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## Caesar's Bibracte Narrative and the Aims of Caesarian Style

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The distinctive characteristics of Caesarian prose style are widely if imperfectly known, but Caesar's merits as a stylist are still argued. Paradoxically, much of the debate has as its origin the domination of our standards of good Latinity and good prose style by Cicero, who himself praised the style of Caesar's *commentarii* in a well-known passage from the *Brutus* (§262). Whether Cicero is being disingenuous in this passage is debatable,<sup>1</sup> but the fact remains that Cicero commended the prose style of the political enemy over whose assassination he later gloated unashamedly. The *Brutus* passage does not seem to be ironic;<sup>2</sup> and the fact that Cicero's praise of Caesarian style does not appear to follow from the dictates he lays down regarding good historical style may be attributed to the generic differences between history and *commentarii*.<sup>3</sup>

Until recently Caesarian prose style has fared less well at the hands of modern critics than it did at the hands of Caesar's contemporary enemies. For example, Nettleship prefaces his harsh condemnation of

<sup>1</sup> H. C. Gotoff, "Towards a Practical Criticism of Caesar's Prose Style" (*Illinois Classical Studies* IX.1 [Spring, 1984], pp. 1–18), p. 2, note 3, raises the possibility that Cicero may be "grovelling" in the *Brutus* passage.

<sup>2</sup> But see P. T. Eden, "Caesar's Style: Inheritance versus Intelligence," *Glotta* 40 (1962), pp. 74–117, esp. pp. 74 ff., on the possibility that Cicero is referring ruefully to the reception accorded his own *commentarii*.

<sup>3</sup> Not even Livy fulfilled the demands Cicero made upon historical style (in, for example, *De or.* 2.51–64); but most literary manifestos are more honored in the breach. See T. J. Luce, *Livy. The Composition of His History* (Princeton 1977), pp. 181 ff.

Caesar both as an individual and as a stylist with the assertion (impossible to prove) that “while much of Cicero’s writing has come down to us in its most finished shape, nothing of Caesar’s remains but his most carelessly written work.” He continues:

It must be pointed out that Cicero’s success was not due merely to his having mastered the laws of prose rhythm, nor merely to his general power as a stylist. His mind was of the poetical and imaginative order, while Caesar’s, manly, sound, and robust, was without a touch of poetry. Strength of passion Caesar has, but no imagination.<sup>4</sup>

It is a truism that Caesar was not a Ciceronian, but too many critical evaluations of Caesarian style issue from canons of taste that are basically Ciceronian, with predictable results. For example, although he avoids the more extreme Ciceronian prejudices of Nettleship, J. J. Schlicher, in his otherwise excellent analysis of Caesarian style, taxes the first book of the *Bellum Gallicum* with being over-precise and argumentative, with using an old-fashioned mode of expression, and with being not yet adapted to a narrative technique.<sup>5</sup> Such a view of Caesarian prose style presupposes (although Schlicher does not say so) a sort of stylistic evolution that moved ineluctably from the old annalists to Ciceronian periodicity, with Caesar—at least in *BG*—certainly looking to the past, perhaps ruefully looking forward to a stylistic future he was not yet capable of fitting into. This is an assumption hard to credit in the case of one of the leading orators of the late Republic, but it is the assumption, I think, that lies at the heart of most Tulliocentric analyses of Caesar’s prose style.

Even a fairly strict reliance upon empirical analysis of Caesar’s style does not render one immune from Ciceronian prejudices; even P. T. Eden, despite his attempts to stand upon empirically firm ground in his analysis of Caesar’s stylistic debt to the annalists, falls prey to his own preference for Cicero:

The style and syntax of Caesar, *or at any rate that immense number of stylistic and syntactic practices he shares with Cicero*, have long since been consecrated as paradigms. They have become the standards to which the Latinity of others, Roman jurists no less than modern students, is explicitly or implicitly referred. This canonical status is no doubt entirely justifiable . . . [my italics].<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> H. Nettleship, “The Historical Development of Classical Latin Prose,” *Journal of Philology* 15 (1886), p. 47.

<sup>5</sup> J. J. Schlicher, “The Development of Caesar’s Narrative Style,” *Classical Philology* 21 (1936), pp. 212 ff.

