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Ruth L. Breindel

Retired, Moses Brown School

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Who Wrote the *Gallic Wars*?

Ruth L. Breindel
The Moses Brown School, emerita



The word “wrote” has two meanings: the creation of those words and the physical activity of actually putting words down on a tablet or parchment. This paper, which is a preliminary study of “wrote,” deals with both of these definitions and answers the question in a new way.¹

We know that Caesar created the *Gallic Wars*, both in terms of actual fighting and also description. He was physically present and determined to send back important information to Rome, probably to bolster his own position and use the *Comentarii* as propaganda. Indeed, in the cut-throat politics of Rome, it was always necessary to protect one’s back.

CAESAR’S STYLE

Caesar was considered by his contemporaries and later historians as a master of style. Most of their comments concern Caesar’s speeches, of which only fragments survive. The following are summaries of ancient comments²:

Cicero, in the *Brutus*, written in 46 BCE, twice discussed Caesar’s oratorical style and concluded that Caesar was a great orator and didn’t use an elaborate style.

Sallust, also a contemporary, said about Caesar – and Catiline – that Caesar was a great orator and quite smart.

1 I have been unable to find research that deals with this topic.

2 Passages not cited in the body of the article are supplied at the end, with translations when necessary.

Quintilian, who wrote his *Institutiones* in the first century CE, made two comments: first, that Caesar was a fiery speaker, just as he was a fiery general, and second, that his energy was remarkable.

Tacitus, (late 1st – early 2nd century CE) who was a sharp commentator, stated in his *Dialogue* that he did not think Caesar's speeches were wonderful, but they were better than his poetry. But he did agree with others that Caesar was brilliant, in both the *Dialogue* and *Annales*.

Pliny the Younger, Tacitus' contemporary, stated that Caesar belonged among the best orators.

Suetonius, a purveyor of gossip who never found a rumor he didn't repeat, a contemporary of Tacitus and Pliny, quoting Cicero, agreed that Caesar was brilliant.

Plutarch, the Greek contemporary of the above 3 writers, who was not interested in gossip, believed that Caesar could have been a great orator had he not desired politics above all.

Aulus Gellius, who wrote slightly later than the above group, commented in his *Attic Nights* that Caesar was brilliant.

Finally, Apuleius, a contemporary of Gellius, in his *Apology*, stated that Caesar's style showed warmth, not an attribute that we ordinarily attribute to Caesar.

Thus, according to the ancient authors, Caesar was a wonderful orator. However, that is outside the scope of this paper, which concentrates on the writing of the *Gallic Wars*. Writing a speech is quite different from what Caesar set out to do in his *Commentarii*.

Eden quotes Cicero, writing in 55 BCE in the *de Oratore* about the origins of Roman historical records, and then points out:

These men were the continuators of an old tradition and Caesar was one of their number. This *similitudo scribendi* forms the basic layer of Caesar's style, this was his inheritance from annalist predecessors, and this makes his work a recognisable member of the *Annales-Commentarii* genre, or rather mixed breed.³

Returning to ancient sources, Cicero continued his conversation with Brutus (section 262) about the commentaries, acknowledging Caesar's supremacy in style. Caesar's general, Hirtius, in his introduction to Book 8 of the *Gallic Wars*, bemoaned

3 Eden (1962, pp. 74-117).

his own lack of elegance when compared to Caesar. Later, Suetonius, quoting both Cicero and Hirtius, wrote how magnificent the *Commentarii* are, especially when one considers how quickly they were written. Suetonius then discussed not only his style but also his breadth of knowledge, including his economy using paper and his use of ciphers.

To summarize the writing of the *Commentarii*: Caesar was a master of his own style. Most believe that Caesar wrote the commentaries as he was undergoing the activities as general in Gaul.

THE WRITING OF THE GALLIC WARS

So, in answer to the first point, the creation of the words, Caesar did decide what he wanted to say. But in answer to the second, as to who physically put them down in actual writing, and how that influenced the choice of the words, we now turn to scribes and grammar.

A general does not sit and write down his thoughts; he is too busy taking care of everything. As Caesar states:

Caesari omnia uno tempore erant agenda: vexillum proponendum, quod erat insigne, cum ad arma concurrere oporteret; signum tuba dandum; ab opere revocandi milites; qui paulo longius aggeris petendi causa processerant arcessendi; acies instruenda; milites cohortandi; signum dandum. *Galic War* 2.20.1

All things had to be done at one time by Caesar: the banner had to be displayed, which was evident, when it was fitting to engage at arms; the signal had to be given by the trumpet; the soldiers had to be recalled from their work; those who had gone a little farther for the sake of seeking [items for the] the ramparts had to be summoned; the battle line had to be drawn up; the soldiers had to be encouraged; the signal had to be given.

