its allies—and he repeats the talismanic phrase with no less emphasis than Cicero had used in the speech from the Rostra for Pompey’s command. One might reasonably infer that Caesar too was addressing the people” (3). This ‘oratorical’ way of presenting his actions must have meant he intended to publish them soon after completion. Additionally, Kraus notes that “the Gallic *commentarii* were certainly available to readers by the time of the composition of Cicero’s *Brutus* in 46 BC, and probably well before” (178); See pages 4-5 for the differences between his audiences for the *BG* and the *BC*.

<sup>37</sup> Mellor 174

<sup>38</sup> Grillo 2018, 133

allow Caesar to manipulate his characters, which will be discussed later:

“[the] abundant use of *oratio obliqua* juxtaposes different viewpoints, presenting individuals through their own words, thus constituting a powerful means of characterization [while] *oratio recta* is more rare, generally reserved for short ‘quotations,’...which stand out for their length and rhetoric but share some functions with indirect speeches: they display Caesar’s own oratorical talents, recapitulate previous events while also triggering further action, and vividly characterize the speakers.”<sup>39</sup>

Caesar then, is able to use both types of speech to accomplish his narrative agenda. Whether he maintains the actual integrity of the speeches he uses will be analyzed when they occur in my arguments, but in most cases, Caesar molded them to his liking so he could present his narrative in favorable terms.

Having provided a brief account of the Commentary genre and Caesar’s innovations, I will now discuss the addition of narrative (a component of the earlier *hypomnemata*) to his *Commentarii* as well as the technique of self-fashioning, which was a key tool for his narrative structure; First, I will deal briefly with the rich theoretical literature under narratology and self-fashioning. After this section, I will analyze examples from both his *Commentarii* in order to elucidate how Caesar the author used both frameworks to solidify Caesar the general as the ideal Roman amongst his audience.

### **Narratology and Self-Fashioning as Frameworks for Caesar’s Composition:**

Narratology helps us to see how an author uses events, images, rhetoric, and other narrative techniques in order to tell a story.<sup>40</sup> In order to complete this task, the person reading the narrative must be able to “understand, analyse, and evaluate” the information.<sup>41</sup> Narratives then, according to Bal, are comprised of three distinct parts: first, there is a narrator and at least one character external to the narrator; second, the narrative has three layers, which are the text,

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid 143

<sup>40</sup> Bal 3. In this section, I follow Bal’s definitions and theories of narratology.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid

story, and *fabula*;<sup>42</sup> lastly, the narrative is concerned with connected events which the characters experience throughout the entirety.<sup>43</sup> If we look back at the comparison between Augustus' *Res Gestae* and Caesar's *Commentarii*, we can see how Augustus' work cannot be defined as a narrative, while Caesar's can. Using Bal's multifaceted definition of what a narrative consists of, both of Caesar's *Commentarii* are narratives (although in some cases, the lines are blurred); the narrator and lead character, although in reality are the same person, are treated as separate individuals,<sup>44</sup> both his texts were published<sup>45</sup> and each has its own separate theme and content, and both have *fabulae* which are interrelated and for the most part tell a chronologically accurate depiction of Caesar's two wars.<sup>46</sup> However, the *Res Gestae*, according to these criteria, is devoid of story and for the most part, the *fabula*.<sup>47</sup> There is hardly a sense of a concrete subject matter, as recounting actions in a list to praise oneself cannot constitute an overarching connection in the way Bal defines it, and the list is loosely chronological and haphazard at times. For example, in one section, Augustus mentions when Gnaeus and Publius Lentulus were consuls (18 B.C.), he

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<sup>42</sup> Bal (5) defines these three layers separately: the text is the manifestation of the narrative which an agent relates, either composed in a physical book or some other source; the story is the subject matter which the narrative discusses which influences the inflection of the *fabula*; the *fabula* then, comprises the many singular and chronologically related events which the characters experience, which make up the story of the narrative. Applying these three terms to Caesar's *Commentarii*, the text is the actual manuscripts and books of the *Commentarii*; the story for each *Commentarii* differ: *De Bello Gallico* is about Caesar's need to pacify Gaul and *De Bello Civili* is about Caesar's justification for starting the most brutal Civil War to date; the *fabulae* are the events such as the Battle of Gomphi or the crossing of the Rubicon which help Caesar discuss his story.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid 8

<sup>44</sup> An aspect, which I will argue below, makes Caesar appear to be objective.

<sup>45</sup> The medium of his commentaries is nuanced, as Wiseman notes that "the scene [where the text was observed] we have to imagine is one that no source happens to describe for us [but] wherever it happened in Rome, it was surely reproduced on a smaller scale in the main piazza of every *municipium* and *colonia* in Italy—a skilled speaker, a rapt audience, and the cool, clear prose of a master of narrative" (6).

<sup>46</sup> As I will discuss below, chronology is something which Caesar sometimes distorts, in order to make himself more favorable in the eyes of his readers. These inaccuracies in chronology are attested in the works of many of Caesar's contemporaries, such as Cicero, as well as the later biographers, such as Plutarch and Suetonius, who used as their primary sources historians who we do not have access to, or have fragments of.

<sup>47</sup> I.e. the second aspect of Bal's definition. Additionally, Bal's first criteria is also absent, as Augustus the narrator, and Augustus the character are the same person. This could be said about Caesar as well, but the omission of the first person allows Caesar to be a passive spectator to the events as well, whereas Augustus is the active performer of the events he describes.

showed extreme generosity in providing Roman citizens with *tesserae* for money and grain.<sup>48</sup> Yet in the next section, he talks about various temples he dedicated to Rome, some of which were dedicated many years prior.<sup>49</sup> Mellor indicates that “it is not a narrative autobiography but a first-person reckoning of his long stewardship of the Empire—a kind of balance sheet prepared in his final months to be disclosed to the Roman people on his death.”<sup>50</sup> The reason why Augustus could simply list his accomplishments and neglect writing his work in the same genre as Caesar is because Augustus had nothing to justify when he wrote down his accomplishments at the end of his life. Unlike Caesar, he was not in the midst of a great political battle and therefore justification would serve no purpose in his work. It was therefore unnecessary for the *Res Gestae* to contain any elements of proper narrative.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, through this comparison, it is clear that Caesar’s *Commentarii* can be defined as narratives. Augustus wanted the Roman people to remember his contributions to Rome, Caesar needed his audience to be convinced his contributions to Rome were necessary, beneficial, and justified.

Therefore, even though a significant number of the *fabulae* in his stories<sup>52</sup> (the Gaulic and Civil Wars) were treasonous, morally indefensible, or contradictory, Caesar needs to present them in a way which seems legitimate. Because of this, his *fabulae* are tailored in order to accomplish this goal: they describe any necessary background information concerning the *fabulae* in question (this could be anything from an ethnography of a specific Gaulic tribe to reports from the Senate or his own legionaries about enemy movements); they relate Caesar’s

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<sup>48</sup> Augustus *Res Gestae* 17

<sup>49</sup> Ibid 18

<sup>50</sup> Mellor 179

<sup>51</sup> However, Augustus did write an autobiography which justified his actions during the civil wars of 44 and 31 B.C.E. Unlike the *Res Gestae*, this text would constitute a narrative because its subject matter is concretely about a specific time period where Augustus had interrelated events to discuss. Some fragments are preserved in Suetonius, Plutarch, and Appian.

<sup>52</sup> Referring back to Bal’s use of the word.

initial motives for pursuing his course of action; they depict an outcome, the vast majority being victories or defeats in battle; and they express Caesar's reaction to the outcome. Thus, these *fabulae* are historiographical in content and add something new to the narratological makeup of the *Commentarii*.

When reading narratives, we come by information about a character when “either the character itself mentions characteristics explicitly, or we deduce them from what the character does.”<sup>53</sup> Therefore, whether a statement within a narrative is objective or subjective, propagandistic or neutral,<sup>54</sup> we can only understand, analyze, and evaluate information as it is presented to us. This is equally true about character traits. For someone reading the *Commentarii* for the first time, say a first-year Latin student with relatively no knowledge about Caesar or Pompey, these characters are empty names. As Bal notes, “when a character appears for the first time, we do not yet know very much about it. The qualities that are implied in that first presentation are not all grasped by the reader. In the course of the narrative the relevant characteristics are repeated so often that they emerge more and more clearly.”<sup>55</sup> When a character performs certain actions, “we deduce from these certain implicit qualifications [and] the reader's frame of reference becomes a crucial element in picking up such qualifications. A deserter is, say, qualified as either a pacifist or a coward.”<sup>56</sup> For historical writing, it is fundamental that the author paints an accurate picture of the characters and events for his audience so that they can understand the character's place and influence on the events the author describes. However, while reading a narrative, the reader does not choose to qualify, in Bal's

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<sup>53</sup> Bal 117

<sup>54</sup> I refrain from using the words ‘true’ or ‘false’ when discussing the veracity of narratives, as the works which I am evaluating present events which actually happened, but might be used in a way which accomplishes an ulterior motive besides the obvious informative one.

<sup>55</sup> Bal 113

<sup>56</sup> Ibid 118

example, whether a deserter is a pacifist (the more complimentary option) or a coward (the more pejorative option) impetuously. The reader uses context, past descriptions, and other devices to determine whether the complementary or pejorative qualification is apt. Additionally, “relations with others also help build the image of a character,” as well as “the changes or transformations that a character undergoes.”<sup>57</sup> Whether the characterization is actually genuine or altered for the author’s purpose is discernable only by reading closely and analyzing how the character fits into the narrative. Therefore, in historical writing, the writer plays a crucial role in forming how the reader perceives and understands characters and the events which the characters are pertinent to, and as we shall see in the *exempla*, this is a central technique Caesar uses to manipulate the opinion of his audience.

Even though Caesar is both the narrator and the main actor in his *Commentarii*, there is a sub-textual hierarchy between his two roles. Caesar the narrator controls the actions which Caesar the actor performs and the events he experiences. Christina Kraus observes that:

“this separation of ‘Caesar’ the actor/character from the anonymous narrator (who is known, but not declared, to be Caesar) has been read in different ways. It has been seen as an indicator of ‘epistemic objectivity’ [and] conversely, it has been understood as a device masking the text’s partiality: the author does share these things with the actor but, by separating the two, reassures us—perhaps speciously—that the author is self-critical.”<sup>58</sup>

Additionally, the use of the third person allows Caesar the narrator to distance himself from his character, and this distance enables his account to seem more objective and fit to judge the actions of its characters, especially since his text was read aloud by professional speakers.<sup>59</sup> Just like tragic plays or rhapsodic performances, a good performer of Caesar’s text could capture the emotions of the audience, and because it is in third person, the praises which Caesar receives and

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid 114

<sup>58</sup> Kraus 180

<sup>59</sup> See footnote 45

the motives for his actions seem more legitimate.

Since he is a character in his commentaries, it is natural to talk about Caesar's self-fashioning and fashioning in general. All autobiographical narratives, such as Caesar's, use the concept of self-fashioning, while other forms of narratives do not. Stephen Greenblatt emphasizes that, present within the concept of self-fashioning, "are always selves—a sense of personal order, a characteristic mode of address to the world, a structure of bounded desires—and always some elements of deliberate shaping in the formation and expression of identity."<sup>60</sup> The last part of this definition is most important, as it is also integral to the previous discussion on how characters and events obtain their personality within narratives: deliberately shaped to form some sort of outcome that serves a political purpose. In the genre within which Caesar is composing, this outcome is ultimately to convince the reader that his actions are justified.

Additionally, William Howarth observes that:

"in writing his story he artfully defines, restricts, or shapes that [his own] life into a self-portrait—one far different from his original model, resembling life but actually composed and framed as an artful invention [and] is thus hardly 'factual,' 'unimaginative,' or even 'non-fictional,' [and] welcomes all the devices of skilled narration and observes few of the restrictions—accuracy, impartiality, inclusiveness—imposed upon other forms of historical literature."<sup>61</sup>

While Caesar certainly fashions his character to his benefit, this position taken by Howarth is extreme. Caesar might not have been as altruistic and glorious as he presents himself in his narrative, but he still was one of the greatest generals of all time (certainly during his generation), and therefore the 'self-portrait' Caesar presents is somewhat veracious.

Even so, Caesar is the master of his own text and content. He alone has the authority to add or omit certain elements in order to tell his story properly and is not concerned with

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<sup>60</sup> Greenblatt 1

<sup>61</sup> Howarth 86

precision, but with satisfying his intent for writing his *Commentarii* in the first place. Because Caesar is the main actor in his commentaries, “the reader watches with the character’s eyes and will, in principle, be inclined to accept the vision presented by that character.”<sup>62</sup> Caesar codes his agenda into his characters’ expressions and is heavily utilized in his *Commentarii*.

Manipulating his text in this way helps him accomplish his authorial purpose.

In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche states that “it is the ‘work’, whether of an artist or of a philosopher, that first invents the creator, the one who is said to have created it. ‘Great men’, as others revere them, are poor little tales written after the fact; in the world of historical value, counterfeits *predominate*.”<sup>63</sup> Nietzsche captures the subjectivity of the author, and, according to Bal, although the author might claim to write objectively, “objectivity is an attempt to present only what is perceived...Perception, however, is a psychosomatic process that is strongly dependent on the position of the perceiving body...Perception depends on so many factors that aiming for objectivity is pointless.”<sup>64</sup> While Bal is extreme in his conclusion that aiming for objectivity is pointless, I do believe formulating narratives engender an implicit subjectivity, and because Caesar’s narrative concerns factual information, he is able to hide some of his subjectivity behind a veneer of objectivity. However there are very clear statements of explicit subjectivity in Caesar’s narratives which exacerbate the parts of his works which are more subdued when it comes to presenting his subjectivity.<sup>65</sup>

Returning to Nietzsche’s use of the word ‘counterfeit,’ in the *Commentarii*, counterfeiting is comprised of many types of cosmetic applications “for dressing up the truth,

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<sup>62</sup> Bal 135

<sup>63</sup> Nietzsche *Beyond Good and Evil* 165

<sup>64</sup> Bal 132

<sup>65</sup> Subjective is not synonymous with false, but that a more attentive audience-member could see through Caesar’s manipulations.

including clever coloring, exaggeration, simplification, omissions, and from time to time selection of the variant most convenient to Caesar from among plausible events.”<sup>66</sup> While fashioned from the truth, these counterfeits are still deceptive and muddy any existing inherent truth. As we shall see, it is not surprising that Caesar sometimes turned to ‘counterfeiting’ in order to compose his narrative, as he wished to be seen as an unprecedented figure and the face of the Republic.

Having described the basic framework surrounding narratology and self-fashioning, as it pertains to Caesar, I will now describe and analyze specific examples drawn from Caesar’s *Commentarii*. This will prove that Caesar fashioned himself and his undertakings as extremely beneficial to Rome, and consciously manipulated his narrative to influence his audience into revering and siding with him.

### **Case Study of Caesar’s Manipulations:**

This section is divided into two subsections: Caesar’s purposeful narratology in his Gallic War, and in his Civil War. Both utilize the manipulations of the *Commentarii* genre and narratological techniques discussed above. For each *fabula* discussed, I begin by briefly addressing the *fabula* and its relevant background information; next I indicate where in the *fabula* Caesar has cleverly (or not so cleverly) misled (manipulated his narrative to influence) his audience. In places where I have directly pulled sections of Caesar’s text, I highlight the ideas, phrases, or words which have additional crucial subtext;<sup>67</sup> simultaneously, I compare the *fabula* to any relevant ancient sources (if any are present), such as Plutarch or Suetonius, to see if there are any inconsistencies or different narratological devices present, as well as to modern scholars’

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<sup>66</sup> Mehl 76; These can be placed under the definition of ‘devices of skilled narration’ which Howarth relates.

<sup>67</sup> Note that the whole passage itself has been chosen because it already possesses some narrative manipulation.

reactions to the *fabula*;<sup>68</sup> once I have finished discussing every *fabula* in a subsection, I will end the section with some concluding thoughts. This holistic approach will allow us to see Caesar's intentions behind his *Commentarii* while addressing his counterfeits and distortions. The *fabulae* in each section are addressed in chronological fashion as they occur in the *Commentarii*. I have chosen only a few from a plethora of *fabulae* which Caesar has manipulated.

### Caesar and the Helvetians

In the beginning of Book One of the Gallic War, we are told that the Helvetians, under the influence of Orgetorix, have decided to migrate west from northwestern Gaul because their prior location has hindered their free movement.<sup>69</sup> The narrator mentions that there were only two possible routes which the Helvetians could travel across:

unum per Sequanos, **angustum et difficile**, inter montem Iuram et flumen Rhodanum, vix qua singuli carri ducerentur; mons autem altissimus impendebat, ut facile perpauci prohibere possent: alterum per **provinciam nostram, multo facilius atque expeditius**, propterea quod inter fines Helvetiorum et Allobrogum, qui nuper pacati erant, Rhodanus fluit isque nonnullis locis vado transitur.<sup>70</sup>

“one through the land of the Sequani, **which was narrow and difficult**, between the Jura Mountains and Rhone River, on which the freight-wagons could barely be led in a single line; moreover the very high mountain hung over it, so that it could be easily protected with a few men: the other was through **our Province, and was by far easier and unencumbered**, because the Rhone flowed between the borders of the Helvetians and Allobroges (who had been recently pacified), and was traversable in some places with a ford.”