<sup>6</sup> Eden, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

This is not to say, however, that Eden's critique is without merit. The great strengths of Eden's analysis are, first, his attempt at a sort of "empirical fair-mindedness" and, second, his constant recognition that, in comparing the literary remains of Caesar and Cicero, one is comparing (at least) two very different literary genres. Eden's analysis of Caesar and the meager remains of the old annalists leads him to a conclusion that is probably correct and, interestingly, almost directly opposed to Nettleship's: "[T]he early annalist manner is generally dry and monotonous, but it does carry with it an undeniable impression of passionless objectivity. This suited Caesar's needs exactly: he would be his own most detached judge and expositor."<sup>7</sup> Eden therefore sees in Caesar's style the result of a conscious choice: the avoidance of obvious *exornatio* and the suppression of extreme rhetorical flourishes were means to an end, as was the text of the work itself. This is a fair conclusion, so far as it goes: it treats Caesar as an artist rather than as a self-serving political hack; but beyond that, Eden does not give Caesar's early prose style much credit when compared to the capabilities of the "comprehensive Livian period." For example, in dealing with Caesar's tendency to repeat key words and phrases (about which I shall have something to say later), Eden says:

Caesar is notoriously guilty of such close repetitions [as *BG* I. 49. 1–3] . . . [T]he repetition is due neither to carelessness nor to a desire for accuracy, but occurs simply because Caesar took no pains to avoid it. In fact here we glimpse the basic substratum of Caesar's annalistic style, running directly from writers like Calpurnius Piso, outcrops of which continue to manifest themselves up to the end of Caesar's work.<sup>8</sup>

The metaphor is instructive (to say nothing of phrases like "notoriously guilty"): by Eden's standards, the *BG* contains boulders of clumsiness that lurk beneath its otherwise almost featureless surface, "outcrops" of uncouth repetition that make it hard for the reader to plough through. While Cicero would no doubt have appreciated the agricultural metaphor, it does not jibe well with Eden's conclusion (quoted above, note 7); moreover, such criticisms, at their worst, tempt the uncritical reader to dismiss Caesar (at least in the early books of the *BG*) as little more than a slavish though effective follower of an outmoded, pre-Ciceronian style; at its best, Eden's view of Caesarian style gives the impression that Caesar either had a tin ear or, worse, was indifferent to the sound of his writing.

What is needed is an analysis of Caesarian style that takes account

<sup>7</sup> Eden, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

<sup>8</sup> Eden, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

both of the appeal of the annalists for Caesar and of the aims Caesar had in bucking the trend in Latinity represented by Cicero. If we take it as given that Caesar was not incapable of something resembling the "comprehensive Livian period" even in the early books of the *BG*, we must answer the question what the effect of Caesar's stylistic choice was—even if we agree with Eden as to its purpose. W. Richter and, more recently, H. C. Gotoff have begun to address this point. Richter observes that Caesar's aim is to make motives, assumptions and consequences understandable as a logical complex which presents Caesar "als kritischen Beobachter eines Kampfverlaufes. . . . [D]ie Kunst des Darstellers spiegelt den Meister der Befehlstechnik."<sup>9</sup> Correct as this analysis is—and Richter, to his credit, uses *BG* I in this passage—the observation derives not from Caesar's prose style *per se*: Richter does not show how, for example, Cicero (had he been so minded) could not have taken the same material and achieved the same result in his own fashion. Gotoff, on the other hand, treats the nuts and bolts of Caesarian style in much detail, analyzing the complex subtlety and flexibility Caesar achieves even in the early books of the *BG*.<sup>10</sup> But nearly all of Gotoff's examples are drawn from the second and fourth books of the *BG*, and most are comparatively short passages—on the order of one or two sentences. Significantly, the two examples he chooses from *BG* I illustrate the purpose behind a lack of balance between an ablative absolute phrase and the main clause of the sentence (I. 41) and periodicity of a sort not often associated with Caesar (I. 6). In short, Gotoff has shown both what is Caesarian about Caesar and the style's artistic capabilities.

I propose to take the methods of Richter and Gotoff and apply them to a longer, continuous passage of early Caesarian prose: Caesar's account of his fight with the Helvetians at Bibracte (*BG* I. 23 ff.). This engagement, fought in 58 B.C., was Caesar's first major battle as commander in Gaul and, as he saw it, his victory broke the back of a dangerous invasion that could have jeopardized Roman control of the province.<sup>11</sup> In this narrative Caesar faced the difficult task of describing a personal triumph and an historically pivotal battle

<sup>9</sup> Will Richter, *Caesar als Darsteller seiner Taten* (Heidelberg 1977), p. 149.