So who was in charge of the actual writing? Scribes were on the staff of the Quaestor.⁴ Plutarch describes Caesar's use of scribes both on his travels and in the camp:

4 Harper and Tolman (1908, p. 36).

έκοιμᾶτο μὲν γε τοὺς πλείστους ὕπνους ἐν ὀχήμασιν ἢ φορείοις, εἰς
πρᾶξιν τὴν ἀνάπαυσιν κατατιθέμενος, ὥχειτο δὲ μεθ' ἡμέραν ἐπὶ τὰ
φρούρια καὶ τὰς πόλεις καὶ τοὺς χάρακας, ἐνὸς αὐτῷ συγκαθημένου
παιδὸς τῶν ὑπογράφειν ἅμα διώκοντος εἰθισμένων, ἐνὸς δ' ἐξόπισθεν
ἐφεστηκός τοι στρατιώτου ξίφος ἔχοντος, ... *Life of Caesar* 17.3

Most of his sleep, at least, he got in cars or litters, making his rest
conducive to action, and in the day-time he would have himself conveyed
to garrisons, cities, or camps; one slave who was accustomed to write
from dictation as he travelled sitting by his side, and one soldier standing
behind him with a sword.⁵

From this it is obvious that Caesar never stopped dictating. Pliny the Elder was
amazed at the use Caesar made of his scribes:

The most remarkable instance, I think, of vigour of mind in any man ever
born, was that of Cæsar, the Dictator. I am not at present alluding to
his valour and courage, nor yet his exalted genius, which was capable of
embracing everything under the face of heaven, but I am speaking of that
innate vigour of mind, which was so peculiar to him, and that promptness
which seemed to act like a flash of lightning. We find it stated that he
was able to write or read, and, at the same time, to dictate and listen. He
could dictate to his secretaries four letters at once, and those on the most
important business; and, indeed, if he was busy about nothing else, as
many as seven.⁶ *Nat. Hist.* 7.25

These quotes are written proof of Caesar's use of scribes. They might have been
slaves, or perhaps they were young men attached to his retinue for political advance-
ment. The following is visual proof of the use of scribes.

5 http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Lives/Caesar*.html

6 <http://perseus.uchicago.edu/perseus-cgi/citequery3.pl?dbname=PerseusLatinTexts&query=Plin.%20Nat.%207.25&getid=1>

Rostovtzeff writes about a bas-relief⁷ of the 1st century BCE shows the *missio*, the discharge of soldiers:

A scribe is writing down the names of the discharged soldiers in a book and hands over to the soldiers in civilian dress their certificates (*tabulae missionis*) in the form of a *diptychon* (booklet of two pages). One of the soldiers has already received his booklet and watches the scribe making the corresponding entry in his book. Two others are waiting and talking to each other. A heap of booklets or of census registers is piled up before the scribe.⁸

In a fictional passage, John Maddox Roberts,⁹ sends his protagonist, Decius Caecilius Metellus the Younger, betrothed to Caesar's niece, to get some further military experience under Caesar. The passages at the end of this article take place in the camp while Caesar is treating with the Helvetians at the beginning of Book 1 of the *Gallie Wars*. Caesar's view of his own style is discussed in the first passage and Decius' shock at reading Caesar in the second. Decius then goes on to describe his shock at Caesar's style.

In any event, the use of scribes was very common and attested. In fact, Tiro, Cicero's scribe, developed his own shorthand in order to take down the words of Cicero. Students often take notes while teachers speak; these notes are usually not verbatim, as Tiro was supposed to have written, but their own understanding of what was said in their own words. Surely students did not invent the wheel, and scribes on a general's staff would probably have done the same.

I came to this conclusion when teaching Book 1 of the *Gallie Wars*. I noticed that there were great differences in the purpose expressions being used: the subjunctive or the gerund/gerundive. I then went through the all of Book 1, finding every example of *ut / ne / qui* etc. with the subjunctive as well as all the gerunds and gerundives.¹⁰

7 Eden (1962).

8 Rostovtzeff (1927, pp. 86-87).

9 Both passages are cited at the end of this article; Roberts (2001).

10 First, I downloaded the entire Book 1 of the *Gallie Wars* from The Latin Library. Next, I hit Control F, which opens up the search box on the left. I then typed in "nd", and checked each instance first, to make sure it was a gerund/gerundive, and second to see that it used *ad, causa* or *gratia*. While the

After finding all the examples that could be purpose clauses, I reviewed them carefully. Not satisfied with my own decisions, I brought them to our reading group.¹¹ There were many lively discussions about whether a particular usage was a result clause or a purpose clause; we finally resolved on a list. The information is charted below.

CONSTRUCTIONS USED - CHARTS

Location in Book 1; second column lists *ut* unless otherwise specified; parentheses note clauses with other possible constructions

search sidebar says there are 150 matches, it is very easy to find the “real” gerunds and gerundives.

It was also easy to find the subjunctives; the difficulty with the subjunctives was deciding exactly what type of construction was being used.

I began by typing into the search box space “ut” space and then copying and pasting every occurrence. You need to put the space before and after the word, so that you don’t get words such as *utor*, where the *ut* is at the beginning of a word, or *sicut*, where the *ut* is at the end of the word, or *virtute*, where the *ut* is in the middle of the word. Since there are only 72 matches, the sidebar is able to show them all, and you can quickly move over those that are obviously not purpose clauses.

