



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

Advanced Latin: Caesar Genre questions

Trawsnewid Addysg; Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education; Transforming Lives



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Earlier Roman historical writing

- Annalistic historiography dominates Roman historical writing up to this point:
 - *tabulae annales* noting names of officials and key events in the regal period onward, publication in book form end of 2nd C BCE,
 - *annalistic historiography* from e.g. Fabius Pictor, Cincius Alimentus (late 3rd C BCE), often written in Greek, but gradually developing to literary form with considered narrative units
 - "the continuous presentation of history expresses a view of history where Rome is at the centre" (paraphrased from M. von Albrecht 1997: 309)
- Cato *Origines* (3rd C BCE) partly thematically organised (foundation of Greek cities in Italy), partly annalistic (chronological record of Rome to C's own days)
 - For a comparison of Cato and Caesar, see Kraus 2007: 245-249 in *A Companion to Latin Literature* (ed. S. Harrison).

Historiographical features

- Separate sections (e.g. on ethnography – here 5.12-14 on Britain, 6.11-28 on Gaul/Germania)
- Speeches integrated to explore the problems facing parties in a given situation
 - Direct or indirect? Difference in effect on reader
 - Cf. relative frequency across books – far more in 7!
- Considerations of the commander (motivations, reflection) included in the text
 - cf. syllogismoi in Polybius, Thucydides and Xenophon

Not quite historiography

- The *Commentarii* may be ordered by year, but are episodic rather than annalistic
- They are also centred on one individual's efforts (characters included on the basis of their relation to Caesar, *e.g.* stand-in or opponent)
- Xenophon's *Anabasis*
 - 3rd person narrator (based on author)
 - but cf. Thucydides also speaking of himself in 3rd person, Fabius Pictor including his own presence at the battle of the lake Trasimene (Pictor *fr.* 26)
 - aim to appear simple in style
 - some of the same features: geography and ethnography

Commentarii

*Commentarium consulatus mei Gaece compositum misi ad te. [...]
Latinum si perfecero, ad te mittam. (Cic. Att. 1.19.10 – 60 BCE)*

Cf. also the follow-up letter Att. 2.1.1-2.

*atque etiam commentarios quosdam scripsit rerum suarum. Valde quidem,
inquam, probandos; nudi enim sunt, recti et venusti, omni ornatu orationis
tamquam veste detracta. (Cic. Brut. 262 on Caesar's commentaries)*

*Pollio Asinius parum diligenter parumque integra veritate compositos
putat, cum Caesar pleraque et quae per alios erant gesta temere crediderit
et quae per se, vel consulto vel etiam memoria lapsus perperam ediderit;
existimatque rescripturum et correcturum fuisse. (Suet. Div. Iul. 56 on
Pollio's estimation of Caesar's commentarii)*

Questions to consider

- Where does Latin historiography go in the years after Caesar?
- How do authors like Livy, Sallust, and Tacitus relate to Caesar's genre?
- What intertexts are fundamental to later Roman historians?
- What are their overarching aims, and how do they compare to Caesar's?