The use of the word *nostram* when describing his province is suggestive to an unaware audience.

Caesar is not speaking of the Roman Peninsula but of Cisalpine and Transalpine Gaul, which

might not have been the assumption of the audience if they were uninformed about Roman

imperial provinces.<sup>71</sup> Hester Schadee points out that “Caesar appears initially absent from what

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<sup>68</sup> There are very few ancient sources for the Gallic Wars.

<sup>69</sup> *BG* 1.2-3.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid* 1.6

<sup>71</sup> This can be attributed to the fact that at the beginning of the *BG*, Caesar the author never clearly distinguishes that he was given the proconsulship of Cisalpine and Transalpine Gaul.

pretends to be a factual representation. In the opening sequence of the *Commentaries*, the reader is left alone with the subject matter: *Gallia* [and additionally] Caesar is ambiguous about what constitutes Gaul, an ambiguity all the more remarkable because it is in a sentence that purports to define.”<sup>72</sup> If Caesar is unaware about what makes up Gaul, how could he assume his audience members could be aware? It clearly then could not have been ‘*provinciam nostram*’ as it barely is *suam provinciam*. What Caesar attempts to accomplish through the use of the word *nostram* is to rally the audience to his side (even if in this case *nostram* is used as the ‘royal we’), as his province was not only given to him to administer, but to the Roman people as a whole. As we shall see, Caesar will go on to deny the Helvetians safe passage through his province, and therefore he is protecting his entire audience from a Gaulic invasion, even though most of Rome’s population probably never saw the province with their own eyes.

What also should be noted here, is that Caesar must have agreed with the Helvetians concerning the difficulty of the other route, or else there would be no reason to even discuss how the route through his province was less dangerous. This is shown through the comparison between the characteristics of the two paths (*angustum et difficile...multo facilius atque expeditius*). There is no skepticism behind this comparison, and if there were, why would there not be a statement to express such skepticism? The narrator also offers no alternate path which the Helvetians could have taken in order to safely arrive at their destination. Thus, there is no justification for denying the Helvetians access to his province, but because he appeals to it as a definite extension of Rome (although even Caesar is unsure where the boundaries of his province end), he claims that he acted legitimately.

Similarly, it is obvious from their description that the Helvetians are not bellicose and

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<sup>72</sup> Schadee 159

therefore should be allowed to pass through Caesar's province uninterrupted. If their only reason to pass through Caesar's province was to make their journey quicker and safer, it should be expected that they would be permitted access. Any doubts concerning their peaceful intentions can be thrown away, as we are told that "they sent their most noble citizens to him [Caesar] as envoys...who said that their purpose was to journey through the province without any harm, because they did not have another route" (*legatos ad eum mittunt nobilissimos civitatis...qui dicerent sibi esse in animo sine ullo maleficio iter per provinciam facere, propterea quod aliud iter haberent nullum*).<sup>73</sup> All these factors present within the text point to an outcome where Caesar would allow the Helvetians to pass through his province.

However, these factors are negligible, as Caesar the general denies the Helvetians access to 'his province,' and the narrator points to past wrongs which the Helvetians inflicted on the Republic. Caesar's reasoning is that "**he remembered** that the consul Lucius Cassius had been killed and his army had been beaten by the Helvetians and sent under the yoke" (*memoria tenebat L. Cassium consulem occisum exercitumque eius ab Helvetiis pulsum et sub iugum missum*).<sup>74</sup> Caesar has completely shattered the expectations of the reader and uses the pro-Roman motif to justify his reasoning.<sup>75</sup> For a reader who lacks an extensive memory of Roman consuls, the death of Cassius and humiliation of his army might seem like a recent occurrence, and thus the event still stings in the heart of the Roman populace. However, Cassius and his army were defeated in 107 BC, almost five decades before the Helvetians asked Caesar if they could travel across his province.<sup>76</sup> Additionally, because he starts the clause with "*memoria tenebat*," it seems like it happened in his own lifetime, as he is claiming he remembers the event as if he experienced it

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<sup>73</sup> *BG* 1.7

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>75</sup> Discussed above with the use of the word '*nostram*'.

<sup>76</sup> Elvers

firsthand.<sup>77</sup> But Caesar was born in 100 B.C., seven years after Cassius was killed. If Caesar wanted to be less ambiguous about what he was implying, he could have used a verb such as *disco*, or a passive form of the word *dico*.<sup>78</sup> If he had done this, any confusion about Caesar's presence during the death of Cassius would have been dispelled because the audience could more easily distinguish that Caesar was absent during this anecdote. However, what Caesar accomplishes with this subtle distortion is that he furnishes his justification towards denying access to the Helvetians more acceptable to his audience, as they are influenced to believe that the event took place in recent memory and that Caesar himself was present (Caesar makes the event more immediate to the reader). If Caesar were to distinguish in his account that Cassius was killed five decades earlier, his audience might be less emotionally affected by the anecdote and less concerned about the violent nature of the Helvetians, especially since Caesar also fails to mention that at the end of the Cimbrian War, the Gaulic opposition were completely annihilated by the Romans along with their leaders.<sup>79</sup> If the members of his audience already knew the fate of Cassius, Caesar uses Cassius' death to appeal to a Roman collective memory, which would further impel his audience to back his cause, as Caesar lumps his own lot with that of Cassius and that of Rome, championing himself as an avenger of past and present injustices against Rome. Either way, through the use of this anecdote, Caesar is able to further solidify support for his actions in Gaul.

Another important aspect of this *fabula* is Caesar's initial victory against the Helvetians and his response to the Helvetian ambassadors who try to sue for peace. For a pro-Roman audience, the comparison between these two events is opaque, but to an adept reader Caesar's hypocrisy is clear. In order to obtain victory against the Helvetians, the narrator states that "he

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<sup>77</sup> Glare 1920

<sup>78</sup> For *disco* see Glare 550-51. For *dico* see Glare 537.

<sup>79</sup> Rawlings 7. This source is part of the *Encyclopedia of Ancient Battles*.

[Caesar] attacked them [the Helvetians] **when they were encumbered with baggage and unaware**, and killed a large section of them” (*Eos impeditos et inopinantes adgressus magnam partem eorum concidit*).<sup>80</sup> The two adjectives “*impeditos*” and “*inopinantes*” suggest that the fight would not end well for the Helvetians, and that Caesar attacked in a dishonorable fashion. This unjust nature of the attack appeals to the ‘Just War Doctrine,’ and Cicero attests to this for similar types of offensives, mainly that “no war is just, unless it is waged after reparations had been sought or it had been declared and made known first” (*nullum bellum esse iustum, nisi quod aut rebus repetitis geratur aut denuntiatum ante sit et indictum*).<sup>81</sup> Therefore, Caesar’s attack was certainly unjust, as he admits that the Helvetian baggage train was unaware.

However, after the victory, it is not disgrace but unsurpassable honor which the narrator bestows upon Caesar, as:

quae pars civitatis Helvetiae insignem calamitatem populo Romano intulerat, ea princeps poenas persolvit. **Qua in re Caesar non solum publicas sed etiam privatas iniurias ultus est**, quod eius socii L. Pisonis avum, L. Pisonem legatum, Tigurini eodem proelio quo Cassium interfecerant.<sup>82</sup>

“that part of the Helvetian state which had inflicted a severe defeat on the Roman people was also the first to pay the penalty. Because of this, **Caesar avenged not only a national but also private injury**, as the grandfather of his father-in-law Lucius Piso, the legate Lucius Piso, the Tigurini had killed in the same battle as Cassius.”

Because Caesar adds that both a national and private injury were avenged by the defeat of the Tigurini, he has intertwined the fate of his own kinsmen with the fate of Rome herself, which alludes to the fact that Caesar’s troubles are also Rome’s. However, there seems to be a key omission from Caesar’s victory: the role of Titus Labienus. This omission is made up for in Plutarch’s *Life of Caesar* when he notes that “Caesar himself did not crush the Tigurini at the Arar River, but Labienus did, who was sent by Caesar” (Τιγυρίνους μὲν οὐκ αὐτός, ἀλλὰ Λαβιηνός

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<sup>80</sup> *BG* 1.12

<sup>81</sup> Cic. *De Officiis* 1.36

<sup>82</sup> *BG* 1.12

πεμφθεις ὑπ' αὐτοῦ περὶ τὸν Ἄραρα ποταμὸν συνέτριψεν).<sup>83</sup> Labienus, not Caesar, avenged the past injury made on Rome by the Tigurini, but if Caesar were to include this, he could not link his personal matters with that of the Republic.

At first glance, there is nothing to criticize Caesar for. He took advantage of an unaware enemy (if the Helvetians can even be described as a true enemy of Rome at this point) in order to achieve a more convincing victory. After all, a general wants to minimize risks and aims for winning a war while suffering the fewest number of casualties. However, Caesar the narrator makes a fatal error while describing the events shortly after this victory. Once the Helvetians are defeated, Caesar and a few Helvetian ambassadors work towards a peace treaty. One of the ambassadors, Divico, reminds Caesar of the defeat of the Roman people under Cassius (mentioned above) and Helvetian courage in war, should Caesar not agree to reasonable peace terms.<sup>84</sup> As a response, Caesar the narrator points out that:

Eo sibi minus dubitationis dari, quod eas res, quas legati Helvetii commemorassent, **memoria teneret**, atque eo gravius ferre, **quo minus merito populi Romani accidissent: qui si alicuius iniuriae sibi conscius fuisset, non fuisse difficile cavere; sed eo deceptum, quod neque commissum a se intellegeret quare timeret, neque sine causa timendum putaret.**<sup>85</sup>

“**since he remembered** those events which the Helvetian ambassadors had brought up, he was in no doubt, and he was firmer, **as they happened through no fault of the Roman people. If they were aware of some outrage, it would not have been difficult to protect themselves; but they had been unaware, because they did not think that they did anything which should cause them fear, and they did not think that something should be feared without a reason.**”

Caesar concludes that by attacking a Roman army who was unprepared for battle, the Helvetians had no justifiable reason for bringing up the defeat during peace negotiations. However, is it not Caesar himself who a couple of chapters before did the exact same thing? Of course when Caesar talks about his own attack on the Helvetians, he gives no excuse for the unpreparedness of the

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<sup>83</sup> Plut. *Caes* 18

<sup>84</sup> *BG* 1.13

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid* 1.14

Helvetians. Caesar points towards unexpectedness in his excuse for the utter annihilation of Cassius and his army (*quo...putaret*), but could Caesar really believe that the Helvetians expected him to attack at all? Before attacking the Helvetians, Caesar notes that they were bridging the Saone by lashing rafts together, a process which took them twenty days.<sup>86</sup> Surely the Helvetians would not leave themselves vulnerable for twenty days unless they were extremely confident that they were safe. They even followed Caesar's request to stay out of his province, and instead went through the unsafe and narrow pass which went through the lands of the Sequani.<sup>87</sup> Whatever the case, Caesar still believes his attack against them was honorable, although his own behavior is contradictory at best. What Caesar accomplishes by condemning the Helvetians and praising himself is that he creates an undeserved animosity towards a group of people who used the same military tactic as the Romans themselves, and he builds up his own character. Because of this animosity, Caesar creates an 'us versus them' mentality which justifies his further hunger for territory when he invades other lands in Gaul, Germany, and Britain later in the text. It is also worth mentioning that Caesar again appeals to memory (*memoria teneret*) to amplify the feelings of disgust among his audience towards the 'others.'<sup>88</sup>

The final part of this *fabula* which is crucial to highlight Caesar's distortions is his final battle at Bibracte against the Helvetians, as the peace talks are ultimately abandoned. The main point to note here, is that during the battle:

Caesar **primum** suo, deinde omnium ex conspectu remotis equis, **ut aequato omnium periculo spem fugae tolleret**, cohortatus suos proelium **commisit**.<sup>89</sup>

“Caesar **first** sent away his own horse, then sent away everyone else's horses out of sight, **in order to remove the desire of flight by equaling the danger for everyone**, and urging his men **he engaged** in battle.”

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid 1.13

<sup>87</sup> Ibid 1.11

<sup>88</sup> This mentality reoccurs in the *BC* when Labienus gives his speech before Pharsalus. See page 75.

<sup>89</sup> *BG* 1.25

At first glance, this is an awe-inspiring, heroic move which can be attributed to Caesar's eventual victory over the Helvetians, and is an example of excellent generalship. He is the subject of both verbs (*tolleret* and *commisit*), and the adverb '*primum*' as the second word in the line stresses his bravery.<sup>90</sup> However, Caesar's generalship and decision making during this battle were far from flawless, as Nathan Rosenstein reveals that:

“at Bibractae, where he faced the main body of their [Helvetian] forces, he elected to await their charge at the top of a hill...yet his army nearly came to grief when they were surprised in their pursuit by the sudden arrival of the Helvetian rearguard behind the Romans. At their appearance Caesar found himself trapped between two enemies [and] although the Romans ultimately triumphed, their losses were heavy [and] had come very close to defeat.”<sup>91</sup>

Caesar only briefly mentions Roman losses, and never gives a distinct number.<sup>92</sup> Instead, he focuses on the surrender of the Helvetians because if he admitted to making errors during the battle, he would be seen as reckless and unfit to lead a large army. By omitting this information, Caesar is able to enhance himself not only as a general but as a dauntless hero.

The heroism of Caesar in this passage places him on a pedestal to receive praise from his audience. There is no question that Caesar intended himself to be seen in this way, especially since his name is the first word in the clause, and is the subject of the verb in the '*ut* clause' and main clause. Also within the '*ut*' clause, Caesar likens himself to the average Roman soldier in his army. He is not just an absent general watching the battle on his horse, but fighting alongside the brave warriors of Rome. Additionally in the main clause, Caesar is the only one of his men who is described as engaging in battle, although his men sent away their horses as well. As Mark Williams notes “it cannot be denied that there is personal propaganda in Caesar's account of his

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<sup>90</sup> John and Mollie Dixon mention that “displacing words from their normal order in Latin and, in this case, bringing them forward to the opening (part) of the sentence or clause” is a common way to add emphasis (67-68).

<sup>91</sup> Rosenstein 116-17. Rosenstein uses not only Caesar to make this conclusion, but uses the works of modern scholars such as Goldsworthy, Meier, Et al. See Rosenstein 119 for a full list of his sources. See *BG* 1.23-6 for the description of the battle and its blunders.

<sup>92</sup> In *BG* 1.26 Caesar indicates that his army could not pursue the fleeing Helvetians because it took three days to bury the dead.

battle at Bibracte...This has the effect of making any praise of the commander seem merited but unsought: the reader is led to agreement by the narrative's lucidity and by its author's forthrightness."<sup>93</sup> This praise is also seen after the battle, as we are told that:

**totius fere Galliae legati principes civitatum ad Caesarem gratulatum convenerunt:**

Intellegere sese, tametsi pro veteribus Helvetiorum iniuriis populi Romani ab his poenas bello repetisset, **tamen eam rem non minus ex usu terrae Galliae quam populi Romani accidisse**, propterea quod eo consilio florentissimis rebus domos suas Helvetii reliquissent, uti toti Galliae bellum inferrent imperioque potirentur.<sup>94</sup>

**The most distinguished envoys of almost all the Gallic states convened to congratulate Caesar:** They understood that, although he sought retribution in the war because of the ancient injuries of the Helvetians on the Roman people, **nevertheless it chanced that this was no less useful to Gaul than to the Roman people**, because of the fact that the Helvetians had abandoned their own homes when their affairs were exceedingly prosperous with the intention of waging war upon all of Gaul and obtaining an empire.

Not only has Caesar avenged Rome, but has saved all of Gaul from a hostile invader. In short, Caesar is presented as the savior of Gaulic autonomy, or at least that is what the narrator wants the reader to think. Similar to how Caesar intertwined his own injuries with that of Rome when discussing the defeat of the Tigurini, in this passage, Caesar intertwines himself with all of Gaul, making his movements later in the *BG* seem more justified. In reality, it is Caesar himself, who over the course of his *Commentarii*, is not the savior, but the usurper of both Gaulic and Roman territory and autonomy. These nuances would be most apparent to his opponents, and therefore were aimed more towards those in his audience who were not as informed about geopolitics (the Plebeians) as those in the Senate (in other words, the *Optimates*).

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<sup>93</sup> Williams 226.