<sup>10</sup> H. C. Gotoff, *loc. cit.*; the author also remarks (p. 4, note 14) on the "carefully controlled rhetorical ornamentation and *ethopoiia* that makes Book I perhaps the least typical part of the Caesarian corpus."

<sup>11</sup> S. Reinach, "Les communiqués de César" (*Revue de philologie* 39, 1915), pp. 29–49, raises the possibility that Caesar's campaign against the Helvetians was a "picked" fight and that the Helvetian migration actually proved no threat to Roman interests. See also Richter, *op. cit.*, ch. 4, §4.a, "Der Ausbruch des Helvetierkrieges," pp. 102–16.

in terms that would enhance his *dignitas* but at the same time give as little offense as possible to those at Rome who already viewed his command with mistrust and apprehension.<sup>12</sup> Thus Caesar was obviously concerned with the impression his account would make at home, and we should probably believe that he was pulled in different directions by aims that would appear, on the surface at least, mutually exclusive. There are also curiosities of style in this passage that seem to be flaws when they are considered in the light of Ciceronian "norms." Perhaps the most immediately obvious example is the repetition of certain verbs and their derivatives: *iacio* (six times), *mitto* (nine times) and *fero* (five times)—and all within the space of about two-and-a-half Oxford pages.<sup>13</sup> But we must not judge these repetitions and other stylistic "quirks" too harshly, especially if (1) our standard of what constitutes a quirk is based upon Cicero<sup>14</sup> and (2) we fail to look for a possible reason for Caesar's having written as he did. That Caesar was trying in his account of Bibracte to enhance his public image will, I think, be granted without argument. What I seek to prove, and what will provoke argument, is that Caesar's Bibracte narrative succeeds as a work of prose art.

Postridie eius diei, quod omnino biduum supererat cum exercitui frumentum metiri oporteret, et quod a Bibracte, oppido Aeduorum longe maximo et copiosissimo, non amplius milibus passuum xviii aberat, rei frumentariae prospiciendum existimavit: iter ab Helvetiis avertit ac Bibracte ire contendit. Ea res per fugitivos L. Aemili, decurionis equitum Gallorum, hostibus nuntiatur. Helvetii, seu quod timore perterritos Romanos discedere a se existimarent, eo magis quod pridie superioribus locis occupatis proelium non commisissent, sive eo quod re frumentaria intercludi posse confiderent, commutato consilio atque itinere converso nostros a novissimo agmine insequi ac lacessere coeperunt. (23. 1–3)

At the beginning of his Bibracte narrative, Caesar immediately makes a distinction between the Roman strategy and that of the

<sup>12</sup> Caelius reported to Cicero in June, 51, some of the rumors circulating in Rome concerning Caesar's campaign (*Ad fam.* VIII. 1. 4). While commentaries or dispatches by the commander probably would not have won over Caesar's harshest critics in the senate and elsewhere, they would have helped to allay the sort of fears that Caelius mentions.

<sup>13</sup> All references to the *BG* in this paper are to the Oxford Classical Text of Du Pontet.

<sup>14</sup> Though it is well known that Cicero wrote a *commentarius* about his own actions against the conspiracy of Catiline which he himself thought needed stylistic "touching up."

Helvetians. It was (and is) a none-too-glamorous fact of military life that an army must be provisioned while it is in the field. The first concern Caesar faces as a commander is the insurance of an adequate food supply for his forces. Logically, reasonably, he keeps his logistics in mind (23. 1) and breaks off his pursuit of the enemy before putting himself at a potentially dangerous disadvantage. The construction of 23. 1 reflects the commander's *ratio*: an ablative of time for temporal accuracy and transition from the previous sentence, followed by a balanced pair of *quod* clauses, followed by another balanced pair of main clauses in asyndeton. Such balancing is a conscious effect, of course, and its purpose is to reveal to the reader at once the options that lay open to Caesar as a commander and the logical, most prudent course of action given the circumstances. What the reader is supposed to think is that no other course of action lay open to Caesar which would not have jeopardized the success of the mission.