To find the purpose clauses with *mitto*, I then typed in space mitt, and checked out all those usages. Since there are only 11 matches, this was easy. The space before *mitt* made sure that I didn’t get compounds of *mitto*, such as *committo*. Because there was no space after *mitt*, all the verb endings appeared. Then it was necessary to do this with *mis* for the past tense. There is no example of this until Chapter 21.

11 Thanks to the RI Reading Group, consisting of Timothy Joseph, Ben Revkin, Anne Drogula and Jan Frazier; and my friend Dr. Morris Faienstein, who has access to the University of Maryland library and found many articles for me.

Book I	gerund/ive with <i>ad/causa/gratia</i>	<i>ut/ne/qui/quo</i>
I.1	I	
I.3	3	I
I.4		I <i>ne</i>
I.5	I	I
I.6		2
I.7	I	2 (I <i>qui</i>)
I.8		I (<i>quo</i>)
I.9		3 (I <i>ne</i>)
I.13		3
I.17		I <i>ne</i>
I.18	I	
I.20	I	I
I.21		I (<i>qui</i>)
I.22		I
I.24		I (<i>qui</i>)
I.25		2
I.26		I <i>ne</i>
I.27		I <i>ne</i>
I.28		I <i>ne</i>
I.30		2
I.31		I <i>ne</i>
I.34		I (<i>qui</i>)
I.38	2	
I.39	I	I
I.40		I
I.41	I	I
I.42		I
I.44	3 (2 <i>causa/gratia</i>)	
I.47	3 (<i>causa/gratia</i>)	
I.48		I
I.49		I <i>ne</i> ; I (<i>qui</i>)

I.50		I (<i>qui</i>)
I.51		I
I.52		2
I.54	I	
Total	19	39

The totals show that the subjunctive is used twice as often as the gerund or gerundive.

In this chart, the uses are even clearer:

Book I	<i>causa</i> gerund	<i>causa</i> ge- rundive	<i>ad</i> ger- und	<i>ad</i> ge- rundive	<i>ut / ne / qui / quo</i>
I.1				I	
I.2					
I.3			I	2	I
I.4					I <i>ne</i>
I.5				I	I
I.6					2
I.7			I		2 (I <i>qui</i>)
I.8					I (<i>quo</i>)
I.9					3 (I <i>ne</i>)
I.10					
I.11					
I.12					
I.13					3
I.14					
I.15					
I.16					
I.17					I <i>ne</i>
I.18			I		
I.19					
I.20				I	I
I.21					I (<i>qui</i>)
I.22					I
I.23					

I.24					I (<i>qui</i>)
I.25					2
I.26					I <i>ne</i>
I.27					I <i>ne</i>
I.28					I <i>ne</i>
I.29					
I.30					2
I.31					I <i>ne</i>
I.32					
I.33					
I.34					I (<i>qui</i>)
I.35					
I.36					
I.37					
I.38				2	
I.39			I		I
I.40					I
I.41				I	I
I.42					I
I.43					
I.44		2		I	
I.45					
I.46					
I.47	3				
I.48					I
I.49					I <i>ne</i> ; I (<i>qui</i>)
I.50					I (<i>qui</i>)
I.51					I
I.52					2
I.53					
I.54				I	
Total	3	2	4	10	<i>ut</i> : 24; <i>ne</i> : 8; <i>qui</i> : 6; <i>quo</i> : 1

First, in 25 chapters there are no purpose expressions. To put it another way, 46% of the chapters have no purpose constructions, so 54% use purpose clauses; i.e., more than half the chapters use the subjunctive. Even more strikingly, of those chapters, 7 (shown with light cross-hatching) use the subjunctive more than once, thus making up 13% of the chapters.

Second, there are clearly large gaps between the various uses. The horizontal lines on the left show passages with no gerunds or gerundives: chapters 8-17, 21-37, and 48-53. This chart also shows the clustering of uses: 1-7, 18-20, 38-47. Although not every chapter in a particular cluster uses a gerund or gerundive, there is a large number of these appear in these groupings. The vertical lines on the right shows gaps in the subjunctive.

CONSTRUCTIONS USED – PASSAGES

Subjunctive with *ut / ne*

The subjunctive with *ut / ne* is the most common, and is only omitted as a group in chapters 32-38 (chapter 34 has a *qui* usage) and 43-47.

- I.3 ut in itinere copia frumenti suppeteret
- I.4 per eos ne causam diceret se eripuit.
- I.5 ut domum reditionis spe sublata paratiores ad omnia
pericula subeunda essent;
- I.6 mons autem altissimus impendebat, ut facile perpauci prohibere possent;
existimabant vel vi coacturos ut per suos fines eos ire paterentur.
- I.7 ut spatium intercedere posset dum milites quos imperaverat convenirent,
legatos ad eum mittunt nobilissimos civitatis, qui dicerent sibi esse in
animo sine ullo maleficio iter per provinciam facere, propterea quod
aliud iter haberent nullum:
- I.9 legatos ad Dumnorigem Haeduum mittunt, ut eo deprecatore a Sequanis
impetrarent. Sequani, ne itinere Helvetios prohibeant, Helvetii, ut sine
maleficio et iniuria transeant.
- I.13 reliquas copias Helvetiorum ut consequi posset ut flumen transirent,
ut is locus ubi constitissent ex calamitate populi Romani et
internecone exercitus nomen caperet aut memoriam proderet.
- I.17 ne frumentum conferant quod debeant:
- I.20 ut quae agat, quibuscum loquatur scire possit.
- I.21 qualis esset natura montis et qualis in circuitu ascensus
qui cognoscerent misit.