<sup>94</sup> *BG* 1.30. The addition of the phrase '*florentissimis rebus*' when describing the Helvetians state of affairs is surprising. In *BG* 1.2 we are told that "the Helvetians are enveloped on all sides by the shape of the land...they could not roam far and could not wage war on their neighbors as easily" (*undique loci natura Helvetii continentur...minus late vagarentur et minus facile finitimis bellum inferre possent*). How then could Caesar believe that they left their homes in a time of prosperity even though he begins his account of the Helvetian migration with this statement? The reader then is left wondering which is the case, and if Caesar fabricated this statement made by the Gallic envoys, it is to inflate the praise he receives, as defeating a poor enemy is far less commendable than defeating a prosperous one.

## Mutiny at Vesontio<sup>95</sup>

After crushing the Helvetians, Caesar puts it upon himself to wage war against Ariovistus, the German king of the Suebi, at the request of the Gauls, who were under the threat of expulsion from their land at the hands of Ariovistus.<sup>96</sup> When sending envoys to Ariovistus emerges unsuccessful, Caesar learns that Ariovistus planned to march on Vesontio, a town which had an abundance of useful military resources, and was situated in an excellent defensible location, and decides to take the town before the arrival of Ariovistus.<sup>97</sup> However, after arriving at Vesontio, Caesar's men began to hear rumors about the ferocity and fearlessness of the Germans and started panicking, some even asking for a leave of service.<sup>98</sup> We are even told that:

Nonnulli etiam Caesari nuntiabant, cum castra moveri ac signa ferri iussisset, non fore dicto audientes milites neque propter timorem signa laturos.<sup>99</sup>

“Some even announced to Caesar that, although he had ordered the camp to be moved and the standards lifted, the soldiers would not listen to him and on account of their fear would not raise the standards.”

Why include this? If Caesar is attempting to fabricate himself as an unmatched military virtuoso, the fact that his men are threatening mutiny based on mere rumor would counteract against this claim. It would show that Caesar is unable to control his men, and that his pursuits are not worth his soldiers' troubles. However, Caesar remedies this mutiny with a logical and flawless argument, juxtaposing the irrational fears of his men.<sup>100</sup> Naturally, Caesar's speech eradicates the panic, as:

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<sup>95</sup> While this is the only mutiny Caesar recognizes in his two *Commentarii*, there is another during his Spanish Campaign in book two of the *BC* which he outright omits. This omitted mutiny is analyzed below on the *BC* and will posit the reasons for the exclusion when compared to this mutiny.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid* 1.31-32

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid* 1.38

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid* 1.39

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>100</sup> His argument appears in *BG* 1.40, and consists of these points: Gaius Marius defeated the Cimbri and Teutones and the Slave Revolt of 73 B.C. was put down, both consisting of a German opposition; the Helvetians had frequently beaten the Germans, and Caesar had beaten them; the Roman Army was better suited than the Gauls for defeating the Germans; and that the soldiers were motivated to mutiny by fear, not by their logistical situation.

Hac oratione habita mirum in modum conversae sunt omnium mentes, summaque alacritas et cupiditas belli gerendi innata est.<sup>101</sup>

“After he gave this speech the minds of all his men changed remarkably, and the greatest eagerness and desire for waging war arose.”

There are no counter-arguments to his reasonings, and battle preparations are conducted as if there had been no mutiny at all. Therefore, what does Caesar gain from this *fabula*? A mutiny usually springs from the refusal to perform an action which the leading authority deems appropriate. In this case, the mutiny establishes Caesar as an omniscient general because he proves that the soldiers’ fears are unjustified, and because he ends up beating the dreaded Germans, Caesar can hardly be questioned again by his audience concerning his military strategies and leadership. Additionally, Caesar’s is able to demonstrate that his skill in speech writing and delivery was as effective as his skill in writing the *Commentarii*. Bryan James agrees with this, stating that “clearly we see a general who skillfully controls his army. This ability to control his soldiers through speech is a quality that great generals possess, and we could argue that the most important effect of this marginal episode is simply to paint Caesar as the perfect general.”<sup>102</sup> However, this *fabula* accomplishes something subtler than praising Caesar’s leadership, and is invisible to an unsuspecting and absentminded audience. James elaborates that “the audience is given a privileged view of the great Julius Caesar in action, and the implicit message is that Caesar (the author) no longer has anything to hide, or at least not from the reading audience [which] pretends to an objectivity and honesty greater than is actually practiced in the *Commentarii*.”<sup>103</sup> By providing us with the information concerning this mutiny (an account which provides relatively no nuance to the end result of Caesar’s strategy against Ariovistus),

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<sup>101</sup> *BG* 1.41

<sup>102</sup> James 63

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid* 64

any omission or instance in this *fabula* where Caesar strays from the authentic truth will be overlooked.

Surprisingly, this *fabula* survives in Cassius Dio's highly fragmented *Roman History*.

While the contents of the *fabula* are practically the same (panic leading to mutiny-Caesar's speech-mutiny quelled), there are a few interesting differences from Caesar's account. The extent of the soldiers' openness towards mutiny is heightened in Dio's account, as:

ἐθρύλουν ὅτι πόλεμον οὔτε προσήκοντα οὔτε ἐψηφισμένον διὰ τὴν ἰδίαν τοῦ Καίσαρος φιλοτιμίαν ἀναιροῦντο, καὶ προσεπηπείλουν ἐγκαταλείπειν αὐτόν, ἂν μὴ μεταβάλῃται.<sup>104</sup>

“they were repeating that they were taking up a war which neither belonged to them nor voted for, due to the private ambition of Caesar, and were threatening to abandon him, if he did not change his course.”

Obviously, Dio was not present during the mutiny, and was relying on other sources as well as Caesar to create his narrative. However, Caesar downplays the intensity of the mutiny more than Dio does, as Caesar depicts a more amiable, non-aggressive mutiny. If Caesar's soldiers are as rebellious as Dio describes them, it would be beneficial for Caesar to mollify their views because it makes him seem less erratic and more justified in his course of action. I believe that Caesar purposefully softened his account, and fashioned his men to be less hostile than they truly were, as he indicates that some of his men “were saying that they needed to depart, and were seeking his permission to leave. Others remained, compelled by shame, in order to avoid any notion of fear” (*proficiscendum necessariam esse diceret, petebat, ut eius voluntate discedere liceret; nonnulli pudore adducti, ut timoris suspicionem vitarent, remanebant*).<sup>105</sup> If Caesar made his account as serious as Dio's, it would be unrealistic that his words alone would compel his men to abandon the mutiny and continue with his desired course of action, but instead would have been forced to

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<sup>104</sup> Dio 38.35

<sup>105</sup> BG 1.39

implement a more serious form of damage control.<sup>106</sup> Although his speech quelled the mutiny, trust in Caesar's ability to lead and his commitment to Rome would have decreased by his audience, had he attributed the mutiny to anything other than the fear of the enemy.

One final difference in narrative between the two accounts is how Caesar's speech is given.

James notes that in Dio's version:

“the soldiers become afraid, while the council [to whom Caesar presents his speech] consists of officers and leaders who are not explicitly afraid and do not question the justice of fighting. Dio's >Caesar<, therefore, preaches to the converted, who must then go out and control the troops. In the *BG*, the speech of Caesar is delivered to centurions who seemingly have lost their confidence, and to officers in the grip of panic.”<sup>107</sup>

Caesar's version allows him to persuade not only the rank and file, but the senior officers who are more experienced in battle that his strategy is the correct one, which in turn better convinces the audience that the soldiers' and “their own fears are groundless.”<sup>108</sup>

James fails to mention the speeches' length and speaker. Speeches are exceptionally suitable places for rhetorical sophistication, and analyzing the differences between the two accounts is helpful. While James does recognize that Dio's is more Thucydidean, Dio also lengthens Caesar's speech from one chapter to eleven chapters, as well as have the speech in direct discourse, instead of Caesar indirectly speaking through the narrator. By slimming down the length of the speech, Caesar is able to sufficiently summarize his arguments, while keeping his audience engaged with the narrative. Lengthy speeches, and lengthy episodes in general, are great for losing an audience's interest, and are also foreign to the Commentary genre. Fast-paced narratives with frequent introduction of new plotlines are better suited for maintaining the audience's attention. As Bal mentions, “a writer who wishes to fill out a scene will automatically

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<sup>106</sup> As we shall see with the omitted mutiny in the *BC*, Caesar has to resort to decimation in order to punish the army.

<sup>107</sup> James 57

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*

employ more attention-grabbing material,”<sup>109</sup> and Caesar surely would have lost his audience if he discoursed over Thucydidean philosophy, as his words would be “insignificant in the sense that they do not greatly influence the course of the fabula.”<sup>110</sup>

However, the reason why Caesar uses indirect instead of direct discourse for his speech is trickier for the audience to ascertain. After all, direct discourse has immediacy and thus more emotion, and in turn allows for the use of rhetoric to sway opinion. While that may be the case, it is not the tone of the *Commentarii* genre to present an abundance of emotion. Caesar stays ‘matter-of-fact’ in his tone, which gives the impression of not overdoing it and bragging about his oratorical prowess. Therefore, it is up to the audience-members to recognize how great a deed Caesar pulled off by convincing his men to fight. Caesar has no need for rhetorical flourish when his flawless but brief reasoning already contains enough rhetoric to sufficiently make his point.

### Caesar against the Nervians

After Caesar defeats the Helvetians in book one, he marches into the territory of the Belgae, a people whom Caesar attributes to be the bravest in Gaul.<sup>111</sup> Most of the Belgic nations he fights against in book two put up feeble resistance to his army. The Nervians however, cause Caesar the greatest trouble, and even after a large portion of the Belgic people are defeated, continue to wage war against the Romans. Caesar describes the Nervians “**to be fierce men and of great courage**: they harassed and reproached the other Belgians who surrendering themselves to the Roman people and disregarded their ancestral courage” (*esse homines feros magnaue virtutis: increpitare atque incusare reliquos Belgas, qui se populo Romano dedidissent patriamque virtutem proiecissent*).<sup>112</sup> Not only are the Nervians Belgic, the bravest race in Gaul, but because

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<sup>109</sup> Bal 94

<sup>110</sup> Ibid 92

<sup>111</sup> BG 1.1

<sup>112</sup> Ibid 2.15

of their unrelenting tenacity to stand up to the Romans they are depicted as the bravest tribe within the Belgic race. Therefore, “the Nervii seem to be the most ‘Belgic’ of all Belgae.”<sup>113</sup> Describing the Nervians in this way allows Caesar’s eventual victory over them to be more glorious.

Furthermore, the introduction of a previously unknown people is always wonderful to an unformed audience. The campaign against the Nervians (and the Belgae as a whole) allows Caesar the author to capture that wonder. Schadee notes that “the campaign against the Belgae takes its inception not from knowledge, but from hearsay. Instead of possessing all information from the start, Caesar finds out over time by rumors and reports from Labienus.”<sup>114</sup> In doing so, “Caesar places himself on par with his readership, for both he and we learn the answers from the legates’ response.”<sup>115</sup> This is a major narratological move, as it makes the information seem factual because the narrator is not portraying himself to the audience as the leading authority, which simultaneously distances him from the *fabula*. Similarly, concerning the Nervians, we are told that “when Caesar inquired about their nature and customs, he discovered this: there was no access into their territory for merchants” (*quorum de natura moribusque Caesar cum quaereret, sic reperiebat: nullum aditum esse ad eos mercatoribus*).<sup>116</sup> The Nervians are remote, and their eventual conquering likens Caesar to a new Alexander.

The battle begins with a surprise attack by the Nervians on a completely disoriented Caesar. They are said to have:

**incredibili celeritate** ad flumen decucurrerunt, ut **paene uno tempore** et ad silvas et in flumine et iam in manibus nostris hostes viderentur. **Eadem autem celeritate** adverso colle ad nostra castra atque **eos qui in opere occupati erant contenderunt**.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Schadee 165

<sup>114</sup> Ibid 163

<sup>115</sup> Ibid

<sup>116</sup> *BG* 2.15

<sup>117</sup> Ibid 2.19

“ran at **with an incredible quickness** down to the river, so that the enemy seemed, **almost at the same moment**, to be near the woods, in the river, and already upon our men. Moreover **with this same quickness** they marched up the hill towards our camp and **towards those who were working on fortifications.**”

The Romans are still fortifying their camp when the Nervians attack them. Caesar has obviously misjudged the military capability of the Nervians, or else he would have been completely prepared for a sudden onslaught and would have fought the Nervians on his own terms. However, what Caesar hopes to accomplish with this part of the Nervian *fabula* is that even when he is thrown into a tough scenario, he can overcome the adversity and still be victorious. The emphasis on speed in this passage further augments the glory which Caesar receives as a result of his victory. The phrase ‘*paene uno tempore*’ denotes that all of the sudden, the Nervians are everywhere. They arrive with no warning and go unnoticed until it is too late. If Caesar could command his men to a victory, being thrown into a scenario where the ‘*celeritas*’ of the enemy has utterly stunted his normal military operations, it raises the question whether any foe could outmatch him.

As a result of the sudden attack by the Nervians, Caesar is thrown into a turbulent battle which he is not prepared for.<sup>118</sup> This can be seen when the narrator relates that:

Caesari omnia uno tempore erant agenda [sed] Quarum rerum magnam partem temporis brevitatis et successus hostium impediēbat.<sup>119</sup>

“everything had to be done by Caesar simultaneously [but] the lack of time and the advance of the enemy impeded a large part of these responsibilities.”

Additionally, once the battle begins, we are told that:

**rem esse in angusto vidit neque ullum esse subsidium, quod summitti posset**, scuto ab novissimis uni militi detracto, quod ipse eo sine scuto venerat, in primam aciem processit centurionibusque nominatim appellatis reliquos cohortatus milites signa inferre et manipulos laxare iussit, quo facilius gladiis uti possent. **Cuius adventu spe illata militibus ac redintegrato animo, cum pro se quisque in conspectu imperatoris etiam in extremis suis rebus operam navare cuperet, paulum hostium impetus tardatus est.**<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Another instance of Caesar’s flawed generalship. See footnote 91.

<sup>119</sup> *BG* 2.20

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid* 2.25

**“he saw that the battle was uncertain and there were no reinforcements which could be sent. Taking a shield from a soldier amongst those in the rear, because he himself had come there without one, went forward into the first line and calling upon the centurions by name and encouraging the remaining soldiers he ordered them to advance the standards and expand the companies, so that they could use their swords more easily. His arrival brought hope to the soldiers and renewed their spirit, since each desired of his own accord to perform their duty well in the sight of the commander, even though in extreme personal circumstances, and the enemies’ attack was somewhat checked.”**

Because of Caesar’s presence, and nothing else, the battle is won (although ‘*paulum*’), even though Caesar’s camp is mal-fortified, his men are severely wounded, and the battle heavily favored the Nervians.<sup>121</sup> The mere ‘*adventus*’ and ‘*conspectus*’ of Caesar reinvigorated a brutally shattered army. Caesar is able to match Nervian quickness with his excellent military bravado. In this light, Caesar is portrayed as possessing a sort of divine power. George Swain seems to think in this way, as he believes the battle “needed all the magic of Caesar’s presence in the thick of the fray, his personal shouts of command, and the orders of his fertile brain, to save a day all but lost.”<sup>122</sup> In the same way Caesar himself is, Swain is lost in the artificial magnificence of Caesar’s presence in this passage. Swain is so focused on the description of Caesar, that he fails to comprehend two key details in this passage which actually work against Caesar: the first is seen in the last sentence, where we are told that although Caesar inspired his men greatly, it only checked (not even halted) the attack of the Nervians ‘*paulum*’ (slightly); the second is that Caesar running into battle is extremely desperate (especially as he is ill-equipped from the start). However, because the description of Caesar’s presence and actions before this sentence (which is comprised of only five words) is substantial in comparison, the reader is convinced that Caesar had a greater effect on the

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<sup>121</sup> This is not an empty claim. Caesar’s camp was overrun with the enemy (*BG* 2.23-24), and on the right flank, where Caesar’s heroics were put on display, “all the centurions of the fourth cohort were slaughtered, the standard-bearer was killed, and the standard was lost; almost all the centurions from the remaining cohorts were either wounded or slain” (*quartae cohortis omnibus centurionibus occisis signiferoque interfecto, signo amisso, reliquarum cohortium omnibus fere centurionibus aut vulneratis aut occisis*; *BG* 2.25).

<sup>122</sup> Swain 70

battle than he realistically did.

