

BOOK REVIEW

Der Gallische Krieg: Geschichte und Täuschung in Caesars Meisterwerk. By MARKUS SCHAUER. München: Verlag C. H. Beck, 2016. Pp. 271. Hardcover, €19,95. ISBN 978-3-406-68743-3.

While a “new” biography of Caesar seems to hit the market every year or two, surprisingly few book-length studies of the *Bellum Gallicum* (or the *Bellum civile*, for that matter) have appeared, even during the several decades which have elapsed since T. P. Wiseman’s *Clio’s Cosmetics* (1979), A. J. Woodman’s *Rhetoric in Classical historiography* (1989), etc. ushered in the new era of scholarship on ancient historiography. Andrew Riggsby’s 2006 monograph on the *BG* and Luca Grillo’s 2012 work on the *BC* represent the most recent contributions (in English, anyway), so it is fair to say that much more remains to be done. Shockingly, there is no true introduction to the *BG* in English; *Der Gallische Krieg* partially fills the void by offering an accessible overview of Caesar’s career prior to his proconsulship in the context of the Late Republic (Erster Teil, 13-78) and then of the war which determined the subsequent course of his life (Zweiter Teil, 79-231).

In the “Vorwort” (9–11), Schauer frames his essential question: “Wo schreibt Caesar Geschichte, wo erfindet er sie—und macht das, wenn Worte Tatsachen schaffen, überhaupt einen Unterschied?” (“Where does Caesar write history, where does he invent it—and does it make a difference anyway, when words construct reality?”, 9). In a more traditional vein, the author seeks to differentiate between “was man Caesar glauben darf und wo Zweifel angebracht sind” (“what one ought to believe Caesar about and where doubts are appropriate”, 10). At its core, the rest of the work explores this complex relationship between “Geschichte” and “Täuschung”.

“Erster Teil: Historische Voraussetzungen” (13–78) recounts the major events of 133–59 BC, from the rise and fall of the Gracchi to the consulship of Julius and Caesar. Beginning with a quotation from Theodor Mommsen’s *Römische Geschichte* (1854-1856), Schauer underscores how Caesar the general and Caesar the writer are inextricably bound up with each other, as well as how Caesar’s career marks the culmination of the transition from Republic to Empire. The author

develops a very conservative reconstruction of the political landscape, essentially along the lines of Friedrich Münzer's *Römische Adelsparteien und Adelsfamilien* (1920); in this world of *optimates* and *populares*, he charts the successive rise and fall of Marius, Sulla, and Pompey before turning to Caesar, in particular. Schauer duly emphasizes the importance of the usual milestones in Caesar's life leading up to his first consulship and stresses the signal importance of the proconsulship in offering Caesar the opportunity to restore both his finances and his reputation in preparation for his return to Rome.

"Zweiter Teil: Nachrichten aus dem Norden – Caesars *Commentarii*" (79–231) likewise tackles the narrative of 58–50 BC as presented in the *BG*. In "Die Erfindung einer neuen Gattung" (85–162), Schauer credits Caesar with the invention of the *commentarius* genre against the backdrop of a rich literary tradition, and he deftly connects Caesar with Cicero through their shared interest in self-promotion via the written word. Amidst many fruitful observations about Caesar's style, the author ventures an extended analysis of the Pullo and Vorenus episode in *BG* 5.44, but he ought to have pursued the comparison with Sabinus and Cotta (cf. 161). In "Die Erfindung der Geschichte" (162–231), Schauer identifies the *BG* as sophisticated political propaganda designed to create a new reality, and he wisely focuses on Caesar's manipulation of geography. Amidst many insightful comments about Caesar's relationships with his own men and his enemies, the author undertakes close readings of the wars against the Helvetii in *BG* 1 and Vercingetorix in *BG* 7, but he ought to have included more on Caesar's other enemies, especially Ambiorix.

In the "Fazit: Die Selbsterfindung Caesars" (233–242), Schauer returns to the essential question of the "Vorwort" and concludes "daß es nicht immer ganz einfach zu entscheiden war, ob wir es gerade mit dem Gallischen Krieg oder mit Caesars Büchern über den Gallischen Krieg zu tun haben." ("that it was not always easy to decide, whether we were dealing with the Gallic War or with Caesar's books on the Gallic War", 235). Ultimately, the author suggests that "Caesar hat eben beides <geschrieben>: Geschichte und Literatur" ("In fact, Caesar 'wrote' both: history and literature", *ibid.*). I would only contend that there is no objectively real Gallic War separate or even separable from Caesar's narrative, and that, in fact, Caesar wrote *Geschichte als Literatur*.

The back matter includes a "Zusammenfassung der Bücher 1-8 des *Bellum Gallicum*" (243–245), brief – mostly bibliographical – "Anmerkungen" (246–250), and a "Literaturverzeichnis" (251–261) of mostly German works, as well as

a “Register der Namen und geographischen Begriffe” (262–265), a “Stellenindex” (266–268), and a “Zeittafel” (269–271). For all of its evident virtues, the book falls short as an introduction, much less as a more ambitious study, because it does not treat the narrative of the *BG* in sufficient depth—Sabinus and Cotta merit only a passing mention—and because it does not engage with the language of the work in any deeply meaningful way—quotations from ancient literature appear only in German translation. These reservations aside, Schauer has certainly made a worthwhile contribution to the scholarship on Caesar and the *BG*, and I hope that this book will inspire a similar work in English, perhaps of a more literary bent.

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