- 1.22 ut undique uno tempore in hostes impetus fieret,
 1.24 equitatumque, qui sustineret hostium impetum, misit.
 1.25 ut aequato omnium periculo spem fugae tolleret,
 Romani conversa signa bipertito intulerunt: prima et secunda acies, ut
 victis ac submotis resisteret, tertia, ut venientes sustineret.
 1.26 Caesar ad Lingonas litteras nuntiosque misit, ne eos frumento neve
 alia re iuarent:
 1.27 ne armis traditis supplicio adficerentur,
 1.28 ne propter bonitatem agrorum Germani, qui trans Rhenum incolunt, ex suis
 finibus in Helvetiorum fines transirent
 1.30 domos suas Helvetii reliquissent uti toti Galliae bellum inferrent
 imperioque potirentur,
 1.31 ne maior multitudo Germanorum Rhenum traducatur,
 1.34 Quam ob rem placuit ei ut ad Ariovistum legatos mitteret,
 qui ab eo postularent
 1.39 non nulli pudore adducti, ut timoris suspicionem vitarent, remanebant
 1.40 ut quam primum intellegere posset utrum apud eos pudor atque officium an
 timor plus valeret.
 1.41 ut milium amplius quinquaginta circuitu locis apertis exercitum duceret
 1.42 ut praesidium quam amicissimum, si quid opus facto esset, haberet.
 1.48 ut, si vellet Ariovistus proelio contendere, ei potestas non deesset.
 1.49 ne diutius commeatu prohiberetur eo circiter hominum XVI milia expedita
 cum omni equitatu Ariovistus misit, quae copiae nostros terrerent et
 munitione prohiberent.
 1.50 Tum demum Ariovistus partem suarum copiarum, quae castra minora
 oppugnaret, misit.
 1.51 quod minus multitudine militum legionariorum pro hostium numero
 valebat, ut ad speciem alariis uteretur
 1.52 uti eos testes suae quisque virtutis haberet;
 ut spatium pila in hostes coiciendi non daretur.

Subjunctive with *qui* and *quo* plus comparative

The subjunctive with *qui* is less common, appearing 6 times, and with *quo* plus the comparative, only once.

- 1.7 Ubi de eius adventu Helvetii certiores facti sunt, legatos ad eum mittunt
 nobilissimos civitatis, cuius legationis Nammeius et Verucloetius
 principem locum obtinebant, qui dicerent sibi esse in animo sine ullo

maleficio iter per provinciam facere, propterea quod aliud iter haberent nullum:

- 1.21 qualis esset natura montis et qualis in circuitu ascensus qui cognoscerent misit.
- 1.24 equitatumque, qui sustineret hostium impetum, misit.
- 1.34 Quam ob rem placuit ei ut ad Ariovistum legatos mitteret, qui ab eo postularent uti aliquem locum medium utrisque conloquio deligeret:
- 1.49 Eo circiter hominum XVI milia expedita cum omni equitatu Ariovistus misit, quae copiae nostros terrent et munitione prohiberent.
- 1.50 Tum demum Ariovistus partem suarum copiarum, quae castra minora oppugnaret, misit.

quo plus subjunctive

Purpose Clause with *quo plus subjunctive* is used only once.

- 1.8 quo facilius, si se invito transire conentur, prohibere possit

Ad with gerund or gerundive

Ad with the gerund or gerundive is the most common form of that construction, appearing 14 times.

- 1.1 ea quae ad effeminandos animos pertinent important,
- 1.3 constituerunt ea quae ad proficiscendum pertinerent comparare
Ad eas res conficiendas biennium sibi satis esse duxerunt
Ad eas res conficiendas Orgetorix deligitur.
- 1.5 paratiores ad omnia pericula subeunda essent
- 1.7 respondit diem se ad deliberandum sumpturum:
- 1.18 facultates ad largiendum magnas comparasse;
- 1.20 quibus opibus ac nervis non solum ad minuendam gratiam,
- 1.38 copiis ad occupandum Vesontionem, magnam ad ducendum bellum daret facultatem,
- 1.39 quam sibi ad proficiscendum necessariam esse diceret
- 1.41 seque esse ad bellum gerendum paratissimam confirmavit.
- 1.43 cum neque aditum neque causam postulandi iustam haberet,
- 1.44 ad se oppugnandum venisse
- 1.54 ipse in citeriorem Galliam ad conventus agendos profectus est.

Causa / gratia with gerund or gerundive

Causa / gratia with gerund or gerundive is rare, appearing 5 times in a clump at

chapters 44-47 (shown on the chart with grey filling).