Additionally, in order for a single swing in fortune to affect an outcome of a battle in the way Caesar intends his audience to perceive it, he must be misrepresenting the actual disparity between the two sides, especially since the battle rests ‘*in angusto*’ and there is no sign of ‘*ullum subsidium*.’ His forces must not have been as wounded and demoralized as he leads us to believe, and Caesar must have inflated the quickness and tenacity of the enemy. Mentioned previously, Caesar had scouts inquire about the Nervii, and therefore it is safe to assume that Caesar also had advanced knowledge about the movement of the Nervii, especially when he tells us that before the battle, he:

inveniebat ex captivis Sabim flumen ab castris suis non amplius milia passuum x abesse: trans id flumen omnes Nervios consedissee adventumque ibi Romanorum exspectare una cum Atrebatibus et Viromanduis, finitimis suis.<sup>123</sup>

“learned from prisoners that the Sambre River was no more than ten miles away from his camp, and that across this river all the Nervians were encamped and awaiting the arrival of the Romans together with the Atrebatibus and the Viromandui, their neighbors.”

Milton Diaz agrees with Caesar’s deception of the weakness of his army, and highlights that this *fabula* contains “attributes [which] Caesar had honed since his youth, [which were] remarkable intelligence and propensity to take calculated risks, [and] lend weight to the argument that he, through his actions, purposely encouraged the Nervii to attack so that he might end their rebellion.”<sup>124</sup>

What is more, after the passage above where Caesar claims there was no hope of any reinforcements, he admits that Titus Labienus arrived on the scene with fresh troops, which transformed the battle to such a degree that “our men, even those who were on the ground exhausted by their wounds, renewed the battle supporting themselves on their shields” (*nostris*

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<sup>123</sup> *BG* 2.17

<sup>124</sup> Diaz 42. The evidence for his argument spans 39-40 in the article.

*etiam qui vulneribus confecti procubuissent, scutis innixi proelium redintegrarent*).<sup>125</sup> If Labienus was able to bring reinforcements shortly after Caesar's heroic charge, why did Caesar write in the previous passage that receiving reinforcements was futile? It is because it legitimizes Caesar's single-handed effort, and makes it seem like the reason why Labienus was able to send reinforcements in the first place was because Caesar's actions alone allowed for it. However, as already seen, Caesar's effect on the battle was extremely limited. While it may have inspired a renewal of hope for his men, it ultimately achieved nothing. If we are to attribute the victory over the Nervians to anyone, it should be Labienus.<sup>126</sup> Instead, the reader is convinced that Caesar had a greater effect on the battle because Labienus is mentioned only briefly, whereas Caesar is mentioned throughout the *fabula*. What he achieves by misrepresenting the strength of the Nervians and omitting Labienus' reinforcements until after his heroic call to arms is that he emphasizes the glorious effect he has on his men while simultaneously convincing the reader that there is no opposition which can best him. In the end, although Labienus' decision-making changed the outcome of the battle, the audience is forced to believe Caesar is the true hero, especially since at the end of his Nervian campaign, "a fifteen-day thanksgiving was decreed, which had never occurred for anyone before" (*dies quindecim supplicatio decreta est, quod ante id tempus accidit nulli*).<sup>127</sup>

### **The Lead Up to and Crossing of the Rhine**

Book Four begins with a large scale invasion of the Usipetes and the Tencteri, two tribes who lived across the Rhine in northwest Germany. Once Caesar successfully defeats them, we are

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<sup>125</sup> *BG 2.27*

<sup>126</sup> Not to mention Labienus gained possession of the enemy camp (*BG 2.26*); There are no ancient sources besides Caesar who mention Labienus' contributions to the outcome of this battle, however as mentioned in the section about the Helvetians, Labienus is credited with the victory over the Tigurini, the tribe of the Helvetians who killed Lucius Cassius, in Plutarch.

<sup>127</sup> *BG 2.35*

told that:

multis de causis Caesar statuit sibi Rhenum esse transeundum; **quarum illa fuit iustissima**, quod, cum videret Germanos tam facile impelli ut in Galliam venirent, **suis quoque rebus eos timere voluit, cum intellegent et posse et audere populi Romani exercitum Rhenum transire.**<sup>128</sup>

“Caesar decided that he must cross the Rhine for many reasons; of which, **the most legitimate one** was that, since he saw that the Germans were so easily compelled to enter Gaul, **he wanted them to fear for their own livelihoods, when they learned that the army of the Roman people were both able and daring to cross the Rhine.**”

The use of the superlative ‘*iustissima*’ is an odd choice here. Not only does it reaffirm Caesar’s opinion about his course of action, but it raises the question how Caesar could claim that inducing fear into a defeated people is legitimate in the first place. As was the case in the Helvetian *fabula*,<sup>129</sup> the word ‘*iustissima*’ appeals to the ‘Just War Doctrine’ and what constitutes a reasonable response. Cicero states that “wars which are undertaken without a reason, those wars are unjust. For unless the war is waged for the reason of revenge or driving away enemies, it is not considered just” (*Illa iniusta bella sunt, quae sunt sine causa suscepta. nam extra ulciscendi aut propulsandorum hostium causam bellum geri iustum nullum potest*).<sup>130</sup> Even though Caesar claims this is a defensive move on his part, how can he justify defending land which is not his to defend in the first place? This justification is even more strange when we are told in the beginning of Book Four that the entire reason the Usipetes and the Tencteri crossed the Rhine was because they were being viciously harassed by the Suebi, whom the narrator characterizes as “by far the greatest and most aggressive of all the Germans” (*longe maxima et bellicosissima Germanorum omnium*).<sup>131</sup> Just like the Helvetians in Book One, the Usipetes and the Tencteri are exiles from their native land, but Caesar lacks sympathy. Instead, he uses their crossing of the Rhine as a test

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid 4.16

<sup>129</sup> See page 24

<sup>130</sup> Cic. *De Re Publica* 3.35. This fragment survives in Isidorus’ *Origines* 17.1.

<sup>131</sup> *BG* 4.1; More about the characterization of the Suebi later in this *fabula*.

for himself, a contest to determine who is the alpha. It is only fitting then that Caesar describes his army not with ‘*suum*’ but with the genitive of possession through the words ‘*populi Romani*.’ It is no longer Caesar’s strength which is on display by attempting to cross the Rhine, but the strength of all of Rome. If successful, this feat would have been unprecedented, and even if Cato the Younger was reading this *fabula*, the sheer fact that the Roman army was strong enough to bridge the Rhine must have jolted his enthusiasm, even though his bitter enemy was credited with the endeavor.

The question must be asked, does Caesar seriously believe he has jurisdiction over the Rhine and the regions of Germany across its banks? He in fact does because he believes that the Germans entered his own jurisdiction when they crossed into Gaul. After the defeated Usipetes and Tencteri cross the Rhine back to Germany, Caesar demands that the Sugambri (the people who were sheltering the survivors) immediately surrender them as hostages to Rome. Their response is as follows:

**Populi Romani imperium Rhenum finire:** si se invito Germanos in Galliam transire non aequum existimaret, **cur sui quidquam esse imperi aut potestatis trans Rhenum postularet?**<sup>132</sup>

“**the Rhine limited the rule of the Roman people:** if Caesar thought it was unfair that the Germans crossed into Gaul against his will, **why did he claim any rule or power across the Rhine?**”

Caesar obviously does not agree with this statement made by the ambassadors of the Sugambri, as he almost immediately crosses the Rhine afterwards. Caesar had no legitimate authority across the Rhine, and really had no authority anywhere in Gaul except for his allotted provinces. However, by including it, he demeans the reasonable argument made by the Sugambri. While this might be normal Roman imperial behavior, in reality, Caesar has no legal authority in Germany nor northeast Gaul, and J. P. V. D. Balsdon concurs due to the fact that “in his [Caesar’s] campaigns

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid 4.16

which opened the way to the conquest of the whole of Gaul west of the Rhine—he had violated Sulla’s Treason Law, in that he had campaigned outside the boundaries of his province of Transalpine Gaul without authority from the government at Rome.”<sup>133</sup> However, Caesar excludes this from his account, and instead shifts his audience’s intention towards the magnificence of the feat. However, through this account, the narrator makes Caesar have more power than what is attributed to him. Caesar is the master of lands which Rome herself did not previously control.

Demeaning this argument also inflates the authority of the Roman people, as he shows that no people, no matter how reasonable an argument might be, can deter the Roman people from extending their *‘imperium,’* especially since Caesar again uses the phrase *‘populi Romani’* when describing the *‘imperium.’* Instead, Caesar could have used the word *‘Romae,’* as it would have been a less dramatic word because it appeals to tangible boundaries and geography, not to the passions of his audience. Caesar and the Romans take what they want, and this sentence must have caused his Roman audience to chuckle at the stupidity and insolence of the Germans, while boasting at their own power.

Thus begins Caesar’s crossing of the Rhine and we learn that:

navibus transire neque satis tutum esse arbitrabatur, **neque suae neque populi Romani dignitatis esse statuebat.** Itaque, etsi **summa difficultas faciendi pontis proponebatur propter latitudinem, rapiditatem altitudinemque fluminis, tamen id sibi contendendum aut aliter non traducendum exercitum existimabat.**<sup>134</sup>

“he judged that it was not safe enough to cross by boats, **and he determined that it was unworthy of his own and the Roman people’s dignity.** Thus, although **there was extreme difficulty of constructing a bridge which was set forth for him, because of the width, velocity, and depth of the river, he nevertheless thought that he must attempt it or otherwise not lead his army across it.**”

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<sup>133</sup> Balsdon 25

<sup>134</sup> BG 4.17

Even if crossing with boats was safe, Caesar presumably would still have constructed a bridge because going by boat was not only beneath him, but beneath the Romans as an entire people (shown again through the use of *populi Romani*). Giuseppe Micunco, summarized by Robert Brown, makes a bold assertion about this passage by claiming that “in crossing the natural limits of the Rhine and the Ocean into regions beyond the known world Caesar was imitating Alexander the Great but takes care to avoid the impression of *hybris* in relating his exploits.”<sup>135</sup> While I agree that the crossing is very ‘Alexandrian’ of Caesar, the hubris loaded in the clause ‘*neque...statuebat*’ is clear. Caesar is emphasizing that he must provide a grand spectacle when crossing the Rhine and that he is a military trailblazer, or else his dignity will be debased, especially as he boasts that the Rhine is broad, fast, and deep. Upholding and enlarging one’s ‘*dignitas*’ was crucial in republican Rome and was a real concern for Caesar, as it signaled that one was worthy of “leadership, advancement, and promotion,” and if it was lost, meant “being exposed, [and] helpless, to the insults of one’s inferiors.”<sup>136</sup> By describing this tremendous feat in this way, Caesar expresses to his audience, even to his enemies, that his ‘*dignitas*’ was invincible and always expanding.

Furthermore, Brown adds that:

“[crossing in boats] was how the Germans crossed the Rhine. How much more uplifting—and visually impressive—to march in formation across a bridge than to pack together in small boats, to cross the river in a shapeless convoy, and clamber up its muddy banks. Most importantly, perhaps, to cross by boat is to place oneself at the mercy of the river; to build a bridge...is to subdue it.”<sup>137</sup>

While this belief is egotistical from a foreign perspective, Caesar’s audience must have felt invincible having their own ‘*dignitas*’ grouped in with Caesar’s own ‘*dignitas*,’ especially when this episode can be compared to Xerxes’ bridging the Hellespont during the Persian War.

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<sup>135</sup> Brown 41

<sup>136</sup> Francese 127

<sup>137</sup> Brown 45-46

After completing the bridge, Caesar transported his army across into Germany in order to harass the Sugambri and aid the Ubii (who pledged loyalty to Caesar before crossing and needed help against the Suebi). Caesar learns from the Ubii that the Suebi have mustered a large force and have prepared for a pitched battle.<sup>138</sup> We would expect Caesar to engage with the Suebi, especially since they were the reason the Usipetes and the Tencteri crossed the Rhine in the first place. We would also expect this course of action because Caesar is known to fight against peoples whom he considers to be a greatly formidable force.<sup>139</sup> However:

Quod ubi Caesar comperit, **omnibus rebus eis confectis**, quarum rerum causa traducere exercitum constituerat [et] **diebus omnino decem et octo trans Rhenum consumptis satis et ad laudem et ad utilitatem profectum arbitratus se in Galliam recepit pontemque rescidit.**<sup>140</sup>

“When Caesar learned this, **everything was accomplished for him**, which were the reasons he had decided to lead his army across [and] **spending altogether eighteen days across the Rhine, judging that he had achieved enough in terms of his renown and benefit, he returned to Gaul and tore down the bridge.**”

Strategically, Caesar accomplishes nothing. While he does torch the land of the Sugambri, he does not capture the remaining survivors of the Usipetes and the Tencteri, and does not fight against the Suebi, but instead promised his help if the Suebi were ever to harass them again.<sup>141</sup> It is surprising that Caesar does not fight the Suebi, and not fighting them influences the reader to perceive them as inferior and undeserving of Caesar’s time and resources.<sup>142</sup> However, the two phrases ‘*omnibus...confectis*’ and ‘*diebus...consumptis*’ harmonize well together because the brevity of Caesar’s stay across the Rhine influences his audience into believing something of merit was accomplished. This effect is augmented when Caesar destroys his bridge and determines he gained a sufficient amount of ‘*laudem*’ and ‘*utilitatem*’ from the undertaking, as this signals that his work

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<sup>138</sup> *BG* 4.19

<sup>139</sup> He describes the Nervians this way in book two and does not shy away from a fight.

<sup>140</sup> *BG* 4.19

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>142</sup> This is intensified by Caesar’s description of them in *BG* 4.1.

has been successfully completed to Caesar's liking, but he could just as easily build another bridge should the need arise. Brown notes that more likely, Caesar's goals for crossing the Rhine "were less clear-cut and included some to which he does not admit—for example, the desire to win fame for being the first to do so. All that we can say for certainty is that, in his *literary* version of the campaign, Caesar achieves a perfect fit between his aims and accomplishments."<sup>143</sup> By 'perfect fit,' Brown indicates that Caesar, regardless of the interpretation of his audience, commits to the notion that he left nothing incomplete across the Rhine, and in destroying the bridge he reaffirms this. This passage also refutes the claim made by Micunco concerning the lack of hubris Caesar possesses throughout the *fabula*, as there is an invasive narcissistic undertone to Caesar's views and actions. In the end, only Caesar himself can assess his satisfaction in crossing the Rhine, and because he is content with his task and the renown it gave him, his audience should 'unquestionably' feel the same way.

### **Absent Caesar**

This section is a combination of a series of *fabulae* found within books six and seven, where Caesar is not actually present during the *fabulae*, which outline Caesar's absent effect on his army. What these *fabulae* highlight is Caesar's awesome effect on his soldiers while he is away, which in turn emphasizes the extremity of his self-fashioning in his narrative.

The first *fabula* occurs in book six. We are told that Caesar has split his army into multiple units, and had entrusted Labienus with at least one legion to wage war against the Treveri.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Brown 44

<sup>144</sup> It seems that Caesar forgot whether he sent Labienus two legions (6.5) or a single legion (6.7). This lack of clarity, while it may seem trivial, is actually somewhat troublesome. If Caesar was unable to manage and remember whether he gave Labienus one or two legions to command, how are we able to believe any of the numbers Caesar gives us which are much larger, such as death tolls and population sizes? A logistical error like this would completely change the perception of the audience concerning the disparity between the winning and losing side in any given battle. I am not saying that Caesar purposely misrepresented the number of legions he gave to Labienus, just that something as trivial as this leads one to question the reliability of more consequential statistics. For other examples of Caesar's numerical inconsistencies, see Henige 1998.

Labienus then employs an unusual strategy of imitating panic among his army in order to entice the Treveri to engage the Romans on unfavorable terms. Before battle is joined, the narrator injects a rare direct exhortation from Labienus:

“Habetis,” **inquit**, “milites, quam petistis facultatem: hostem impedito atque iniquo loco tenetis: **praestate eandem nobis ducibus virtutem, quam saepe numero imperatori praestitistis, atque illum adesse et haec coram cernere existimate.**”<sup>145</sup>

“**He said** ‘soldiers you have the opportunity which you have sought: you are holding the enemy on obstructed and unequal ground. **Exhibit the same courage under our leadership, as you have often exhibited to our commander, and imagine that he is present and looking on you personally.**’”

Caesar obviously had not heard this speech firsthand, and by adding it one of two assumptions can be made: either, being told that this was exactly how the speech was uttered, Caesar wholeheartedly believed everything which his lieutenants and lesser officers told, or Caesar fabricated it to fashion himself as a great leader. Either way, the fact that he leaves this in, when there are very few other instances in the *BG* of direct discourse, leaves one to ponder how Caesar could know exactly what was said before the battle. He did not add any adverb which could be translated into any synonym of the word ‘supposedly’, but instead simply writes ‘*inquit*’ (he said), which denotes that there is no question that Labienus uttered this exact speech, or something extremely similar to it.

