

REVIEW–DISCUSSION

Luca Grillo, *The Art of Caesar's Bellum Civile: Literature, Ideology, and Community*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012. Pp. xii + 221. Hardcover, £55.00/\$95.00. ISBN 978-1-107-00949-3.

This book is organised in seven chapters, which are thematic in treatment and interact with one another in a manner reminiscent of movements within a musical composition. To help the reader, there is an introduction (pp. 1–13) that sets forth the agenda of this book and situates it within the wider landscape of the study of Caesar and literature during the past half-century. Then, the first chapter (pp. 14–36) explores the oblique manner in which Caesar shapes the narrative so as to leave readers with a negative impression of his enemies and a positive judgement of his own achievements and goals. The *celeritas* of Caesar is contrasted with the slowness and indecision of Pompeius, for example. The second chapter (pp. 37–57) explores the construction of a Caesarian ethos through the claim to display certain virtues highly prized by contemporary Roman society: *constantia*, *innocentia*, *pudor*, and *virtus*. In similar situations, Grillo shows, Caesarian and Roman generals and soldiers behave differently. The third chapter (pp. 58–77) is concerned with loyalty and in particular oaths and oath-taking. Desertion or insurrection were a constant problem for both sides in the civil war, and Grillo focusses upon the narrative strategies that Caesar utilises in order to consolidate the good faith of those soldiers serving under him and his lieutenants, such as Curio in Africa. The fourth chapter (pp. 78–105) is dedicated to the exercise and representation of Caesar's clemency. This involves not only analysis of the virtue's manifestation during the Ilerda campaign and at Massilia, but also comparison with the treatment of hostile peoples in the *Bellum Gallicum* and reflections upon the ethical and juridical basis for clemency. The fifth chapter (pp. 106–30) explores the theme of the barbarization of the enemy, viz. Pompeius and Caesar's other enemies depicted as the Other. Beginning with a review of treatment of the Other in Roman rhetoric and historiography of the late Republic, Grillo goes on to look at the ways in which Caesar shows Pompeius and lieutenants as evincing barbarian traits. The sixth chapter (pp. 131–57) examines the implications of the Caesarian image of the two antithetical communities between which Romans had to choose in time of civil war. Showing how Pompeius is assimilated to the figure of Sulla, whereas Caesar uses Sulla as a foil, Grillo makes illuminating use of the evidence of the rhetorical handbooks as regards ethos and the various motifs commonly deployed. The seventh chap-

ter (pp. 158–74) concludes this investigation by looking at the ways in which the overall architecture and narrative development of the *Bellum Civile* may further Caesar’s political goal of restoring unity to a community fractured by civil war. Grillo highlights the artificial nature of the ending of Book 1 with Ilerda and of Book 2 with Bagradas, and then argues that the ending of Book 3 with Alexandria was meant to be inconclusive. The moral of the story, according to Grillo, is that more power be conferred upon Caesar.

Thus ends this intense, wide-ranging discussion. The usual ancillary sections follow, furnishing additional material of use. Appendix 1 (pp. 175–7) furnishes a chronological guide to the contents of the *Bellum Civile*. Appendix 2 (pp. 178–84) reviews the issues of the composition, publication, and literary genre of the *Bellum Civile*. Appendix 3 (pp. 181–5) reviews the manuscript evidence, arguing that both the current three-book division of the *Bellum Civile* and the work’s beginning *in medias res* were intended by Caesar. An extensive and updated bibliography (pp. 186–209) is followed by an index locorum (pp. 210–15) and a general index (pp. 216–21), both useful and attractively organised.