The logical and likely suppositions of 23. 1 are continued to 23. 2, a short, smoothly-flowing period that shifts the reader's focus from the Roman point of view to that of the Helvetians. Despite the change in perspective, 23. 3 reinforces the idea of Caesar's *providentia* signified in 23. 1. In 23. 3 we have yet another straightforward periodic sentence whose structure is, like that of 23. 1, built around a complex of *quod* clauses. The period begins with an explicit statement of the subject, *Helvetii* (necessary because the sentence begins in asyndeton and the subject of the prior sentence was *ea res*); next comes a pair of explanatory *quod* clauses (the first of which is expanded by an additional *quod* clause<sup>15</sup>) which give the most likely possibilities to account for the sudden change in the enemy plan; after the *quod* clauses comes a pair of ablatives absolute, and finally the main clause, for which we have been waiting from the start.

Thus we see that in 23. 1–3 Caesar sets forth in well-balanced sentences the state of affairs just prior to the battle (whose preliminary skirmishes are described in 23. 4). Like any good commander Caesar takes stock of his own situation and tries to account for that of the enemy. We should note, however, that despite the fact that the intelligence controlling the presentation and the activities described in 23. 1–3 is unmistakably Caesar's, Caesar is nowhere named in §23. Significantly, he is not named until 24. 1, where the emphasis shifts from the strategic to the tactical, from planning on a grand, rational (and somewhat impersonal) scale to planning on a smaller scale that

<sup>15</sup> Contrast 23. 1, where the *quod* clauses are more equally balanced.

allows for greater, more detailed analysis of personal motives and actions.

Postquam id animum advertit, copias suas Caesar in proximum collem subducit, equitatumque qui sustineret hostium impetum misit. Ipse interim in colle medio triplicem aciem instruxit legionum quattuor veteranorum [ita uti supra]; sed in summo iugo duas legiones quas in Gallia citeriore proxime conscripserat et omnia auxilia collocari, ac totum montem hominibus compleri, et interea sarcinas in unum locum conferri, et eum ab eis qui in superiore acie constiterant muniri iussit. Helvetii cum omnibus suis carris secuti impedimenta in unum locum contulerunt; ipsi confertissima acie, reiecto nostro equitatu, phalange facta sub primam nostram aciem successerunt. (24. 1–4)

In 23. 1–3 the reader is invited to survey the strategic situation and to make of it what he will; by contrast, in 24. 1–3 we see Caesar's tactical response to a new and perhaps unexpected situation: the Helvetians decide to fight. The Roman commander is here at his most decisive (*subducit/misit/instruxit/iussit*); the impression of his decisiveness is heightened by the (corresponding) tetracolon of passive infinitives in 24. 3 (*collocari/compleri/conferrimuniri*), all depending upon the final *iussit*. Quick action is required; the enemy whom Caesar has earlier (§22) failed to engage is now ready for a fight, and the smoothly flowing syntax of 24. 1–3 reflects the speed with which Caesar prepares to give battle; it also reflects the ease with which Caesar changes his plans to take advantage of an unexpected situation. 24. 1 is short and ultimately periodic (due to the postponement of *misit*); 24. 2 differs from its predecessor in the middle position (!) of its main verb (*instruxit*). The third sentence, 24. 3, is longer by almost a third than the first two taken together, and its periodicity is the more noticeable for the tetracolon of passive infinitives all waiting upon *iussit*, as noted above. The writing is as lucid as Caesar's tactics are conventional: high ground has always been advantageous in battle.<sup>16</sup> But in this part of the *BG* Caesar is concerned with more than a matter of conventional tactics: he is keeping in mind both what the enemy might be thinking about the Roman willingness to fight (see 23. 3), and the tactics the enemy might be expected to use once the

<sup>16</sup> M. Rambaud, *L'art de la déformation historique dans les commentaires de César* (Paris 1953), p. 41, quotes Jullian's observation that Caesar followed monotonously conventional tactics as a matter of habit. Rambaud rightly comments: "L'éminent historien n'avait pas songé que les manoeuvres dont il reproche à César la monotonie sont des nécessités militaires de tous les temps."