- 1.44 non Galliae oppugnandae causa facere; sui opprimendi causa habere
1.47 Conloquendi Caesari causa visa non est, et quod in eo peccandi Germanis
causa non esset, an speculandi causa?

Subjunctive and the Gerund or Gerundive

Out of 30 chapters that use purpose expressions, there are only 6 chapters where both the subjunctive and the gerund or gerundive are both used. That is only 20% of the total number of chapters, showing that one construction or the other is usually chosen.

- 1.3 His rebus adducti et auctoritate Orgetorigis permoti constituerunt ea quae ad proficiscendum pertinerent comparare, iumentorum et carrorum quam maximum numerum coemere, sementes quam maximas facere, ut in itinere copia frumenti suppeteret, cum proximis civitatibus pacem et amicitiam confirmare. Ad eas res conficiendas biennium sibi satis esse duxerunt; in tertium annum profectionem lege confirmant. Ad eas res conficiendas Orgetorix deligitur.
- 1.5 ut domum reditionis spe sublata paratiores ad omnia pericula subeunda essent;
- 1.7 Tamen, ut spatium intercedere posset dum milites quos imperaverat convenirent, legatis respondit diem se ad deliberandum sumpturum
- 1.20 quibus opibus ac nervis non solum ad minuendam gratiam, sed paene ad perniciem suam uteretur. ut quae agat, quibuscum loquatur scire possit.
- 1.39 quam sibi ad proficiscendum necessariam esse diceret, petebat ut eius voluntate discedere liceret; non nulli pudore adducti, ut timoris suspicionem vitarent, remanebant.
- 1.41 seque esse ad bellum gerendum paratissimam confirmavit ut milium amplius quinquaginta circuitu locis apertis exercitum duceret

Three of these that use both constructions are in the first 7 chapters and 2 are in chapters 39 and 41. Of these 6 chapters, 3 (or half) of them use the two constructions in the same sentence – chapters 3, 7 and 39. Chapters 3 and 7 also have a cluster of gerunds and gerundives. In addition, in Chapter 3, these forms appear in the first 3 sentences. This is also true in Chapter 7, which is much shorter, so the constructions would appear near each other. In fact, it is important to emphasize that the chapters are of varied length, so multiple uses of a construction in a longer chapter can be balanced against fewer uses in a shorter chapter.

ut with forms of *possum* and *quo* with comparative

As can be expected, *ut* is used with *possum*, since there is no easy way to use the gerund or gerundive with that verb. This is also the only time *quo* with the comparative is used.

- I.6 mons autem altissimus impendebat, ut facile perpauci prohibere possent;
- I.7 ut spatium intercedere posset dum milites quos imperaverat convenirent,
- I.8 quo facilius, si se invito transire conentur, prohibere possit
- I.13 reliquas copias Helvetiorum ut consequi posset
- I.20 ut quae agat, quibuscum loquatur scire possit.
- I.40 ut quam primum intellegere posset utrum apud eos pudor atque officium an timor plus valeret

Gerund and gerundive, used twice each

With the gerund and gerundive, *proficisor* and *conficio* are the only 2 verbs used twice. Interestingly, *conficio* is used twice in the same chapter.

proficisor

- I.3 constituerunt ea quae ad proficiscendum pertinerent comparare
- I.39 quam sibi ad proficiscendum necessariam esse diceret

conficio

- I.3 Ad eas res conficiendas biennium sibi satis esse duxerunt
Ad eas res conficiendas Orgetorix deligitur.

Subjunctive with *mitto*

The use of subjunctive with *mitto* appears 6 times.

- I.7 Ubi de eius adventu Helvetii certiores facti sunt, legatos ad eum mittunt
nobilissimos civitatis, cuius legationis Nammeius et Verucloetius
principem locum obtinebant, qui dicerent sibi esse in animo sine ullo
maleficio iter per provinciam facere, propterea quod aliud iter
haberent nullum:
- I.21 qualis esset natura montis et qualis in circuitu ascensus qui cognoscerent
misit.
- I.24 equitatumque, qui sustineret hostium impetum, misit.
- I.34 Quam ob rem placuit ei ut ad Ariovistum legatos mitteret, qui ab eo
postularent uti aliquem locum medium utrisque conloquio deligeret:
- I.49 Eo circiter hominum XVI milia expedita cum omni equitatu Ariovistus
misit, quae copiae nostros terrent et munitione prohiberent.

- 1.50 Tum demum Ariovistus partem suarum copiarum, quae castra minora
oppugnaret, misit

Negative Clauses with subjunctive

Additionally, since gerunds and gerundives are rarely used in the negative, those 8 negative clauses almost have to be in the subjunctive.

- 1.4 per eos ne causam diceret se eripuit.
1.9 Sequani, ne itinere Helvetios prohibeant, Helvetii
1.17 ne frumentum conferant quod debeant:
1.26 Caesar ad Lingonas litteras nuntiosque misit, ne eos frumento neve
alia re iuarent:
1.27 ne armis traditis supplicio adficerentur,
1.28 ne propter bonitatem agrorum Germani, qui trans Rhenum incolunt, ex suis
finibus in Helvetiorum fines transirent
1.31 ne maior multitudo Germanorum Rhenum traducatur,
1.49 ne diutius commeatu prohiberetur

CONCLUSION

What conclusions can be made from this? I believe that the different scribes used the grammatical constructions they preferred. In addition, looking at the clumps of constructions, it would seem that either a huge amount of information was written down at one time as Caesar dictated, or that the scribe made his notes and later went over them and wrote the text.