Grillo’s book constitutes a significant contribution to the ever more lively and developing debate on how to read the *Bellum Civile* and what value to attribute to Caesar’s testimony as regards the civil war of 49–48 BC.¹ Aware that Caesar ‘apparently falsifies many of the relevant facts’ in writing the *Bellum Civile* (p. 42), Grillo deftly sidesteps that issue and focusses upon how the construction of the narrative—overall architecture, word-choice, clausulae, and the use of inter-textuality and intra-textuality—serves to create a Caesarian community by persuading readers of the justice of Caesar’s cause. The resulting close readings of the text are often highly valuable, stimulating even when they fail to convince (e.g. the section on Caesar and the ring of Gyges, pp. 49–51). From this rich production, a few items deserve especial mention. First and foremost, there is Grillo’s deployment of the evidence of the rhetorical handbooks in order to clarify Caesar’s method of argumentation, e.g. use of the *complexio* against Afranius at the end of the Ilerda campaign (p. 89) and reliance upon the topos of *misophilia* in order to discredit Pompeius obliquely from beginning to end (p. 142). Caesar’s historiographical work emerges as a polished piece that is as complex as, if not more so than, the *Catilinarians* of Cicero. A second item deserving of mention is Grillo’s examination of how Caesar uses words in a sophisticated manner so as to characterise the various protagonists of this historical drama, e.g. the adjective *barbarus* applied only to the allies of Pompeius (p. 111) or different vo-

¹ Damon 1994; Welch and Powell 1998; Rossi 2000; Urso 2000; Cairns and Fantham 2003; Batstone and Damon 2006; Kraus 2007; Griffin 2009; cf. Mannetter 1995; Westall 2000.

cabulary for oaths so as to delegitimise the Pompeians and put them on a par with the Catilinarian conspirators (p. 66). A third item is Grillo's attention to the architecture, or economy (to use an old-fashioned word), of this work. How does Caesar arrange his materials? What does he include? What does he leave out? Again the discussion is richly textured and stimulating for further discussion. Grillo, for instance, is well aware of the meaning of the omission of Placentia (p. 71). Most significantly, however, Grillo identifies chronological perturbation committed by Caesar for the sake of an artful and persuasive distribution of events. Hence, Book 1 ends with the victory of the Ilerda campaign, and Book 2 concludes with the disaster of Curio at the Bagradas; readers are, in Grillo's view, presented with two alternative visions between which to choose (pp. 164, 167). As for Book 3, Grillo is of the opinion that its inconclusive ending intentionally mirrors the inconclusive beginning in an instance of ring-composition (pp. 169–70). Despite debate over various points, these mark significant contributions to the discussion and reading of a text that for far too long languished in unmerited neglect. Contextualisation of Caesar's *Bellum Civile* is an important step forward.

Not all can be recommended, however, and fundamental flaws are visible. Therefore, some reflections may serve as a guide for the future.

Curiously, there are distinct problems with the treatment of language within this book. Let it immediately be remarked, however, that Grillo has managed to assimilate American idiom well, perhaps far too well (e.g. 'speedster', which neologism seems rather inelegant and out of place). One or two instances should suffice. In translating the text of Caes. *BC* 1.72.3, Grillo is at one moment too loose with his language and immediately afterwards far too close in formal terms (p. 81):

Movebatur etiam misericordia civium, quos interficiendos videbat.

He was also moved by pity toward his citizens, whom he saw had to be killed.

The phrase 'his citizens' strikes a jarring note, and a solution such as J. M. Carter's 'his fellow-citizens' would have been preferable. The possessive adjective otherwise acquires a force that misrepresents the Latin original. The point that Caesar is making is that he was intent upon saving the lives of *Roman* citizens, not people who are peculiarly 'his'. Which brings us to the second problem within this sentence, the rendering of the future passive participle (gerundive) utilised in the relative clause. Translating *interficiendos* as 'had to be killed' eliminates the conditional nature of the prospective or future sense of the gerundive in this instance. It is true that people often overlook such use, but one expects better of a philologist (as opposed to the

translations offered by people who are typically classified as historians). Moreover, it is not difficult to find pertinent parallels, e.g. Cic. *Fam.* 16.12.1: *patriam diripiendam reliquimus*.² It would have been better altogether to render this phrase in conditional fashion as ‘citizens who would die’ (sc. if battle were engaged). The citizens did not have to die, but they most certainly would if it were a matter of actual battle.

So much for one sentence. Another random sentence exemplifying the problems inherent in Grillo’s translations and method of citation comes immediately afterwards when he quotes Caes. *BC* 1.75.2 (p. 82):

Beneficiariis suis ... improviso ad vallum advolat, conloquia militum interrumpit, nostros repellit a castris, quos deprendit, interficit.

With his private friends ... he suddenly flies to the ditch, interrupts the soldiers’ dialogues, drives away our men from his camp and executes the ones he catches.