battle is joined. Here again we are reminded of Caesar's *providentia*, which is further emphasized when (24. 4) the Helvetians virtually doom their brave effort in advance by forming a phalanx for a difficult uphill charge. 24. 4 is in effect a brief recapitulation of the previous sentences, for the Helvetians carry out what must have been a universal pre-battle maneuver before forming their phalanx; thus, in the first half of 24. 4 Caesar can afford to be brief. His brevity continues in the last half of the sentence, where the preliminary skirmishes of the engagement are rendered with simple compactness in ablatives absolute. 24. 4 is also noteworthy for the occurrence of a verb formed from *iacio*, in the ablative absolute *reiecto nostro equitatu*. As noted above, forms of *iacio* are repeated six more times from 24. 4 to 27. 2; though such repetitions may appear dull or at least bewildering, they are artfully used in this narrative and emphasize in the end the personal nature of Caesar's triumph.

Caesar primum suo, deinde omnium ex conspectu remotis equis, ut aequato omnium periculo spem fugae tolleret, cohortatus suos proelium commisit. Milites e loco superiore pilis missis facile hostium phalangem perfregerunt. Ea disiecta, gladiis destrictis in eos impetum fecerunt. Gallis magno ad pugnam erat impedimento quod pluribus eorum scutis uno ictu pilorum transfixis et colligatis, cum ferrum se inflexisset, neque evellere neque sinistra impedita satis commode pugnare poterant; multi ut diu iactato brachio praeeptarent scutum manu emittere et nudo corpore pugnare. Tandem vulneribus defessi et pedem referre et, quod mons suberat circiter mille passuum, eo se recipere coeperunt. (25. 1-5)

If our gaze is progressively narrowed from the strategic to the tactical in §§23 and 24, we find that at 25. 1 we are invited to consider Caesar's personal bravery in the face of battle. By sending away his own horse as well as those of his staff, Caesar shows his willingness to undergo the same risks that his legionaries will face. Beginning here at 25. 1, we note several repetitions of verb forms already noted: *commisit* (25. 1), *missis* (25. 2), *disiecta* (*ibid.*). 25. 1 is periodic, though brief; 25. 2 (printed rightly as two separate sentences in modern texts) communicates most of the violence of the battle in ablatives absolute, with the outcome of the engagement given alliteratively in the main clause (*phalangem perfregerunt*). The syntax of these first three sentences (25. 1-2) is simple and, again, smooth-flowing; but when in 25. 3-4 Caesar shifts our gaze to the Helvetians, the syntax suddenly changes: the periodic, easy-going syntax of the prior sentences is abandoned as the main clause of 25. 3 comes first with *magno* in a mild hyperbaton. There follows yet another *quod* clause (the sixth since 23.

1) that is periodic in nature (ablative absolute—*cum* clause—correlated pair of infinitives [the second of which is expanded with its own ablative absolute] depending upon *poterant*); 25. 4 is a result clause with *ut* in hyperbaton. Where the syntax of 25. 1–2 clearly reflects the relative ease with which the Romans beat back the Helvetian phalanx, that of 25. 3–4 reflects the confusion brought upon the enemy by Caesar's tactics. Thus the commander's *ratio* and *providentia* of §24 are vindicated in 25. 5.

Capto monte et succedentibus nostris, Boii et Tulingi, qui hominum milibus circiter xv agmen hostium claudebant et novissimis praesidio erant, ex itinere nostros latere aperto aggressi circumvenere, et id conspicati Helvetii, qui in montem sese receperant, rursus instare et proelium redintegrare coeperunt. Romani conversa signa bipertito intulerunt: prima et secunda acies, ut victis ac summotis resisteret; tertia, ut venientis sustineret.

Ita ancipiti proelio diu atque acriter pugnatum est. Diutius cum sustinere nostrorum impetus non possent, alteri se, ut coeperant, in montem receperunt, alteri ad impedimenta et carros suos se contulerunt. Nam hoc toto proelio, cum ab hora septima ad vesperum pugnatum sit, aversum hostem videre nemo potuit. (25. 6 – 26. 2)

There is, however, an unexpected turn of events when the Boii and Tulingi counterattack and throw the Romans into some confusion. If there is a point in the Bibracte narrative where Caesar tacitly admits to a lapse in his preparations, this is it. In order to preserve his victory Caesar must split his triple battle line, thus weakening his forces. Though Caesar does not say so forthrightly (the battle was merely *anceps*), there was a grave danger that, with his lines weakened thus and split up, the Helvetians could easily have broken through, had it proved possible for them to reform their phalanx (though whether they could in fact have reformed it depends upon how many of them had lost their shields [cf. 25. 1–5]; a phalanx lacking in shields is a decidedly inferior fighting force). The syntax of 25. 6–7 reflects this changed state of affairs: where the actions of the enemy are earlier described in choppy, starting-and-stopping ablatives absolute and subordinate clauses (see especially 25. 3 ff.), now we have the Helvetian action described in smooth, parallel, periodic sentences (depending upon *circumvenere* and *coeperunt*, respectively), and the Roman side is described in abrupt, choppy phrases (25. 7).