What Caesar is implying when he describes Labienus’ appeal to absent Caesar (*praestate...existimate*) is that his army is missing a piece without Caesar present, and therefore cannot fight to their full potential. It is only when they imagine Caesar looking on ‘*coram*’ (in person) that they are eager to fight to the best of their abilities, even though Labienus is a fantastic general in his own right. Caesar is such an effective commander, that he has engrained himself in the psychology of his men, making him present during the battle, even though he is

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<sup>145</sup> *BG* 6.8

not physically there. This clause fashions Caesar as unrivaled in generalship and the admiration of his soldiers. Additionally, there is a striking juxtaposition between this clause, and the clause before it (*milites...tenetis*). When taken as a whole, we can see that without mention of Caesar, Labienus and his legion might have squandered or not capitalized on the advantage they had over the Treveri in the previous clause. It is interesting that Caesar uses the pronoun ‘*nobis*’ when describing Labienus’ leadership. This pronoun likens every Roman soldier’s contributions to that of Caesar’s and masks any self-aggrandizement, which in turn appeals to the audience that every single soldier, not just the Centurions and Legates (or Caesar alone), were crucial to the successful operation of a campaign.

The second *fabula* also occurs in book six. This time, Caesar has left Quintus Cicero in charge of the fourteenth legion and a camp which housed the Romans’ baggage.<sup>146</sup> Caesar himself went with three legions across the Scheldt River due to reports that Ambiorix had headed there, and told Quintus Cicero he planned on returning after seven days.<sup>147</sup> During his absence, the Germans attempt to penetrate the camp, but ultimately fail and retreat.<sup>148</sup> After the Germans retreat, Caesar has still not returned, which sends the camp into complete disarray:

Ac tantus fuit etiam post discessum hostium terror ut ea nocte, cum Gaius Volusenus missus cum equitatu ad castra venisset, fidem non faceret adesse cum incolumi Caesarem exercitu. Sic omnino animos timor praeoccupaverat ut paene alienata mente deletis omnibus copiis equitatum se ex fuga recepisse dicerent neque incolumi exercitu Germanos castra oppugnatos fuisse contenderent. Quem timorem Caesaris adventus sustulit.<sup>149</sup>

“And even after the departure of the enemies there was such panic that during that night, when Gaius Volusenus, who had been sent with his cavalry, had arrived at the camp, he could not produce any faith that Caesar was present with his army unharmed. Panic had seized their minds so completely that they almost went insane and said that the cavalry retreated from all of Caesar’s slaughtered forces and asserted that with the army being unharmed, the Germans would not have attacked their camp. The arrival of Caesar put down this panic.”

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid 6.32

<sup>147</sup> Ibid 6.33

<sup>148</sup> Ibid 6.40-41

<sup>149</sup> Ibid 6.41

This passage displays the almost unhealthy amount of dependency which Caesar's soldiers have towards him. If Caesar is gone for even a second, or is rumored to have been defeated in any way, years-worth of military expertise and training disappears, and the result is irrational and sudden panic. However, there is another way to interpret this panic as well. The mere absurdity that Caesar could even be beaten so badly (although he has been beaten in battle) provokes the reader to wonder whether Caesar could ever lose, especially since the audience is aware that Caesar is still alive. Even Alexander the Great eventually had to stop his march to the East. Hannibal Barca was forced to leave Italy after a marvelous display of military might in a foreign land, and eventually lost right outside Carthage at the Battle of Zama. As Adrian Goldsworthy points out, "Caesar had immense charisma, and the loyalty of his soldiers...was almost fanatical in its intensity, in a way matched throughout history by only a few individuals, such as Napoleon."<sup>150</sup> Caesar not only possessed military bravado, but seduced his soldiers into an extremely dependent relationship, which leads the audience towards the same seduction, as Caesar is the only necessary ingredient for success. At first glance, this *fabula* may seem at odds with the previous one. If Caesar was always psychologically present for his men, how could he justify their panic? It is because his men believe he is defeated, and there is no hope for his safe return. Their psychology has been completely warped. If Caesar was dead, who would they be fighting for? The difference between this *fabula* and the previous one is that Caesar the narrator is giving his audience a glance into the mind's of his soldiers when he is alive, and when he is perceived to be dead. Either way, the reactions from his soldiers are extremely loyal. Their lives are useless without Caesar. If the brave soldiers of Rome could experience intense emotions for Caesar, why should the audience not as well? Could Caesar be a whole new breed of

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<sup>150</sup> Goldsworthy 2010, 217-18

commander? The narrator surely thinks so, and the reader is left in agreement, especially since the soldiers' panic lasts two lengthy sentences (*ac...contenderent*) and is only resolved when Caesar is there in person, which is described in a mere five words (*quem...sustulit*). Just like many of his campaigns, Caesar is brief but effective.

The third and final *fabula* occurs in book seven during the revolt of Vercingetorix, and is similar to the first *fabula* in this section. Labienus is surrounded by two large Gaulic forces near Lutetia and must fight his way out and re-cross the Seine in order to avoid complete annihilation.<sup>151</sup> Once Labienus spots the enemy, we are told that:

Labienus milites cohortatus ut suae pristinae virtutis et secundissimorum proeliorum retinerent memoriam atque **ipsum Caesarem, cuius ductu saepe numero hostes superassent, praesentem adesse existimarent**, dat signum proeli.<sup>152</sup>

“Labienus urging his soldiers to remember their former courage and their previous battles and **imagine that Caesar himself, under whose leadership they so often overcame their enemies, was there in person**, then gave the signal for battle.”

The mere thought of Caesar's name arouses the soldiers' spirits so much (even though Labienus' men were surrounded by two separate forces of Gallic opposition) that the Gauls are swiftly and brutally defeated. Caesar, in a sense, is able to defeat the Gauls *in absentia*, and although Labienus was the lieutenant in command of the forces who defeated them, the victory is ultimately attributed to the awe-inspiring and galvanizing mentioning of Caesar. This mention of Labienus' invocation of Caesar paints him as a divine force, and convinces the reader that Caesar's name is as inspiring as Caesar himself.

### Conclusions on the *BG*

What these three *fabulae* accomplish is the confirmation that Caesar is an unstoppable force, and can be miles away from large parts of his army but still have active effects on their

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<sup>151</sup> *BG* 7.59-61

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid* 7.62

performance and psychology. Because his soldiers are so loyal, the audience is invited to feel the same way. However, due to the immense amount of charisma absent Caesar possesses in these *fabulae*, as audience members, it is integral to acknowledge that Caesar added them to his narrative without being a witness to them, and either heard about them through his soldiers, or created them himself. Therefore, the veracity of each *fabula* is at least questionable, but if believed, can transmit an enticing and fervent influence over his audience.

Through the manipulations of his narrative (omissions, self-aggrandizements, deceits, etc.), Caesar manifests himself as an ideal Roman, intertwines himself with the pursuits of the Republic, and fuses the livelihoods of his men with his own. It is with this Commentary that Caesar is able to claim that he represents the prosperity of the Republic, which he is able to utilize in the *BC*, as instead of justifying his actions against Gauls and Germans, he must attempt to justify the treasonous actions of violence against the very state he sought to protect.

### **The Dichotomy of Caesar and his Opponents in the Beginning of the *BC***

In the beginning of the *BC*, we are immediately thrown into the political conflict between Caesar and his opposition in the Senate, as we are told “when the letter from Gaius Caesar was given over to the consuls, it was allowed to be recited in the Senate by them only through the greatest effort of the tribunes” (*Litteris C. Caesaris consulibus redditis aegre ab his impetratum est summa tribunorum plebis contentione ut in senatu recitarentur*).<sup>153</sup> There is no background information to set the scene, so the audience is tasked with either learning about it themselves, or taking Caesar’s rendition as canon. For this *fabula* especially, Caesar had to mold his Commentary in a way which absolved him from any responsibility of starting the war, and in a way that convinces his audience that he is defending Rome from an impending decline. Therefore, he must

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<sup>153</sup> *BC* 1.1

relate to his audience that he was treated unjustly and that his actions were not out of self-interest, but crucial for the preservation of Rome. Because of this, Caesar is more explicit about his motivations than he was in the *BG*.

To relate this information, Caesar begins his narrative by vilifying his enemies in the Senate. The first of these men is Lucius Lentulus, and we are told that:

senatui rei publicae se non defuturum pollicetur si audacter ac fortiter sententias dicere velint; **sin Caesarem respiciant atque eius gratiam sequantur, ut superioribus fecerint temporibus, se sibi consilium capturum neque senatus auctoritati obtemperatum.**<sup>154</sup>

“he promised the Senate that he would not fail the Republic if the Senators were willing to express their opinions boldly and bravely. **But if they were mindful of Caesar and favorably attended to him, as they did in previous years, he would take matters upon himself and would not comply with the authority of the Senate.**”

As we shall see with all of his opprobria, Caesar is sure to point out his enemies’ transgressions not only against the Republic but also against himself.<sup>155</sup> In Lentulus’ view, there is no amicability or favor (*gratiam*) that can be salvaged between Caesar and the Senate, and although there are some in the Senate who held less radical views, Lentulus is prepared to dismiss any authority the Senate has and act according to his own volition (*se...obtemperatum*). But is Lentulus acting impetuously? Caesar’s phrasing certainly makes it seem so, especially since, as already stated, we are given no background information concerning Caesar’s grievances. Through the participles ‘*capturum*’ and ‘*obtemperatum*’ the audience is led to believe that Lentulus is usurping the Senate from their lawful duties. However, what is actually occurring is Lentulus using one of his official capabilities as consul: the ‘*Senatus consultum ultimum*.’ Used only when Rome was in a state of emergency, it gave one or both of the consuls executive command over Rome.<sup>156</sup>

Although Lentulus was a Pompeian, it is not hard to see why he desired an *SCU*, as the

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid

<sup>155</sup> This is reminiscent of the entanglement of Caesar’s own affairs and those of Rome in the *BG*.

<sup>156</sup> von Ungern-Sternberg

circumstances at the time required one. Caesar had been in Gaul for his apportioned amount of years, possessed a large army and provinces which he refused to hand over, and wanted to run for the consulship in 50 B.C. *in absentia*.<sup>157</sup> Therefore, even if Caesar did not plan to use his resources against Rome, failure to comply with a senatorial decree especially with a large loyal army such as Caesar's warrants the use of an *SCU*. The vagueness of Lentulus' promise characterizes him as rash and hotheaded, which makes him appear extremely hostile to Rome. However, there is no mention of Caesar's insubordination and misconduct, and instead the narrator condemns "that last and final decree of Senatus, which had never been passed before unless for the conflagration of the city and for the despair of safety of everyone by the recklessness of miscreants" (*illud extremum atque ultimum senatus consultum, quo nisi paene in ipso urbis incendio atque in desperatione omnium salutis sceleratorum audacia numquam ante descensum est*).<sup>158</sup> No matter how much he omits from his narrative, in reality Caesar played a major part in the enactment of the *SCU*, escalating tensions towards an all-out war due to his provocative acts.

Next, Caesar the narrator turns to Pompey. After Caesar is ordered to disband his army:

Multi undique ex veteribus Pompei exercitibus **spe praemiorum atque ordinum** evocantur, multi ex duabus legionibus, quae sunt traditae a Caesare, arcessuntur. **Completur urbs et ipsum comitium tribunis, centurionibus, evocatis.**<sup>159</sup>

"Many men from everywhere were re-enlisted from the previous armies of Pompey **with the hope of rewards or rank**, and many were fetched from the two legions which were handed over from Caesar. **The city and the Comitium itself was filled with military tribunes, centurions, and re-enlisted men.**"

This is a serious concern, as troops were barred from entering the Forum, and proconsuls were not allowed to enter the city center unless they were ready to give up their proconsular *imperium*.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Suet. *Caes* 26-29; *BC* 1.2

<sup>158</sup> *BC* 1.5

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid* 1.3

<sup>160</sup> See Carter's translation of the *BC* 270-71, explanatory notes 1.2 and 1.3. This source is listed under 'Caesar' in my bibliography.

Pompey's immorality is augmented with the phrase '*spe...ordinum*,' signaling that both Pompey and his men care more about material gain than safeguarding Rome. Summoning troops into the city in such a manner suggests that Pompey and his supporters were unwilling to compromise; fighting was desired. Adding to the injustices, under Pompey's supervision:

Provinciae privatis decernuntur, duae consulares, reliquae praetoriae...[et] Consules—quod ante id tempus accidit numquam—ex urbe proficiscuntur <inauspicato> lictoresque habent in urbe et Capitolio privatim contra omnia vetustatis exempla. Tota Italia dilectus habentur, arma imperantur, pecuniae a municipiis exiguntur e fanis tolluntur. **Omnia divina humanaque iura permiscentur.**<sup>161</sup>

“Provinces were decreed to men not in office, two at the consular rank, the remaining at the praetorian rank...and the consuls—which had never occurred before this time—left the city <without auspices> and had lictors in a private capacity in the city and on the Capitoline Hill against all precedent. Conscriptions were held in all of Italy, weapons were being furnished, funds were exacted from the towns and taken from shrines. **All divine and human laws were being disturbed.**”

Again, these acts are minacious to the safety of all of Rome, and the hyperbole at the end of this passage heightens their destructiveness (*omnia...permiscentur*). However, just as before, these things are brought about because of the *SCU*, which was a reaction to Caesar's disobedience to the Senate.

Before describing his reactions, Caesar makes one final attempt to slander his enemies en masse. His enemies in the Senate (Lentulus, Scipio, and Cato) reject a proposal to allow a delegation to be sent to him detailing the Senate's wishes, which sends the narrator into a rage:

Catonem veteres inimicitiae Caesaris incitant et dolor repulsae. Lentulus **aeris alieni magnitudine et spe exercitus ac provinciarum** et regum appellandorum largitionibus **movetur** seque alterum fore Sullam inter suos gloriatur, ad quem summa imperi redeat. **Scipionem eadem spes provinciae atque exercituum impellit.**<sup>162</sup>

“the long-standing hatred of Caesar and the anger of losing his election motivated Cato. **Lentulus was motivated by the size of his debts and by the hope of an army and provinces** and by the bribes of kings desiring recognition, and boasted among them [the other senators] that he himself would be another Sulla, on whom supreme power would fall. **The same hope of provinces and**

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<sup>161</sup> *BC* 1.6

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid* 1.4

**armies drove Scipio.”**

All of these slanders, if true, are surely detriments to Rome, and would be apt complaints if Caesar was not of the same mindset. Criticizing Lentulus about his debts is extremely hypocritical, as “Caesar’s own early career was sped by means of huge debts, and it was not until the gold of Gaul became available to him that the tables could be turned.”<sup>163</sup> Additionally, by not relinquishing his army and leaving his province, Caesar is acting in the same manner as Lentulus and Scipio, but in the narrative, the condemnation of Lentulus and Scipio makes Caesar’s claim for retaining his own resources appear more merited. Another thing which might go unnoticed to his audience is the characterization in general. In the previous example where Pompey enlists men in the Comitium, it is not unreasonable to assume that even though Caesar was not actually present in the city, a source told him what happened (although the information could have been skewed). However when it comes to characterizing Lentulus, Scipio, and Cato, it is obvious that Caesar misrepresents their attitudes. They are laughably iniquitous and simple-minded. They hate Caesar, and love profiting at the expense of others. Additionally, as we will see in the following quote through the participles *deductum* and *depravatum*, we are told that they have bewitched Pompey. They are the epitome of nemeses, but it is unrealistic to portray them so nakedly ambitious. Caesar’s disobedience was a legitimate concern, and had to have been a motivation for them to dislike Caesar and restrict the leniency proposed by the more moderate senators. Of course, the rhetoric against Caesar by his opposition must have been as exaggerated, but Caesar’s warped portrayal allows him to focus less on his own injustices in an attempt (albeit a poor one) to convince the audience to do the same.

Now the question must be asked, how did Caesar respond and was it for the benefit of

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<sup>163</sup> Frederiksen 130; for ancient evidence see Plut. *Caes* 11-12 and Suet. *Caes* 18.

Rome, or was it for Caesar's own benefit? The first thing Caesar does is address his soldiers:

Omnium temporum iniurias inimicorum in se commemorat. A quibus deductum ac depravatum Pompeium queritur invidia atque obtreptatione laudis suae, cuius ipse honori et dignitati semper faverit adiutorque fuerit...[et] Hortatur, cuius imperatoris ductu VIII annis rem publicam felicissime gesserint plurimaque proelia secunda fecerint, omnem Galliam Germaniamque pacaverint, ut eius existimationem dignitatemque ab inimicis defendant.<sup>164</sup>

“he recalled the injustices of all of his past enemies against him. He complained that by them Pompey had been led astray and corrupted due to their envy and detraction of his own renown, and that he himself always supported and promoted the honor and dignity of Pompey...[and] he urged them to defend from his enemies the reputation and dignity of the man [Caesar] under whose leadership for nine years they had fought for Rome most successfully and had waged many favorable battles, and pacified all of Gaul and Germany.”