Leaving aside the ever thorny question of how best to render the Latin historical present in English and queries such as that regarding the wisdom of describing ‘fraternization’ as the more intellectually pretentious ‘dialogues’, we should focus upon the very inception of this quotation. Grillo has altogether omitted, without the least signposting, the arming of Petreius’ *familia* and that group’s reappearance at the head of this sentence (cf. p. 121, where the omission is only partially rectified). Even more troubling, perhaps, is the rendering of *beneficarii* by ‘private friends’. Consultation of Lewis and Short or the *OLD*, if not acquaintance with the vast *corpus* of inscriptions dedicated to the subject, would have disabused him of this notion. These two examples of what goes awry in Grillo’s treatment of the language of Caesar’s text at the most elementary of levels should serve as a warning to readers.

No less serious is a failure of the historical imagination. Again the situation is paradoxical, for historians are commonly not credited with being as imaginative as their peers in literary criticism. Yet, this is clearly the case, as a couple of examples demonstrate in telling fashion. Grillo makes frequent reference to Caesar’s consistently unfavourable representation of the *homo militaris* M. Petreius³ and even provides readers with a general presentation of this figure (p. 61 n. 8, incidentally containing a citation of Caes. *BC* 1.75.2 not listed in the *index locorum*). But not once does he relate what would have been the most significant element for Caesar’s audience, granted that they

² Cited by Gildersleeve and Lodge (1895) §430.

³ Pp. 15–16, 21, 23, 29, 46–50, 59–63, 70, 80–6, 95, 99, 112, 119, 121, 137, 161–3.

had a memory going back a little over a decade: Petreius was the man who had destroyed Catilina in engaged battle, for the consul C. Antonius had claimed indisposition and thereby managed to avoid the questionable honour of personally achieving a military victory over fellow-citizens (Sall. *Cat.* 59.4). That fact makes Petreius' arming and deploying his *familia* (gladiators?) and barbarian auxiliaries against legionaries all the more revolutionary. Engaging in the sort of reader response that Cynthia Damon has convincingly argued Caesar desired (Damon 1994; Batstone and Damon 2006), we recognise in Petreius the figure of Catilina.

Abandoning the Spanish theatre of civil war for the plains of Thessaly, we find a similar striking lack of historical imagination. Who was responsible for the tactical blunder that cost Pompeius Magnus the battle? C. Valerius Triarius, according to Caesar in the very phrase in which he remarks the error (Caes. *BC* 3.92.4–5). Discussing this error, Grillo fastens upon the fact that Cicero describes Triarius as 'a young learned man' (p. 116; N.B. the translation is Grillo's rendering of Cic. *Fin.* 1.13: *in primis gravis et doctus adolescens*) and seeks to connect that with the reading of Greek tactical works (e.g. Plut. *Brut.* 4.8, a fascinating image and excellent citation). Conceivably, but this seems redolent of book learning and once again betrays an incredible lack of memory.⁴ Triarius was the son of the homonymous Roman general who had lost both army and life in an infamous battle against Mithridates the Great at Zela in 67 BC. The locale is better known because it was there that Caesar signally routed and defeated Mithridates' son Pharnaces in 47 BC. It is to be remembered that Caesar is recorded as having said upon that occasion that he was surprised by the fact that Pompeius had enhanced his reputation by defeating such riff-raff.⁵ Whether the *bon mot* is historically true or not, people did draw a parallel between the two battles, to the detriment of Pompeius' own record. There is a quiet irony to be savoured in Caesar's attribution of the Pompeian tactic at Pharsalus to the son of the man who had been annihilated by Mithridates the Great.⁶ What both of these examples demonstrate, alas, is the fact that Grillo has overlooked some of the best and most convincing evidence for his thesis that Caesar's *Bellum Civile* is an inter-textual work (granting that we allow for a very loose definition of 'text' so as to include oral discourse that is only indirectly reflected by written monuments). Without imagination and memory, we are left with a very imperfect understanding of the *Bellum Civile*.

⁴ *Pace* the citation of Münzer (1955).

⁵ Westall (1996) 115–7.

⁶ Westall (2000) 350.