Thus Caesar's syntax reflects the ebb and flow of the battle even before 26. 1 sums up in words what the reader intuitively felt to be the case before. In 26. 2 Caesar pays an ungrudging compliment to his gallant enemy; the reader, perhaps, does not see at first that in noting

the enemy's stubborn, almost fanatical bravery Caesar calls attention to that of his own soldiers, and to his ability to change tactics quickly, when the situation demands it.

Ad multam noctem etiam ad impedimenta pugnatum est, propterea quod pro vallo carros obiecerant, et e loco superiore in nostros venientis tela coiciebant, et non nulli inter carros rotasque mataras ac tragulas subiciebant nostrosque vulnerabant. Diu cum esset pugnatum, impedimentis castrisque nostri potiti sunt. Ibi Orgetorigis filia atque unus e filiis captus est. Ex eo proelio circiter hominum milia cxxx superfuerunt, eaque tota nocte continenter ierunt: nullam partem noctis itinere intermisso in finis Lingonum die quarto pervenerunt, cum et propter vulnera militum et propter sepulturam occisorum nostri triduum morati eos sequi non potuissent. Caesar ad Lingonas litteras nuntiosque misit, ne eos frumento neve alia re iuarent: qui si iuissent, se eodem loco quo Helvetios habiturum. Ipse triduo intermisso cum omnibus copiis eos sequi coepit.

Helvetii omnium rerum inopia adducti legatos de deditione ad eum miserunt. (26. 3 – 27. 1)

It is now (26. 3) dark, and the battle rages still around the Helvetian baggage train, but with an ironic reversal of roles. Where before (25. 2–3) the Romans had used high ground to advantage in breaking the initial charge of the Helvetian phalanx, the Helvetians now use high ground to advantage in putting up stiff resistance to an uphill Roman attack. In 26. 3 there are three more repetitions of forms of *iacio*: the Gauls *pro vallo carros obiecerant*; they *tela coiciebant* at the advancing Romans; finally they *inter carros rotasque mataras ac tragulas subiciebant nostrosque vulnerabant*—the first of only two mentions Caesar makes of Roman casualties.<sup>17</sup> Another fierce fight ensues before the Romans finally capture the baggage train and put to flight those of the enemy who are able to escape.

The syntax of 26. 1–4 is simple and straightforward but repetitive in the extreme. Not only do we have the three recurrences of derivatives of *iacio* mentioned above, but we also see several repetitions of other words: *diu/diutius* (26. 1 *bis*, 26. 4), forms of *pugno* (the impersonal passive forms subsuming most of the violence in these paragraphs, 26. 1, 2, 3, 4), and *impedimenta* (26. 1, 3, 4). The repeated vocabulary and the short, abrupt syntax are reflective of the exhaustion on both sides after so many hours of what must have been a nasty fight; thus, the forthright statement in 26. 5b that the Romans were too tired to pursue the Helvetians without several days of rest is anticipated syntactically in 26. 1–4. At the same time, it is indicative of the completeness of the Roman victory that the Helvetians are

<sup>17</sup> The other mention is in 26. 5.

compelled to flee for four days straight, *nullam partem noctis itinere intermisso* (26. 5), while the Romans rest and nurse their wounded. In the description of the aftermath of the battle there is one further repeated verb that is significant: as just noted, the Helvetians flee both day and night; Caesar, on the other hand, *litteras nuntiosque misit* to the Lingones and then *ipse triduo intermisso* follows with his army (26. 6), in stark contrast to the necessary haste of the enemy. Finally, balancing the *litteras nuntiosque misit* of 26. 6, the *Helvetii . . . legatos de deditione ad eum miserunt* (27. 1).