The only mention of Rome in this address is when Caesar's *dignitas* is directly affected by the injustices in Rome and he therefore shoves all of the public offenses against Rome into the background, as if they do not matter. This depiction of Caesar, although he mentions the injustices in the city, surely does not prioritize the well-being of Rome, just the well-being of himself. The first thing Caesar asks his soldiers to do is to remember what his enemies did to *him* (*omnium...commemorat*), not how they were destroying the moral fabric of the city. They are asked not to defend Rome and against the corrupted senators, but to defend Caesar's personal reputation and dignity (*ut...defendant*). And why should they refuse, when their lot has already been intertwined with Caesar's in the *BG*?<sup>165</sup> By attacking Caesar's reputation, the senators are simultaneously attacking the reputations of his followers, and Caesar exploits this in this *fabula* to justify his actions. After the Battle of Pharsalus, Plutarch writes that Caesar said, “they would have it so, they brought me to do it, because if I, Gaius Caesar, having successfully waging the greatest wars, dismissed my armies, I would have been convicted in court” (“Τοῦτο ἐβουλήθησαν, εἰς τοῦτό με ἀνάγκης ὑπηγάγοντο, ἵνα Γάϊος Καῖσαρ ὁ μεγίστους πολέμους κατορθώσας, εἰ

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<sup>164</sup> *BC* 1.7

<sup>165</sup> See page 23

προηκάμην τὰ στρατεύματα, κἄν κατεδικάσθην”).<sup>166</sup> By starting the war, Caesar made sure that his crimes against the Republic would go unpunished, and fashions this *fabula* to vilify the actions of his enemies, while fashioning his actions as necessary reactions.

Because this is the case, similar to his characterization of his enemies, the way Caesar phrases this address conforms to the pro-Roman motif he establishes in the *BG*, and in return discounts the true motive for his actions. By appealing to the wars which his men fought under him in Gaul and Germany (*cuius...pacaverint*), Caesar expresses that the disrespect shown to his own reputation is also disrespect shown to his supporters' reputations. This is the same tactic Caesar employed during his *fabula* against the Helvetians, and as a result Caesar presents a facade that he is acting in Rome's best interests. This hardly would have convinced any of Caesar's opponents that he acted lawfully, but that is not his aim. What he accomplishes is the furthering of the schism between his supporters and his opponents, while also increasing the dedication and decreasing the skepticism of those in the audience loyal to his cause. As Anke Rondholz notes, this *fabula*:

“is structured in blocks. The account starts a ‘Senate block’...followed by a ‘Caesar block’...there follows a second ‘Senate block’...and a second ‘Caesar block’...By combining similar events in blocks, the succession of action-reaction is reordered, so that the senate is presented as the acting, Caesar only as the reacting, party. By this suggestive chronology, the reader is induced to take the side of Caesar.”<sup>167</sup>

In this *fabula*, Caesar's fashioning of himself compared to his enemies appeals to the audience that he has set out to cleanse a scourge which has embedded itself in Rome. Caesar, however, makes the defining move which officially starts the Civil War, and even downplays its significance from his narrative, which I will now analyze in full.

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<sup>166</sup> Plut. *Caes* 46

<sup>167</sup> Rondholz 434-435

## The Crossing of the Rubicon

Here is how Caesar describes his crossing of the Rubicon:

Cognita militum voluntate Ariminum cum ea legione proficiscitur. Ibi que tribunos plebis qui ad eum confugerant convenit. Reliquas legiones ex hibernis evocat et subsequi iubet.<sup>168</sup>

“When the will of his soldiers became known Caesar set out for Ariminum with this [the thirteenth] legion. There he met with the tribunes who had fled to him. He summoned the remaining legions from their winter quarters and ordered them to follow.”

Caesar fails to mention the unprecedented nature of this action. At first glance, this statement seems innocuous enough. He has begun a march to a Roman town to which his supporters had fled. However, what is missing is that Caesar “had to cross the Rubicon, the river which marked the southern boundary of Cisalpine Gaul and therefore the limit of his legal authority. By crossing it with troops, he became a mutinous lawbreaker.”<sup>169</sup> This is the action which started the Civil War. Caesar has invaded Rome, using his army against his own countrymen. This is exactly why Lentulus decided to enact the *SCU* and was correct in doing so. With this action, Caesar has made Rome in her entirety responsible for his own personal grievance. By suppressing these major details, Caesar blunts the detrimental effect this act had on Rome, and instead describes the event as merely an ordinary troop movement, such as what was common in the *BG*.

What the crossing of the Rubicon lacks in Caesar, it regains in other ancient sources.

Plutarch asserts that Caesar crossed the Rubicon to defend his own standing:

πολλὰ δὲ καὶ τῶν φίλων τοῖς παροῦσιν, ὧν ἦν καὶ Πολλίων Ἀσίννιος, συνδιηπόρησεν, ἀναλογιζόμενος ἡλικῶν κακῶν ἄρξει πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις ἢ διάβασις, ὅσον τε λόγον αὐτῆς τοῖς αὐθις ἀπολείψουσι. τέλος δὲ μετὰ θυμοῦ τινος ὥσπερ ἄφεις ἑαυτὸν ἐκ τοῦ λογισμοῦ πρὸς τὸ μέλλον, καὶ τοῦτο δὴ τὸ κοινὸν τοῖς εἰς τύχας ἐμβαίνουσιν ἀπόρους καὶ τόλμας προοίμιον ὑπειπὼν, “Ἄνερρίφθω κύβος,” ὥρμησε πρὸς τὴν διάβασιν.<sup>170</sup>

“for a long time he [Caesar] started questioning his actions among those present of his friends, among whom was Asinius Pollio, considering how the crossing would begin such great evils for all

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<sup>168</sup> *BC* 1.8

<sup>169</sup> Carter 273, explanatory note 1.8.

<sup>170</sup> Plut. *Caes* 32

of mankind, and the great fame of it which they would leave for those in the future. At last, with some emotion, as if letting himself go from calculation towards a better thing, uttering the common saying for those men who are embarking into difficult fortunes and a daring undertaking 'let the die be cast,' hastened to cross the river."

Although Plutarch was not alive during this *fabula*, the fact that Caesar omits this crucial part that crossing the Rubicon was invading Rome means that he must have believed it to be true, or else there would be no reason for the omission. Caesar's version of the *fabula*, when compared to Plutarch's, flawlessly exhibits Caesar's manipulation of the Commentary genre. Because he presents his narrative in this genre, Caesar is not expected to provide any of the nuances when crossing the Rubicon, which eliminates the meaning of the event. It is up to Caesar's audience then (who would have known about the event anyway) to draw their own conclusions.

Technically, Caesar is not lying when he presents his account. He did march towards Ariminum after his argument with the Senate. The other nuances behind the *fabula* are completely up to the narrator to hand over, and by not doing so, Caesar is making an explicit statement that retaining these details would be a detriment to his narrative. Appian also stresses Caesar's disregard for Rome:

καὶ πρὸς τοὺς παρόντας εἶπεν ἀνενεγκών· “ἢ μὲν ἐπίσχεσις, ᾧ φίλοι, τῆσδε τῆς διαβάσεως ἐμοὶ κακῶν ἄρξει, ἢ δὲ διάβασις πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις.” καὶ εἰπὼν οἷά τις ἔνθους ἐπέρα σὺν ὀρμῇ, τὸ κοινὸν τόδε ἐπειπών· “ὁ κύβος ἀνερρίφθω.”<sup>171</sup>

“restoring himself he addressed those present: “My friends, the hindering of this crossing will bring about evils for me, but the crossing will bring about evils for all of mankind.” And speaking such things, he crossed in a rush as if he was possessed, speaking the common saying “let the die be cast.”

Appian is even more explicit than Plutarch concerning the negligence Caesar shows Rome (ἢ... ἀνθρώποις). Caesar understands that he is committing an unprecedented grievance against Rome, but if he were to acknowledge it, his appearance of the ideal pro-Roman statesman would

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<sup>171</sup> App. BC 2.35

disintegrate. Recognizing that crossing meant evil for all of mankind, if Caesar actually believed he was a defender of Rome, he would have sacrificed himself for the welfare of the state, not treasonously marched on his native land.

Additionally, after meticulous analysis from a plethora of ancient sources, Rondholz concludes that:

“according to the sources which deviate at least partly from Caesar’s account, the emperor gave a speech to his troops in Ariminum, and the embassies had reached him after several stops in advance, namely after the crossing of the Rubicon.”<sup>172</sup>

The altering of the timeline, mainly giving his speech before crossing the Rubicon instead of afterwards, allows Caesar to present his speech to his troops as a justification for entering Rome. He is perceived to be more meticulous about his actions and can prove to his audience that he considerably meditated on the idea. If the information which Rondholz collates is true, Caesar was clever to alter it this way. If he were to forego manipulating the chronology, Caesar would be invading Rome without expressing his motives to his soldiers. At that point, his soldiers would be in too deep, without realizing the reasoning for this action. In this light, Caesar would be painted as an autocrat, the exact opposite of his ideal portrayal of himself. By placing his speech before the crossing of the Rubicon, we are shown that his soldiers sympathized with the action and its rationale, which convinces us that we should be too. The omission of the geographical divide of his province with that of Rome, coupled with the loose chronology of the *fabula*, is an integral component of Caesar’s pro-Roman fashioning of himself.

### **The Defection and Characterization of Labienus**

Similar to the omission of many important details of the crossing of the Rubicon, Caesar never discusses in great detail that Labienus, his second-in-command during the Gaulic War,

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<sup>172</sup> Rondholz 434-435; The ancient sources Rondholz draws from are: Dio 41.4; Suet. *Caes* 31-3; Plut. *Caes* 32; App. *BC* 2.5-6

defected to Pompey. The first mention of Labienus is in 1.15, after Caesar had already begun taking the coastal cities of eastern Italy, and he only details that “even legates from Cingulum, which was **a town Labienus had established and had built from his own expenses, came to him [Caesar]** and promised that they would do most eagerly anything which he ordered them to do” (*Etiam Cingulo, quod oppidum Labienus constituerat suaque pecunia exaedificaverat, ad eum legati veniunt quaeque imperaverit se cupidissime facturos pollicentur*).<sup>173</sup> Caesar gives no explanation for why Labienus deserts to Pompey because that explanation would chide Caesar. And how could it not? As is obvious from his prior appearances in Caesar’s *Commentarii*, Labienus was a crucial member of Caesar’s army, and was personally responsible for key victories over many Gaulic tribes.<sup>174</sup> For Caesar to lose a general of this caliber would be a real blow, and would present the question of why it happened. Similar to the omittance of the Rubicon, Caesar conveniently reverts back to the conventions of the Commentary genre for this *fabula*, as Labienus’ desertion is damaging to Caesar’s reputation. As Cynthia Damon points out:

“Labienus’ desertion must have cost Caesar something or Pompeian Cicero would not have expressed himself so enthusiastically upon hearing of it: ‘I call Labienus a hero,’ he says on 23 January 49, ‘it is the finest political action we have seen for a long while. If he has achieved nothing else, he has made Caesar smart.’ Smarting or not, Caesar made no comment.”<sup>175</sup>

Where she gets it wrong is when she claims that “nothing could be less demonstrative, less emotional” than Labienus’ mention in the beginning of the *BC*.<sup>176</sup> Caesar has made a conscious choice to leave Labienus’ defection out in order to avoid humiliation. Instead, he tacitly hints that Labienus was expendable, as he distinguishes that Cingulum supported Caesar, even though it was a town which Labienus had founded (*quod...veniunt*). The emotion which Damon dismisses is

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<sup>173</sup> *BC* 1.15

<sup>174</sup> See pages 24-25

<sup>175</sup> Damon 186

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid*

there through Caesar's choice to omit it, and by omitting it, Caesar must have believed he was in the wrong somehow, or was unable to spin the reason for Labienus' defection in his favor. He certainly tailors his narrative to vilify Pompey, who was once a dear friend and was even married to his daughter. So why could Caesar characterize Pompey in this fashion, but not Labienus? Dio gives us the answer:

**θαυμάσειε μὲν οὖν ἂν τις ὅτι ἐξ τὰ πρῶτα ὑπὸ τοῦ Καίσαρος ἀεί ποτε τιμηθεῖς, ὥστε καὶ πάντων τῶν ὑπὲρ τὰς Ἄλπεις στρατοπέδων, ὁπότε ἐκεῖνος ἐν τῇ Ἰταλίᾳ εἶη, ἄρχειν, ἐποίησε τοῦτο· αἴτιον δὲ ὅτι αὐτός τε καὶ πλοῦτον καὶ δόξαν περιβαλόμενος ὀγκηρότερον τῆς ἡγεμονίας διάγειν ἤρξατο, καὶ ὁ Καῖσαρ παρισούμενόν οἱ αὐτὸν ἰδὼν οὐκέθ' ὁμοίως ἠγάπα. τὴν τε οὖν μεταβολὴν μὴ φέρων, καὶ φοβηθεὶς ἅμα μὴ πάθῃ τι, μετέστη.<sup>177</sup>**

“**one would be surprised that after having always been highly honored by Caesar**, and having been the commander of all of the men beyond the Alps whenever Caesar was in Italy, he defected. The cause was that when Labienus obtained wealth and fame he began to conduct himself more haughtily than his authority permitted, and **Caesar, seeing that Labienus was equaling himself to Caesar, was likewise no longer fond of him.** And not able to bear this change, and at the same time afraid of being harmed, Labienus went over to Pompey's side.”

However, Caesar would never include such a story because it would be against his pro-Roman persona he manufactures throughout his *Commentarii*. He is fashioned not as a benefactor of Rome, but as a benefactor of himself (ὁ Καῖσαρ...ἠγάπα). While it was extremely important for the longevity of a Roman statesman to possess *auctoritas*, in the end, that *auctoritas* is earned through continual and exceptional service to the Roman state, not to an individual Roman.<sup>178</sup> Caesar is absurdly petty and irrational in Dio's account, and whatever the reason for the defection, it would have been difficult for Caesar to spin his pro-Roman motif with the loss of such an important asset, especially since we have seen him act on his own behalf multiple times throughout prior *fabulae*.<sup>179</sup> It is then extremely tactical of Caesar to overlook the reasoning behind Labienus' defection. It not only rids Caesar of seeming narcissistically reckless, but it also

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<sup>177</sup> Dio 41.4

<sup>178</sup> Francese 115

<sup>179</sup> It is Caesar's entire rationale for the Civil War in the first place.

destroys the notion that it would not be entirely unreasonable for other supporters of Caesar to defect, since Labienus, a celebrated general who was honored by Caesar, could (θαυμάσειε... τιμηθείς). Additionally, the masking of the defection removes the notion that Labienus defected with good intentions, as Cicero mentions that Labienus “did not want to be a comrade of his crime” (*socius sceleris esse noluit*).<sup>180</sup> As Damon concludes, “this is not the writing of an indifferent or impartial reporter, but an eminently practical selection and arrangement of incidents to achieve an utterly damning whole.”<sup>181</sup>

This omission is even more confusing when Caesar discusses another defection later in the *BC* during the Battle of Dyrrachium.<sup>182</sup> Before Caesar is defeated, we are told that two Allobroges, who held considerable power in Caesar’s army, had defected to Pompey after they were caught embezzling money meant for the cavalry.<sup>183</sup> After discussing the defection, the narrator shares an interesting piece of information:

Nam ante id tempus nemo aut miles aut eques a Caesare ad Pompeium transierat, cum paene cotidie a Pompeio ad Caesarem perfugerent.<sup>184</sup>

“Before that time no one, either a soldier or horseman, had defected from Caesar to Pompey, although almost everyday men defected to Caesar from Pompey.”

The word ‘*nemo*’ is significant because it is undeniably a lie. Caesar is not saying that no infantry or cavalryman in his army had ever defected, but that no one under his command had, or else Caesar would have clarified this distinction by pairing the adjective ‘*nullus*’ with the two nouns (*miles* and *eques*). Additionally, even if we decide that ‘*nemo*’ only entails common soldiers and

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<sup>180</sup> Cic. *Fam* 16.12.4

<sup>181</sup> Damon 188. Damon not only discusses Labienus’ introduction in the *BC*, but the other instances where he is mentioned, such as at the Apsus River and Dyrrachium. I have decided to pass over these other instances, as Damon does a good job analyzing them, and it would be redundant to include them in this paper. Her analysis occurs from 186-188.

<sup>182</sup> I discuss Caesar’s narratology about the aftermath of the battle later in this paper. I bring up this episode now because it elaborates on the absence of Labienus’ defection.

<sup>183</sup> *BC* 3.59-60

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid* 3.61

cavalrymen, the two Allobroges who had defected were not rank and file soldiers. They had considerable influence and held commanding positions, just like Labienus. Therefore, Caesar's use of the word '*nemo*' is undeniably misleading. Additionally, by comparing the unprecedented and bizarre nature of defections to Pompey's army (*a...transierat*) to the frequent nature of defections to his own army (*paene...perfugerent*), Caesar characterizes himself as the faultless moral pole of the war, or else the direction of the defections would shift to favor Pompey rather than Caesar.