In terms of production, this book is elegant and sleek, precisely the sort of thing that people will want to have in their libraries. This reflects well upon Cambridge University Press and Grillo. Clearly great care was taken in terms of final appearance. Misprints are extremely rare (e.g. cut-and-paste gone amok at p. 104 n. 91; ‘änlicher’ rather than ‘ähnlicher’ at p. 112 n. 24; ‘Alba Fucense’ rather than ‘Alba Fucens’ at p. 124 n. 58), if one discounts unusual expressions (e.g. ‘bring close’ rather than ‘unite’ or ‘tie together’ as the English equivalent for the Italian ‘ravvicinano’ that the author had in mind at p. 166) and a citation invented for the occasion (p. 106). However, one thing of significance has gone awry that should be remarked by potential users. The excellent indices suffer from the fact that someone forgot to review the footnotes systematically. Therefore, discussions of use and interest (e.g. the role played by L. Cornelius Balbus the elder in 49 BC, at p. 79 n. 4; cf. absence of Spartacus, who does appear in the text at p. 118) and references to the ancient sources (e.g. Cass. Dio 44.6.4 at p. 104 n.91 or Caes. *BC* 1.72.5 at p. 61 n. 8) are consequently missing. That is a great shame, for it diminishes the usefulness of this attractive book.

Notwithstanding these reservations, Grillo’s book constitutes an important and timely addition to the growing body of work dealing with Caesar’s *Bellum Civile* and the Roman civil wars of 49–30 BC. It will undoubtedly stimulate further debate and serve to make us more attentive readers of an author whose seemingly straightforward narrative of civil war has misled generations of Classicists and ancient historians and hardly received the searching analysis that it merits. There is undoubtedly the risk that people seeking to apply Grillo’s methods will contrive readings that have little to do with history or literature, but Grillo’s book is a welcome invitation to reflect at greater length upon what Caesar was trying to do and did when he wrote the *Bellum Civile*. Therefore, the more questions the better. Of what significance is a molossus-trochee in Caesarian prose? Why avoidance of the word *clementia* even though Caesar himself had declared *lenitas* to be the new *ratio vincendi*? What connections are there between the text of the *Bellum Civile* and the numismatic and architectural programme of Caesar and his collaborators? With the assistance of narratology, more refined responses may be awaited and new questions raised. Transmitting the torch received from predecessors, Grillo evocatively points the way in this book, and the relay-race continues.

Bibliography

- Batstone, W. W., and C. Damon, (2006) *Caesar's Civil War* (Oxford).
- Cairns, F. and Fantham, E., edd. (2003) *Caesar against Liberty? Perspectives on His Autocracy* (PLLS 11; Cambridge).
- Carter, J. M. (1991–1993) *Caesar: The Civil War*. 2 vols. (Warminster).
- Damon, C. (1994) 'Caesar's Practical Prose', *CJ* 89: 183–95.
- Gildersleeve, B. L. and G. Lodge (1895) *Gildersleeve's Latin Grammar*³ (New York).
- Griffin, M., ed. (2009) *A Companion to Julius Caesar* (Malden, Mass. and Oxford).
- Kraus, C. S. (2007) 'Caesar's Account of the Battle of Massilia (*BC* 1.34–2.22): Some Historiographical and Narratological Approaches', in J. Marincola, ed. *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography* (Malden, Mass. and Oxford) 371–8.
- Mannetter, D.A. *Narratology in Caesar*. Diss. University of Wisconsin, Madison 1995.
- Münzer, F. (1955) 'C. Valerius (365) Triarius', *RE* VIII.A.2: 234.
- Rossi, A. F. (2000) 'The Camp of Pompey: Strategy of Representation in Caesar's *Bellum Civile*,' *CJ* 95: 239–56.
- Urso, G., ed. (2000) *L'ultimo Cesare: Scritti, riforme, progetti, poteri, congiure* (Rome).
- Welch, K. and A. Powell, edd. (1998) *Julius Caesar as Artful Reporter: The War Commentaries as Political Instrument* (Swansea).
- Westall, R. (1996) 'The Forum Iulium as Representation of Emperor Caesar', *RömMitt* 103: 83–118.
- (2000) *Caesar's Civil War and the Mediterranean World of 49–48 BC*. (Diss., Stanford).