Thus, to answer the question: who wrote the *Gallic Wars*? I suggest that it was a collaboration between the scribes and Caesar, and not Caesar alone. We know that the style of the *Gallic Wars* changed over the course of the books. For example, there are no direct speeches until Book 4, one obvious example that Caesar's style was not always the same. Scribes were very important, and perhaps their own views on how to write showed through. If Caesar read over what the scribes had written, it would seem that he was fine with any grammar, as long as it was clear and got the message across – which it certainly did. Let's give credit both to Caesar, who is used to it, and to the scribes, those unsung and unknown heroes who did the work of writing.

PASSAGES

Caesar

Gallic War 8

Constat enim inter omnes nihil tam operose ab aliis esse perfectum, quod non horum elegantia commentariorum superetur: qui sunt editi, ne scientia tantarum rerum scriptoribus deesset, adeoque probantur omnium iudicio ut praerepta, non praebita, facultas scriptoribus videatur. Cuius tamen rei maior nostra quam reliquorum est admiratio: ceteri enim, quam bene atque emendate, nos etiam, quam facile atque celeriter eos perfecerit scimus. Erat autem in Caesare cum facultas atque elegantia summa scribendi, tum verissima scientia suorum consiliorum explicandorum.

For it is agreed on all hands, that no composition was ever executed with so great care, that it is not exceeded in elegance by these Commentaries, which were published for the use of historians, that they might not want memoirs of such achievements; and they stand so high in the esteem of all men, that historians seem rather deprived of, than furnished with material. At which we have more reason to be surprised than other men; for they can only appreciate the elegance and correctness with which he finished them, while we know with what ease and expedition. Caesar possessed not only an uncommon flow of language and elegance of style, but also a thorough knowledge of the method of conveying his ideas.¹²

Cicero

Brutus 252

Sed tamen, Brute, inquit Atticus, de Caesare et ipse ita iudico et de hoc huius generis acerrumo existimatore saepissime audio, illum omnium

¹² <http://classics.mit.edu/Caesar/gallic.8.8.html>

fere oratorum Latine loqui elegantissime; nec id solum domestica consuetudine ut dudum de Laeliorum et Muciorum familiis audiebamus, sed quamquam id quoque credo fuisse, tamen, ut esset perfecta illa bene loquendi laus, multis litteris et iis quidem reconditis et exquisitis summoque studio et diligentia est consecutus. ut dudum de Laeliorum et Muciorum familiis audiebamus, sed quamquam id quoque credo fuisse, tamen, ut esset perfecta illa bene loquendi laus, multis litteris et iis quidem reconditis et exquisitis summoque studio et diligentia est consecutus.

But, however,” said he, (addressing himself to Brutus) “I really think of Caesar, and every body else says the same of this perceptive judge [of the art of speaking], that he has the purest and the most elegant command of the Roman language of all the orators that have yet appeared: and that not merely by domestic habit, as we have lately heard it observed of the families of the Laelii and the Mucii, (though even here, I believe, this might partly have been the case) but he chiefly acquired and brought it to its present perfection, by a studious application to the most intricate and refined branches of literature, and by a careful and constant attention to the purity of his style.¹³

Brutus 261

Caesar autem rationem adhibens consuetudinem vitiosam et corruptam pura et incorrupta consuetudine emendat. itaque cum ad hanc elegantiam verborum Latinorum—quae, etiam si orator non sis et sis ingenuus civis Romanus, tamen necessaria est—adiungit illa oratoria ornamenta dicendum videtur tamquam tabulas bene pictas conlocare in bono lumine. hanc cum habeat praecipuam laudem in communibus, non video cui debeat cedere. splendidam quandam minimeque veteratoriam rationem dicendi tenet, voce motu forma etiam magnificam et generosam quodam modo.

But Caesar, who was guided by the principles of art, has corrected the imperfections of a vicious custom, by adopting the rules and

13 <http://www.attalus.org/old/brutus3.html>

improvements of a good one, as he found them occasionally displayed in the course of polite conversation. Accordingly, to the purest elegance of expression, (which is equally necessary to every well-bred citizen, as to an orator) he has added all the various ornaments of eloquence; so that he seems to exhibit the finest painting in the most advantageous point of view. As he has such extraordinary merit even in the common run of his language, I must confess that there is no person I know of, to whom he should yield the preference. Besides, his manner of speaking, both as to his voice and gesture, is splendid and noble, without the least appearance of artifice or affectation: and there is a dignity in his very presence, which bespeaks a great and elevated mind.”¹⁴

Brutus 262

Tum Brutus: orationes quidem eius mihi vehementer probantur. compluris autem legi; atque etiam commentarios quosdam scripsit rerum suarum.