We are finally told that Labienus deserted to Pompey in 3.71, after Caesar lost at Dyrrachium and some of Caesar's troops were handed to Labienus after fleeing from the battle. Although it is obvious to an attentive eye, it is never explicitly stated until this moment. So why did Caesar wait until the last book of the *BC* to include it? It is because at this moment, Labienus has not only betrayed Caesar, but the Roman people as well:

At Labienus, cum ab eo impetravisset ut sibi captivos tradi iuberet, omnes reductos—ostentationis, ut videbatur, causa quo maior **perfugae** fides haberetur—commilitones appellans et magna verborum contumelia interrogans solerentne veterani milites fugere, in omnium conspectu interfecit.<sup>185</sup>

“But Labienus, when he had obtained from him [Pompey] to order the captives to be handed over to him, calling all of them ‘fellow soldiers’—for the purpose, so it seems, of putting on a display so that there would be more confidence **for himself, a deserter**—and asking them in a very insulting way whether veteran soldiers were accustomed to flight, he killed them in front of everyone.”

Caesar is able mention the desertion at this moment in his narrative because Labienus is performing an injustice against ordinary Roman soldiers. Although they fought for Caesar, they are still Roman citizens, and even Caesar showed a large amount of clemency for defeated Roman soldiers who fought for Pompey. By waiting until this very moment to label Labienus as a deserter (*perfugae*), Caesar has removed any sympathy from his intended audience for Labienus, as not

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid 3.71

even Caesar was wicked enough to publicly execute blameless soldiers.<sup>186</sup> Additionally, Caesar broadcasts Labienus' severe hypocrisy in this passage, as it is unfair for Labienus to criticize Caesar's men when Labienus himself fled from Caesar years prior.

What Caesar is trying to accomplish, albeit poorly, is to remove from his audience's memory that Labienus started as a Caesarian by debasing him (as well as the two Allobroges) as an expendable and insignificant commodity. This is why Labienus is rarely mentioned, and when he is mentioned, is characterized as "cruel and unreliable."<sup>187</sup>

### **The Mutiny at Placentia and its Conscious Omission**

After Pompey was narrowly able to escape Caesar's army at Brundisium, Caesar begins campaigning in Spain against the Pompeians Lucius Afranius, Marcus Petreius, and Marcus Terentius Varro. Once Caesar had successfully defeated them, his final task in Spain was to capture the city of Massilia (modern day Marseilles), which he accomplishes after a long siege. At this point, Caesar seems to be in complete control of the war, as everything is emerging positively for him. We are told that after the successful siege of Massilia, Caesar "left two legions there for protection, and sent the remaining legions into Italy. He himself set out for the city" (*duas ibi legiones praesidio relinquit, ceteras in Italiam mittit. Ipse ad urbem proficiscitur*).<sup>188</sup> At first glance, these movements seem inconspicuous enough. There is nothing much to verify here, as there is nothing genuinely abnormal with returning to Rome after Caesar gained control of Spain. It makes logical sense, as the consular elections for the following year were being held, and Caesar was a candidate.<sup>189</sup> However, as Balsdon notes, in the narrative Caesar's "success followed

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<sup>186</sup> See the next case study concerning the mutiny at Placentia. Caesar wants his audience to believe he is perfectly magnanimous, and is one of the reasons why he omits the mutiny from his narrative, as it would contradict this critique of Labienus.

<sup>187</sup> Damon 188

<sup>188</sup> *BC* 2.22

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid* 3.1. Caesar waits to talk about his time in Rome after completing the second book, which he concludes with Curio's defeat in Africa.

success without interruption. So, at least, a reader of the *Bellum Civile* would judge...what Caesar does not mention is that before he went to Rome he had to go to Placentia in the Cisalpina, and he had to go to Placentia because Legion IX, one of his best and oldest legions, had mutinied.”<sup>190</sup>

Appian indicates that:

στρατιὰ Καίσαρος ἄλλη περὶ Πλακεντίαν στασιάσασα τῶν ἀρχόντων κατεβόησεν, ὡς ἔν τε τῇ στρατείᾳ βραδύνοντες καὶ τὰς πέντε μνᾶς οὐ λαβόντες, ἦν τινα δωρεὰν αὐτοῖς ὁ Καῖσαρ ἔτι περὶ Βρεντέσιον ὑπέσχητο.<sup>191</sup>

“One of Caesar’s armies near Placentia once they had mutinied, cried out to their officers because they were keeping the army [in the war] and were not giving them the five minae which Caesar had promised as a donative still near Brundisium.”

This is a serious concern for Caesar, and is a more serious concern than the mutiny he subdued during the Gallic War.<sup>192</sup> It is different from a mutiny when facing against a foreign enemy, as in that case, the mutineers are expressing their disapproval of a state-sponsored general and war, and are acting against the state. However, in this scenario, the mutineers are not expressing their disapproval with Rome, but with Caesar and his cause. This is disastrous for Caesar, who needs his soldiers to be wholeheartedly committed to his cause, as he is fighting an indecorous war against other Romans. The mere thought of mutiny signals that the war is reprehensible and deleterious to the health of the Republic, and had to have been a reason for its omittance by Caesar.

The mutiny is even worse for Caesar’s image when we discover that Caesar said to the ninth legion that:

“μαρτυράμενος οὖν ἑμαυτὸν τῆς ἐς ὑμᾶς μέχρι δεῦρο φιλοτιμίας χρήσομαι τῷ πατρίῳ νόμῳ καὶ τοῦ ἐνάτου τέλους, ἐπειδὴ μάλιστα τῆς στάσεως κατήρξε, τὸ δέκατον διακληρώσω θανεῖν.”<sup>193</sup>

“Calling myself as a witness to my munificence up until this point for all of you, I will utilize the

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<sup>190</sup> Balsdon 21

<sup>191</sup> Appian *BC* 2.47. The mutiny is also attested in Suet. *Caes* 69 and Dio 41.26-35.

<sup>192</sup> See page 29

<sup>193</sup> Appian *BC* 2.47

law of our country and decimate the ninth legion, since it chiefly began the mutiny.’”

Decimation “was a rarely applied form of punishment [and] considered to be very severe, was applied in case of serious misdemeanors of the entire unit such as disobedience or backing away from the enemy.”<sup>194</sup> This is not the reaction a general should have when he is pinning his men against their own brethren. Although Caesar eventually yields to a milder punishment by only decimating the 120 ringleaders, Caesar still adopts an abnormal form of punishment.<sup>195</sup> The removal of this mutiny from his narrative attempts to accomplish Caesar’s aim of further normalizing the war, since it is already extremely taboo from the start. The difference between reporting on the mutiny which occurred at Vesontio and this mutiny is that the mutiny at Vesontio concerned fear of the enemy, whereas this mutiny at Placentia concerned indignation. Therefore, it was impossible for Caesar to manipulate this mutiny in his favor, hence the omission. He had to use severe punishment in order to keep his legion obedient (a legion which had been one of his most reliable up until this point), and could not attribute its genesis to an external influence. At Vesontio, Caesar was able to overcome the fears of his soldiers by exercising his oratorical ability and unsurpassed leadership, but at Placentia, Caesar had to execute his own men to prove his point. This is not admirable, although it did pacify the mutiny, and would have been adverse to Caesar’s desired image as a leader beloved by his men if it had been kept in his narrative.

### **Caesar’s Defeat at Dyrrachium**

Once Caesar is elected consul in 48 BC for the second time, he sets out across the Adriatic towards Epirus to pursue Pompey, who fled there the previous year. An unorthodox battle near the city of Dyrrachium ensued after a stalemate which lasted months, with Pompey securing the victory. It is not my priority to analyze the intricacies of the battle, but to discuss how Caesar

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<sup>194</sup> Le Bohec

<sup>195</sup> Appian *BC* 2.47

handles and discusses this defeat, as it is the first major battle in the *BC* which Caesar himself loses, and would have been a major turning point in the war had Caesar not bounced back with a decisive victory at Pharsalus.<sup>196</sup> After Caesar's fortifications have been completely overrun, the narrator gives his audience a distorted perspective of the outcome:

His tantis malis haec subsidia succurrebant quo minus omnis deleteretur exercitus, **quod Pompeius insidias timens—credo** quod haec praeter spem acciderant eius qui paulo ante ex castris fugientes suos conspexerat—**munitionibus appropinquare aliquamdiu non audebat** equitesque eius angustiis [portis] atque iis a Caesaris militibus occupatis ad insequendum tardabantur. **Ita parvae res magnum in utramque partem momentum habuerunt. Munitiones enim a castris ad flumen perductae expugnatis iam castris Pompei prope iam expeditam Caesaris victoriam interpellaverunt.** Eadem res celeritate insequentium tardata nostris salutem attulit.<sup>197</sup>

“In such bad circumstances, these were the factors which helped minimize the destruction of the entire army: **that Pompey fearing an ambush, for quite a long time did not dare to approach our fortifications—I think** because these events had happened contrary to the expectation of someone who a little while before saw his own men fleeing from their camp—and his cavalrymen were slowed in their pursuit by the narrow passes which were occupied by Caesar's soldiers. **Such trivial matters shifted the momentum greatly for both sides. For the fortifications having been extended from our camp to the river had interrupted Caesar's victory which he had almost obtained by capturing Pompey's camp.** The same thing brought safety to our men by slowing the quickness of their pursuers.”

Instead of admitting that Caesar was out-generaled, the narrator scrutinizes Pompey's movements, almost as if he is schooling Pompey on how to be a better general and win more convincingly.

This denigration takes the sting out of the defeat for Caesar, and although Pompey was the victor at Dyrrachium, this passage reads like at the very least, the outcome was a draw, because the audience is led to believe that Caesar would have attacked his own fortifications sooner if he was Pompey, or else there would be no reason to make the criticism in the first place. Effectively, Pompey no longer defeated Caesar, and is not even worth Caesar's time. Instead, the narrator suggests that only Caesar himself is capable of defeating Caesar and that this defeat was a fluke.

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<sup>196</sup> While Curio did lose the African theatre, Caesar was not present, and therefore should not be attributed with the defeat, unless we ascribe the defeat to Curio's selection as the commander of the forces in Africa, which I believe is unwarranted.

<sup>197</sup> *BC* 3.70

With this characterization, who would not wish to side with Caesar? Even though he was defeated, Caesar portrays the outcome as a draw because Pompey could not push his advantage due to his inferior generalship.

Although ubiquitous due to the genre, this section of the *fabula* conveys the concept of focalization and the effects it has on an audience. As Bal says, “focalization is the relationship between the vision, the agent that sees, and that which is seen.”<sup>198</sup> Therefore, how the agent, or focalizer, presents the *fabula*, is how the audience perceives it. With this knowledge, it is easy to see how Caesar the narrator manipulates this passage in such a way to persuade his audience that his defeat at Dyrrachium was not as severe as he reports. Besides the aforementioned analysis of Pompey’s reaction which the narrator provides, there are three minute instances where the narrator diminishes the defeat of the battle. The first instance is with the word ‘*credo*’ (‘I believe’). As mentioned already, Caesar almost always employs the third person when referring to himself, as it allows him to distance himself from the events and the characters.<sup>199</sup> However, this is one of the rare occurrences in his *Commentarii* where Caesar the narrator allows Caesar the general to leak into the narrative. The effect is that the audience is personally taught a lesson in military tactics by one of the most successful generals, instead of merely being told about the actions which transpired by an distant narrator. Luca Grillo agrees because Caesar:

“exploits his position of authority to tarnish Pompey and vindicate Caesar...readers are left with a colored impression: the only one who behaved properly on the battlefield is Caesar himself. As for the narrator, by providing both a vivid description of the face of battle and a meaningful reconstruction of the events that determined its outcome, he acts as a good historian and as an eyewitness at once.”<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Bal 135. Bal elaborates that “this relationship is a component of the content of the narrative text: A says that B sees what C is doing...Because the definition of focalization refers to a relationship, each pole of that relationship, the subject and the object of focalization, must be studied separately. The subject of focalization, the focalizer, is the point from which the elements are viewed” (135).

<sup>199</sup> See pages 16-17

<sup>200</sup> Grillo 2011, 259

This in turn convinces us that the criticisms are all the more warranted and would have led to an enhanced defeat, if Pompey had done them.

The second instance is the sentence “such trivial matters shifted the momentum greatly for both sides” (*Ita...habuerunt*). With this sentence, we are led to picture that either army could have won, even though Pompey had superior intelligence due to the two previously mentioned Allobroges who had defected to his side. Additionally, this sentence depicts that at one point, Caesar was decisively winning the battle, and that the outcome was contrary to the expected result. However, this is not the case, and Caesar contradicts this claim earlier in the *fabula* when describing the events of the battle. At 3.63 we are told that due to faulty fortifications, Pompey’s army was able to drive Caesar’s men from the fortifications into flight. At 3.64 every attempted reinforcement was sent in vain, and every centurion in the first cohort except for one had been killed. Caesar begins 3.65 by mentioning that “at that time, the Pompeians were approaching Marcellinus’ camp after slaughtering a great portion of our men, and bringing an extraordinary amount of fear for the remaining cohorts” (*Iamque Pompeiani magna caede nostrorum castris Marcellini appropinquabant non mediocri terrore illato reliquis cohortibus*).<sup>201</sup> The culmination is at 3.69:

Sinistro cornu milites cum ex vallo Pompeium adesse et suos fugere cernerent, veriti ne angustiis intercluderentur cum extra et intus hostem haberent, eodem quo venerant receptu sibi consulebant. Omniaque erant tumultus timoris fugae plena, adeo ut cum Caesar signa fugientium manu prenderet et consistere iuberet alii [dimissis equis] eundem cursum confugerent, alii ex metu etiam signa dimitterent, neque quisquam omnino consisteret.<sup>202</sup>

“When the soldiers on the left wing saw from the rampart that Pompey had arrived and that their own men were fleeing, fearing that they would be cut off in a narrow space since they had the enemy inside and outside them, they decided for themselves to retreat in the same direction they had come. Everywhere was full of panic, fear, and flight to such a degree that although Caesar seized the standards of those fleeing with his hand and ordered them to stand still, some, abandoning their horses, fled in the same direction, others because of their fear even put down the

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<sup>201</sup> *BC* 3.65

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid* 3.69

standards, and no one stood still at all.”

Although the battle is certainly a defeat, Caesar is the only one standing his ground. Caesar has not given up hope, and this passage shows that he believes he could have changed the outcome, if his soldiers had shared the same confidence he possessed and held their ground with their commander. Caesar proves to his audience that Pompey won because of unfortunate circumstances, and uses this passage as an example of the adversity he has to overcome in order to eventually triumph. This *fabula* is a testament to Caesar’s entire position throughout the war, as he claims he was treated unfairly and from the beginning fashioned his narrative to seem like he was ubiquitously fighting an uphill battle.

The last instance where Caesar’s crafty focalization is employed is when he blames his defective fortifications for the defeat (*munitiones...interpellaverunt*). The grievance is not with his excuse (although it is telling that Caesar does not blame himself for not recognizing the deficiency the fortifications presented), but with the noun pair ‘*Caesaris victoriam*’ (Caesar’s victory). Going along with my last point, the use of this noun pair relates that Caesar believed he had the upper hand, and that victory was stolen from him. As already discussed, this is not the case, and by writing ‘*Caesaris victoriam interpellaverunt*’ instead of ‘*Caesaris cladem iuverunt*’ or ‘*Pompei victoriam creverunt*’ Caesar is carefully coloring the *fabula* to convey to his audience that Pompey got lucky, especially since in 3.68, Caesar believes that “Fortune, which is extremely powerful in other things but is especially powerful in war, produces great changes by slight disturbances, as occurred then” (*Fortuna, quae plurimum potest cum in reliquis rebus tum praecipue in bello, parvis momentis magnas rerum commutationes efficit, ut tum accidit*).<sup>203</sup> Through this lens, victory was just out of reach, and was snatched away by the unescapable force of fortune, although

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid 3.68

in reality, Caesar never held the upper hand.

Next Caesar transitions to the Pompeians by discussing their idiosyncrasies in reaction to their victory, which in turn further ameliorates the unexpected result of the battle for Caesar in this *fabula*.<sup>204</sup> Not only does Caesar criticize Pompey's failure to win the battle in a more convincing fashion, but he also berates the Pompeians as a whole for their newly manifested confidence after the battle:

His rebus **tantum fiduciae ac spiritus Pompeianis accessit ut non de ratione belli cogitent sed vicisse iam sibi viderentur**...Non ad haec addebant: non ex concursu aciei facto, non proelio dimicatum...Sed proinde ac si virtute vicissent **neque ulla commutatio rerum posset accidere** per orbem terrarum fama ac litteris victoriam eius diei concelebrabant.<sup>205</sup>

“From these matters **so much confidence and pride came to the Pompeians that they did not think about the nature of the battle but were perceiving that they had already been victorious**...Nor were they admitting that the battle was not fought from an organized attack of a battle-line, nor in regular battle...But just as if they had won by their own courage and **as if no reversal of conditions could happen**, they celebrated by word of mouth and letters the day's victory throughout the entire world.”