Qui cum eum in itinere convenissent seque ad pedes proiecissent suppliciterque locuti flentes pacem petissent, atque eos in eo loco quatum essent suum adventum exspectare iussisset, paruerunt. (27. 2)

The final surrender of the Helvetians takes place in 27. 2. The sentence is refreshingly periodic after so long a stretch of short, choppy sentences and phrases; it eloquently emphasizes the triumph of Roman arms and, more importantly, of the Roman commander (Caesar is mentioned, directly or indirectly, four times in 27. 2; contrast this with the relative scarcity of Caesar's self-references in the early portions of the narrative). 27. 2 begins with a resumptive relative—a construction that Caesar allows himself at only one other part of the Bibracte narrative<sup>18</sup>—and goes immediately into a *cum* clause with yet another tetracolon of verbs. This *cum* clause is worth examining closely, for the first three verbs it controls form a tricolon whose subject is *Helvetii* (*convenissent/proiecissent/petissent*); the fourth verb (*iussisset*) has as its subject Caesar. Immediately after the fourth verb of the *cum* clause the sentence comes to a definitive end, as does the battle itself, with the verb every commander would like to use of his foes: *paruerunt*. Of course this sentence is unbalanced, with the shortest of main clauses weighing in against a ponderous, complicated *cum* clause; but the syntax—and it is straightforward syntax—reflects the discomfiture of the Helvetians, just as choppy, non-periodic syntax reflected the ebb and flow of battle earlier in the narrative. Also, the placement of *paruerunt* makes the sentence ultimately periodic.

The personal nature of Caesar's triumph is emphasized in a subtler way, too, by the seventh and last repetition of a derivative of *iacio* (in the *cum* clause). The enemy who a few days earlier had thrown together wagons as a wall, and thrown volleys of spears and wounded many Roman soldiers (26. 3), now throw themselves at Caesar's feet to beg for peace. Thus Caesar, as noted, emphasizes the personal nature of his victory, but at the same time the precautions he takes to ensure

<sup>18</sup> The other resumptive relative is found in 26. 6 (*qui si iuvissent . . .*). Eden (*op. cit.*, p. 87) complains of a "plethora of resumptive pronouns and adverbs" in Caesar.

that the Helvetian homeland remain free of migrating Germans (28. 4 ff.) emphasize his continued devotion to the constitutional responsibilities of his office.

It cannot be denied that there is personal propaganda in Caesar's account of his battle at Bibracte, but the self-glorification takes the form of irresistibly logical examples of Caesarian *providentia* and *ratio* put at the disposal of the Roman state. 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, which are in turn effects (as Eden saw) vouchsafed by the absence of obvious rhetorical *exornatio*.

While it is right to search out Caesar's debts to the old annalists, and to examine his prose style as it developed and was influenced by the changing standards of the day, it is not right to regard the early books of the *BG* merely as dry, rigid experiments undertaken by Caesar on the path to his development of a more serviceable prose style. Instead, these early writings should probably be regarded as the culmination of the old annalistic genre—a style which it behooved Caesar to adopt but which he was not forced into following uncritically. Indeed, one should ask what became of the "comprehensive Livian period" after Livy: the severities and plainness of an Atticist style must have jibed well with the old, purely Roman style of the annalists; the unadorned, choppy, yet subtly effective style of Caesar commended itself to the enemies of Ciceronianism<sup>19</sup> and might well have had as much influence upon apologists for the principate as Cicero had upon adherents of republicanism. But if the style and content *per se* of Caesar's Bibracte narrative tell us anything about Roman prose, it is that descriptive subtlety and the achievement of a difficult rhetorical goal did not always require a Cicero. When we incorrectly and unreasonably exclude the early books of the *BG* from consideration as anything other than examples of narrative primitiveness pure and simple, we fall into a Caesarian trap—no less than the Helvetians did.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> See R. Syme, "History and Language at Rome," *Diogenes* 85 (1974), p. 5; reprinted in *Roman Papers*, vol. iii (Oxford 1984, pp. 953–61), p. 956.

<sup>20</sup> An early version of this paper was read before the Missouri Classics Association in Columbia, MO, to which audience I should like to express my appreciation. Thanks are due also to Professor H. C. Gotoff and to Professor Curtis Lawrence, who kindly read through earlier drafts. The appearance of their names here does not necessarily imply that they agree with the contents of my argument; of course, I alone am responsible for any errors that remain.