Valde quidem, inquam, probandos; nudi enim sunt, recti et venusti, omni ornatu orationis tamquam veste detracta. sed dum voluit alios habere parata, unde sumerent qui vellent scribere historiam, ineptis gratum fortasse fecit, qui volent illa calamistris inurere: sanos quidem homines a scribendo deterruit; nihil est enim in historia pura et inlustri brevitate dulcius. sed ad eos, si placet, qui vita excesserunt, revertamur.

“Indeed,” said Brutus, “his orations please me highly; for I have had the satisfaction to read several of them. He has likewise written some commentaries, or short memoirs, of his own transactions;”

“... and such,” said I, “as merit the highest approbation: for they are plain, correct, and graceful, and divested of all the ornaments of language, so as to appear (if I may be allowed the expression) in a kind of undress. But while he pretended only to furnish the loose materials, for such as might

¹⁴ <http://www.attalus.org/old/brutus4.html>

be inclined to compose a regular history, he may, perhaps, have gratified the vanity of a few literary embroiderers; but he has certainly prevented all sensible men from attempting any improvement on his plan. For in history, nothing is more pleasing than a correct and elegant brevity of expression.¹⁵

About Oratory 22.52-3

erat enim historia nihil aliud nisi annalium confectio . . . Hanc similitudinem scribendi multi secuti sunt, qui sine ullis ornamentis monumenta solum temporum, hominum, locorum gestarumque rerum reliquerunt.

For history was nothing else but a compilation of annals . . . [Caesar's] mode of writing many have adopted, and, without any ornaments of style, have left behind them simple chronicles of times, persons, places, and events.¹⁶

Sallust

Cataline 54.1

igitur iis genus aetas eloquentia prope aequalia fuere, magnitudo animi par, item gloria, sed alia alii.

Their birth, age, and eloquence, were nearly on an equality; their greatness of mind similar, as was also their reputation, though attained by different means.¹⁷

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ http://pages.pomona.edu/~cmc24747/sources/cic_web/de_or_2.htm

¹⁷ <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0124%3Achapter%3D54>

Quintilian

Institutions 10.1.114

C. vero Caesar si foro tantum vacasset, non alius ex nostris contra Ciceronem nominaretur: tanta in eo vis est, id acumen, ea concitatio, ut illum eodem animo dixisse quo bellavit appareat; exornat tamen haec omnia mira sermonis, cuius proprie studiosus fuit, elegantia.

As for Julius Caesar, if he had devoted himself wholly to the forum, no other of our countrymen would have been named as a rival to Cicero. There is in him such force, such perspicuity, such fire, that he evidently spoke with the same spirit with which he fought. All these qualities, too, he sets off with a remarkable elegance of diction, of which he was peculiarly studious.¹⁸

Institutions 10.2.25

Quid ergo? non est satis omnia sic dicere quo modo M. Tullius dixit? Mihi quidem satis esset si omnia consequi possem. Quid tamen noceret vim Caesaris, asperitatem Caeli, diligentiam Pollionis, iudicium Calui quibusdam in locis adsumere?

“What then?” the reader may ask, “Is it not sufficient to speak on every subject as Cicero spoke?” To me, assuredly, it would be sufficient, if I could attain all his excellences. Yet what disadvantage would it be to assume, on some occasions, the energy of Caesar, the asperity of Caelius, the accuracy of Pollio, or the judgment of Calvus?¹⁹

¹⁸ <http://rhetoric.eserver.org/quintilian/10/chapter1.html#105>

¹⁹ Ibid.

Tacitus

Dialogue 21.5

concedamus sane C. Caesari, ut propter magnitudinem cogitationum et occupationes rerum minus in eloquentia effecerit, quam divinum eius ingenium postulabat, tam hercule quam Brutum philosophiae suae relinquamus; nam in orationibus minorem esse fama sua etiam admiratores eius fatentur: nisi forte quisquam aut Caesaris pro Decio Samnite aut Bruti pro Deiotaro rege ceterosque eiusdem lentitudinis ac teporis libros legit, nisi qui et carmina eorundem miratur. fecerunt enim et carmina et in bibliothecas rettulerunt, non melius quam Cicero, sed felicius, quia illos fecisse pauciores sciunt.

We may, indeed, make allowance for Caius Julius Cæsar, on account of his vast schemes and many occupations, for having achieved less in eloquence than his divine genius demanded from him, and leave him indeed, just as we leave Brutus to his philosophy. Undoubtedly in his speeches he fell short of his reputation, even by the admission of his admirers. I hardly suppose that any one reads Cæsar's speech for Decius the Samnite, or that of Brutus for King Deiotarus, or other works equally dull and cold, unless it is some one who also admires their poems. For they did write poems, and sent them to libraries, with no better success than Cicero, but with better luck, because fewer people know that they wrote them.²⁰

Diologue 25.3

sed quo modo inter Atticos oratores primae Demostheni tribuuntur, proximum [autem] locum Aeschines et Hyperides et Lysias et Lycurgus obtinent, omnium autem concessu haec oratorum aetas maxime probatur, sic apud nos Cicero quidem ceteros eorundem temporum disertos antecessit, Calvus autem et Asinius et Caesar et Caelius et Brutus iure

20 <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0082%3Achapter%3D21>

et prioribus et sequentibus anteponuntur. nec refert quod inter se specie differunt, cum genere consentiant. adstrictior Calvus, numerosior Asinius, splendidior Caesar, amarior Caelius, gravior Brutus, vehementior et plenior et valentior Cicero: omnes tamen eandem sanitatem eloquentiae <prae se> ferunt, ut si omnium pariter libros in manum sumpseris, scias, quamvis in diversis ingeniis, esse quandam iudicii ac voluntatis similitudinem et cognationem.