In this account, the Pompeians are entirely ignorant about what a victory entails, and are so blinded by their success, that they are unable to recognize that they got lucky (*tantum...viderentur*), or even capitalize on the advantage the victory offered them. They are also depicted as foolish for exuding confidence and believing that victory would forever be on their side (*neque...accidere*). There is a sharp contrast between the Pompeians' reaction to the battle in this chapter, and Caesar's in the next chapter, as “Caesar thought that his entire plan for the war ought to be changed because he had been deterred from his previous plans” (*Caesar a superioribus consiliis depulsus omnem sibi commutandam belli rationem existimavit*).<sup>206</sup> Caesar is more meticulous in defeat than Pompey is in victory, and focuses on future encounters instead of lingering on a past one. Thus, Caesar the

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<sup>204</sup> Already discussed is Labienus' actions. See page 62.

<sup>205</sup> *BC* 3.72

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid* 3.73

narrator constructs himself as the more experienced general, as he learns from his defeat, whereas Pompey soaks in his glory. In return, although he did lose at Dyrrachium, Caesar's audience is less inclined to favor Pompey, as he proves that one lost battle has no effect on his generalship, as "unpredictable changes prevented Caesar from success, but only his own mistakes prevented Pompey from transforming an advantageous skirmish into a decisive victory."<sup>207</sup>

Although Caesar shifts the focus from the loss to Pompey's inabilities as a general in his account, Plutarch has a somewhat more culpable depiction of the battle for Caesar:

Πομπηίου γὰρ προσβάλλοντος οὐδεὶς ἔμεινεν...Καῖσαρ δὲ ὑπαντιάζων ἐπειρᾶτο μὲν ἀναστρέφειν τοὺς φεύγοντας, ἐπέβαινε δὲ οὐδέν, ἀλλ' ἐπιλαμβανομένου τῶν σημείων ἀπερρίπτουν οἱ κομίζοντες, ὥστε δύο καὶ τριάκοντα λαβεῖν τοὺς πολεμίους. αὐτὸς δὲ παρὰ μικρὸν ἦλθεν ἀποθανεῖν...εἶπεν ἄρα πρὸς τοὺς φίλους ἀπιὼν ὁ Καῖσαρ, "Σήμερον ἂν ἡ νίκη παρὰ τοῖς πολεμίοις ἦν, εἰ τὸν νικῶντα εἶχον." αὐτὸς δὲ παρελθὼν εἰς τὴν σκηνὴν καὶ κατακλιθεὶς νύκτα πασῶν ἐκείνην ἀνιαροτάτην διήγαγεν ἐν ἀπόροις λογισμοῖς, ὡς κακῶς ἐστρατηγηκῶς.<sup>208</sup>

"For when Pompey attacked, none of Caesar's men stood against him...And Caesar encountering those fleeing, attempted to rally them, but accomplished nothing, and when he tried to take possession of the standards, the standard-bearers threw them away, **so that the enemy took thirty-two of them.** And Caesar himself came extremely close to dying...Caesar leaving his friends said, 'Today victory was close for the enemy, if they possessed a victorious general.' **And having gone away into his tent and lying down, he himself spent that night, most troublesome of all, in difficult recollection that he was a terrible general.**"

In this version, although Pompey still does not seize the initiative, we are given an inside look into Caesar's inner emotions about the battle. Instead of a Caesar who is determined to change his plans for the entire war, a Caesar who adapts and shakes off tough losses, we see a self-deprecating Caesar, who knows he was bested by an inferior commander (*αὐτὸς...ἐστρατηγηκῶς*). This is heightened when, unlike Caesar, who fails to mention a concrete number, Plutarch explicitly notes that thirty-two standards were taken by Pompey's army, which, even losing one, was a serious military disgrace. If Caesar included this part of his psychology in his *fabula*, his audience would

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<sup>207</sup> Grillo 2011, 259

<sup>208</sup> Plut. *Caes* 39

be less compelled to revere him as the paragon of the Roman general. After all, if Caesar himself had doubts about his generalship, how could his audience not doubt his generalship as well?

### Viewpoints at Pharsalus

Before concluding this paper, I want to discuss the differences between the beliefs of Caesar and his men, with those of Pompey's surrounding the Battle of Pharsalus. There are four direct speeches in Caesar's Pharsalus *fabula* (two from Caesarians and two from Pompeians) which are exemplary for this purpose. The first is from Caesar himself, and is the only instance in his *Commentarii* that Caesar the character speaks directly.<sup>209</sup> After succeeding in his plan of marching everyday in order to induce Pompey to give battle away from his superior position,<sup>210</sup> Caesar addresses his soldiers:

“Differendum est” inquit “iter in praesentia nobis et de proelio cogitandum, sicut semper depoposcimus. Animo sumus ad dimicandum parati. Non facile occasionem postea reperiemus.”<sup>211</sup>

“He said ‘our march must be delayed right now and we must think about battle, just as we have always requested. We are mentally prepared for fighting. We will not easily come across the opportunity later.’”

This speech is brief and simple because Caesar is not demoralized by his past defeat at Dyrrachium. He is determined to fight for his cause, which is an outstanding and praiseworthy quality of a general. Caesar does not overconfidently predict the outcome of the battle, but only asserts that there is a necessity to fight in order to reclaim control over the war. This matter-of-fact tone paints Caesar as a diligent individual and helps him appear determined to end the war for the sake of the prosperity and longevity of Rome.

Immediately after Caesar the character speaks, Caesar the narrator transitions to the camp of Pompey, where we get Pompey's reaction to the coming events. In his speech to his men,

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<sup>209</sup> Grillo 2018, 124

<sup>210</sup> *BC* 3.85

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid*

Pompey claims that:

“Persuasi equitibus nostris, idque mihi facturos confirmaverunt, ut cum propius sit accessum, dextrum Caesaris cornu ab latere aperto aggredierentur et circumventa ab tergo acie prius perturbatum exercitum pellerent quam a nobis telum in hostem iaceretur. Ita sine periculo legionum et paene sine vulnere bellum conficiemus. Id autem difficile non est cum tantum equitatu valeamus.”<sup>212</sup>

“I have persuaded our cavalry, and they have confirmed that they will do this for me, that when the approach is closer, to attack Caesar’s right wing on its open flank and once his line is surrounded from the back, to hurl his army into confusion before a weapon is thrown by us at the enemy. In this way we will complete the war without danger to our legions and nearly without a wound. Moreover this is not difficult since we are so strong in cavalry.”

Unlike Caesar’s preparation for the battle, Pompey’s expectations for the battle are supercilious and hubristic, and this attitude coincides with Pompey’s lack of knowledge concerning his victory at Dyrrachium. Pompey’s speech is also more history-like than Caesar’s, which is more straightforward and Commentary-like. Additionally, by placing Pompey’s speech directly after his own, Caesar further augments the clear difference that he (as the narrator) wants his audience to recognize: that Pompey is unaware how victories are acquired, whereas Caesar lets his actions speak for themselves. In this light, Pompey also seems like a fool, especially since Caesar’s audience would have known the outcome of the battle and the war before actually hearing his *Commentarii*. Thus, Pompey’s speech draws a distinction between the two generals. Caesar seems to be the only general who could effectively lead an army, and should be followed unequivocally by the Roman people.

This notion is further enhanced when looking at the next direct speech in the Pharsalus *fabula*, spoken by Crastinus, a re-enlisted veteran in Caesar’s army. Similar to the loyalty expressed in the *BG*, Crastinus, invigorated by his general, exhorts the surrounding men:

“Sequimini me,” inquit “manipulares mei qui fuistis, et vestro imperatori quam constituistis operam date. Vnum hoc proelium superest. Quo confecto et ille suam dignitatem et **nos nostram libertatem recuperabimus.**” Simul respiciens Caesarem “Faciam” inquit “hodie,

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid 3.86

imperator, ut **aut vivo mihi aut mortuo** gratias agas.”<sup>213</sup>

“He said ‘follow me, you who were my comrades, and give to your commander the service which you determined to do. This is the one battle remaining. After its completion Caesar will regain his own dignity and **we will regain our freedom.**’ At the same time, looking at Caesar, he said ‘I will do things today, commander, that you will thank me for, **whether I live or die.**’”

At first glance, this speech might seem similar to that of Pompey’s. Crastinus seems incredibly sure that Caesar’s army will crush the enemy, with the result being that the war would end right then and there. In Caesar’s defence, in this scenario, he is reporting something which one of his soldier’s said, not something which the rival commander supposedly said. Instead, Caesar is able to transfer that hubris onto one of his men. However, because Crastinus is a virtuous soldier, laying it all on the line for a commander he adores (*aut...mortuo*) and a cause which will free the Roman people (*nos...recuperabimus*), that hubris is subverted, whereas Pompey’s is magnified because of his previous hubristic representations. Crastinus then is perfect in exemplifying how the Roman people are, and always should be, loyal to Caesar and his cause, and by fashioning the speech to be more dramatic, Caesar is able to conjure up these intense emotions in his audience.

The antithesis of Crastinus and the virtuous Roman (Caesarian) citizen then, is presented a few chapters prior, with the speech of the renegade Labienus. Labienus downplays the strength of Caesar’s army, disparaging their previous successes and widespread prestige in warfare:

“Noli” inquit “existimare, Pompei, hunc esse exercitum qui Galliam Germaniamque devicerit. Omnibus interfui proeliis neque temere incognitam rem pronuntio. Perexigua pars illius exercitus superest”...Haec cum dixisset iuravit se nisi victorem in castra non reversurum reliquosque ut idem facerent hortatus est. Hoc laudans Pompeius idem iuravit. Nec vero ex reliquis fuit quisquam qui iurare dubitaret.<sup>214</sup>

“He said ‘do not think, Pompey, that this is the army which conquered Gaul and Germany. I took part in all of the battles, and I am not rashly saying a matter unfamiliar to me. A very small part of that army remains’...After Labienus had said these words he swore that he would not return to the camp unless as a victor, and urged the others to do the same. Praising this Pompey swore the same, and there was no one from the others who hesitated to swear this oath.”

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid 3.91

<sup>214</sup> Ibid 3.87

Labienus is arrogant, and disregards his past interactions serving under Caesar. This speech, just like Pompey's own, adds to the portrait of Pompeian foolishness in this *fabula*. What this speech accomplishes, which Pompey's does not, is that in this speech, Pompey's entire army agree in their beliefs. They are ready to utterly humiliate a weak enemy even though that enemy is Roman. Not once in Caesar's nor in Crastinus' speech is there any aspect of disgracing the enemy; only fighting to end the war (through Crastinus' choice of the words *nostram libertatem* in his speech). This helps otherize all of the Pompeians and characterize them as distinctly 'un-Roman.' Caesar is successful in doing this, but is still contradictory because he began the war by disobeying the Senate and crossing the Rubicon.

By including not only speeches from himself and his supporters, but also those from Pompey and his supporters, John Nordling proposes that "Caesar likely provides a contrast between his own 'remarkably flat and *non-rhetorical* 'speech before action'' and two verbose speeches of Pompeians [and] plainly desired observers to judge, then, between his own meager words in *oratio recta* and the more flamboyant resolves of Pompey and Labienus."<sup>215</sup> While I agree that the flamboyancy of the Pompeians attracts more criticism to their speeches, I still believe that every speech Caesar places in this *fabula* have a rhetorical purpose, and therefore to call Caesar's speech *non-rhetorical* is erroneous. By making his speech shorter and straightforward (Commentary-like), Caesar allows himself to be seen as more realistic, while also a more cautious and meticulous general than Pompey. This all contributes to Caesar's ultimate aim, and the reason why he writes about the war in the first place: "he was concerned throughout to show not that he was successful, but that he was in the right, that his adversaries were stupid, un-Roman, and criminal, and that his victory was the victory of the better cause."<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> Nordling 184-85

<sup>216</sup> Collins 946

Besides these speeches, there is one other passage in this *fabula* which highlight the character of the Pompeians. After Pompey fled from Pharsalus and Caesar's army took Pompey's camp:

videre licuit trichilas structas, magnum argenti pondus expositum, recentibus caespitibus tabernacula constrata, Luci etiam Lentuli et nonnullorum tabernacula protecta edera, multaque praeterea quae **nimiam luxuriam et victoriae fiduciam designarent**, ut facile existimari posset **nihil eos de eventu eius diei timuisse qui non necessarias conquirerent voluptates.**<sup>217</sup>

“one could see erected bowers, a large quantity of silver which was exposed, tents paved with fresh turf, even the tents of Lucius Lentulus and of others were wreathed with ivy, and many other things in addition which **designated too much luxury and the confidence of victory**, that it could be easily believed that **those who sought nonessential pleasures were afraid of nothing about the outcome of the day.**”

Just like after Dyrrachium, the Pompeians are so inflated by their *fiducia* (confidence) that they are unable to understand the true nature of the war. In the same way, but with great narratological flourishes, Caesar accuses the Pompeians of overindulgence, a trait which was eschewed in Rome. They are so immersed by *luxuria* that they are unable to give their full attention to the effort of the battle, since they already believed that they won (*nihil...voluptates*). Andreola Rossi adds that “a reading of the episode along these lines fits perfectly the political and ideological program that many scholars have seen as the foundation of *BC*, namely to represent Caesar as the savior of the Republic, while the Pompeians are convicted of contemptuous disregard for Roman laws and customs.”<sup>218</sup> Rossi also prescribes that the taboo *luxuria* is a way for Caesar to call upon the fears of Eastern domination, and he uses this to exploit “the fears of a society who more and more saw the East as a potential threat to its own security and identity and he skillfully casts his enemy as the embodiment of this threat.”<sup>219</sup> It is not my concern to distinguish whether Caesar was actively alluding to the East when detailing

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<sup>217</sup> *BC* 3.96

<sup>218</sup> Rossi 242

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid* 254

Pompey's camp at Pharsalus. What matters is that Pompey's camp is flourishing in *luxuria*, which contradicts Roman *mores*. Through this failure of Pompey to adhere to Roman societal *mores*, Caesar is able to shift the guilt of starting the war from himself to Pompey, as he can prove that Pompey's moral compass was severely lacking, and it was therefore just to cross the Rubicon and expel from Rome those who would continue to push her to decay. This effect is magnified when Pompey flees from Pharsalus and accepts defeat, signaling that he is unfit to protect Rome.<sup>220</sup>

### Conclusions on the *BC*

By writing the *BC*, Caesar is not attempting to change the opinions of his enemies. This surely would be impossible, as from the outset, he berates them for contributing to the decline of the Republic. What Caesar attempts to accomplish is a continuation of his 'man of the Republic' trope present in the *BG*. However, it is a much greater task to achieve, because of the taboo nature of the war. Therefore, he manipulates narratives to shift the blame for the war onto the Pompeians, exonerating himself from any shared responsibility. In this light, it was only necessary that Caesar crossed the Rubicon, but in reality was the sole event which propelled Caesar to justify himself in the first place. Would he have written a plea to the Senate as elegant and straightforward as his *Commentarii*, the Civil War might have been completely avoided.

#### Conclusion:

Although my arguments and analysis concerning Caesar's *Commentarii* have been skeptical, I want to make one clarification: I am not arguing that the *fabulae* which I have used as examples (or any of Caesar's *fabulae* for that matter) are apocryphal. They are both fantastic narratives which elucidate two of the final wars of the Roman Republic directly from their main

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<sup>220</sup> *BC* 3.96

protagonist. Without these *Commentarii*, many of the events surrounding the narratives may have been botched and further misrepresented, and served as a remarkable source for future historians and biographers. However, it is the manipulations of the protagonist as the author, with respect to both the genre and his narrative, which dilutes their absolute veracity when meticulously analyzed. As H. C. Gotoff notes “Caesar is said to have written a pure Latin, simple and direct. He exercised a strict economy in the use of a vocabulary limited to the plain diction of educated Romans. As a plain stylist, he avoided obtrusive ornamentation which, if used in excess, might smack of Asianism.”<sup>221</sup> However, this plain style is a mirage, as it allows Caesar to alter his narrative as he sees fit, which makes it less prone to skepticism from his audience. As a result, Caesar fashions himself as the quintessential Roman statesman, general, and tactician, although he is contradictory, treasonous, and misleading. No matter how subtle he tries to be, Caesar’s ambition is unveiled through a meticulous scrutiny of his narrative.

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<sup>221</sup> Gotoff 1; Asianism was “marked by wordplay, emotional effect, bombast, and rhythm” (Hornblower 184).

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