

The Publication History of Julius Caesar's *Commentaries on the Gallic War*

This paper serves to resolve the debate over the timing of the publication of Julius Caesar's *Commentaries on the Gallic War*. Recent scholars such as Matthias Gelzer and Christian Meier have supported “unitary composition,” the traditionally-held belief that these commentaries were published in their entirety at the end of the Gallic War while Caesar was on his way to Rome, the reasons in support of this theory being the coherence of the text relative to the lack of it in Caesar's *Civil War*, and the lack of any overt mention of the *Commentaries* until Cicero's *Brutus*, delivered in the year 46 (Gelzer 104, Meier 253). The other side of this debate, that in favor of “serial publication,” asserts that Caesar wrote each book of the *Gallic War* at the end of the campaigning season which it described, and sent these to Rome in order that he might make his presence felt in the city while he was physically absent. This theory of publication has been most recently argued by Christopher Krebs and (to an extent) T.P. Wiseman, both of whom look to specific details of the text to support their assertions (Krebs 772-779, Wiseman 1-9).

Nobody, however, has taken into account one political event that I argue provides the strongest support for the theory of serial publication, namely the meeting of the triumvirate at Luca early in the year 56, the year that falls between Books Two and Three of the *Commentaries*. This event, arranged and successfully brought to a close by Caesar himself, provided him with the political security to continue his war in Gaul with no concerns about what was happening in Rome. By observing the marked difference in Caesar's authorial style before and after the conference at Luca, I will demonstrate that this single event is the strongest piece of evidence in support of the serial composition of the *Commentaries*.

Working from this thesis, this paper closely analyzes the details of Caesar's style in order to further support the theory of serial composition. In the first two books, Caesar emphasizes

attributes such as clemency and his unerring instincts as a general in order to prove to the displeased masses at Rome that he was working entirely for the good of the republic. The conference at Luca then happens, in the time that falls between the events of Books Two and Three. From this point on, having gained the extension to his proconsulship in Gaul, Caesar exhibits a completely different attitude toward his own actions. He begins to make decisions that would not have necessarily been too popular with the Roman audience, he takes fewer risks (because of the additional time he had now been granted to conquer Rome's foes), and he even admits to making mistakes on the battlefield.

In addition to this attitude shift around the conference at Luca, there are many textual factors that support this theory. There are several occasions in the text in which Caesar makes a claim, only to contradict himself at a later point in the work, a phenomenon that would have been less likely if the work had been composed all at once. Further, direct statement does not appear in the narrative until the pivotal Book Three, at which point Caesar can be thought to have shifted his perspective from attaining his proconsular extension to building a body of deeds that would contribute to his lasting legacy in Rome, which could only be further bolstered by the drama that direct quotation contributes to a narrative.

While this debate has been argued by many a scholar over a long period of time, this paper makes a contribution that, as yet, has evaded the notice of all composing Caesarian scholarship. The conference at Luca and its influence on Caesar's authorial style is the piece of evidence that brings this debate one step further on the road to completion, and such a resolution could help illuminate many other problems about Caesar's actions during such a significant moment in history.

Bibliography

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