I maintain, however, that just as among Attic orators we give the first place to Demosthenes and assign the next to Aeschines, Hyperides, Lysias and Lycurgus, while all agree in regarding this as pre-eminently the age of speakers, so among ourselves Cicero indeed was superior to all the eloquent men of his day, though Calvus, Asinius, Cæsar, Caelius, and Brutus may claim the right of being preferred to those who preceded and who followed them. It matters nothing that they differ in special points, seeing that they are generically alike. Calvus is the more terse, Asinius has the finer rhythm, Caesar greater brilliancy, Caelius is the more caustic, Brutus the more earnest, Cicero the more impassioned, the richer and more forcible. Still about them all there is the same healthy tone of eloquence. Take into your hand the works of all alike and you see that amid wide differences of genius, there is a resemblance and affinity of intellect and moral purpose.²¹

Annals 13.3

nam dictator Caesar summis oratoribus aemulus;

For the dictator Caesar was a rival to the greatest orators;²²

21 <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0082%3Achapter%3D21>

22 trans. R. Breindel.

Pliny the Younger

Epistles 1.20.4

Hic ille mecum auctoritatibus agit ac mihi ex Graecis orationes Lysiae ostentat, ex nostris Gracchorum Catonisque, quorum sane plurimae sunt circumcisae et breves: ego Lysiae Demosthenen Aeschinen Hyperiden multosque praeterea, Gracchis et Catoni Pollionem Caesarem Caelium, in primis M. Tullium oppono, cuius oratio optima fertur esse quae maxima.

At this point he produces his authorities, and quotes me the Greek Lysias and our own Romans, the brothers Gracchus and Cato. It is true that most of their speeches are short and concise, but I counter Lysias with Demosthenes, Aeschines, Hyperides, and many others, and the Gracchi and Cato with Pollio, Caesar, Caelius, and above all Cicero, whose longest speech is generally considered his best.²³

Suetonius

Life of Julius 55

Eloquentia militarique re aut aequavit praestantissimorum gloriam aut excessit. post accusationem Dolabellae haud dubie principibus patronis adnumeratus est. certe Cicero ad Brutum oratores enumerans negat se videre, cui debeat Caesar cedere, aitque eum elegantem, splendidam quoque atque etiam magnificam et generosam quodam modo rationem dicendi tenere; et ad Cornelium Nepotem de eodem ita scripsit: ‘quid? oratorem quem huic antepones eorum, qui nihil aliud egerunt? quis sententiis aut acutior aut crebrior? quis verbis aut ornatior aut elegantior?’ genus eloquentiae dum taxat adolescens adhuc Strabonis Caesaris secutus videtur, cuius etiam ex oratione, quae inscribitur ‘pro Sardis,’ ad verbum nonnulla transtulit in divinationem suam. pronuntiasse autem dicitur voce acuta, ardenti motu gestuque, non sine venustate.

23 https://www.loebclassics.com/view/pliny_younger-letters/1969/pb_LCL055.59.xml?result=1&rskey=UXRf7Z

In eloquence and in the art of war he either equalled or surpassed the fame of their most eminent representatives. After his accusation of Dolabella, he was without question numbered with the leading advocates. At all events when Cicero reviews the orators in his *Brutus*, he says that he does not see to whom Caesar ought to yield the palm, declaring that his style is elegant as well as transparent, even grand and in a sense noble. Again in a letter to Cornelius Nepos he writes thus of Caesar: "Come now, what orator would you rank above him of those who have devoted themselves to nothing else? Who has cleverer or more frequent epigrams? Who is either more picturesque or more choice in diction?" He appears, at least in his youth, to have imitated the manner of Caesar Strabo, from whose speech entitled "For the Sardinians" he actually transferred some passages word for word to a trial address of his own. He is said to have delivered himself in a high-pitched voice with impassioned action and gestures, which were not without grace.²⁴

Life of Julius 56

Pollio Asinius parum diligenter parumque integra ueritate 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. Reliquit et 'de analogia' duos libros et 'Anticatones' totidem ac praeterea poema quod inscribitur *Iter*. Quorum librorum primos in transitu Alpium, cum ex citeriore Gallia conventibus peractis ad exercitum rediret, sequentes sub tempus Mundensis proelii fecit; novissimum, dum ab urbe in Hispaniam ulteriorem quarto et vicensimo die pervenit. Epistulae quoque eius ad senatum extant, quas primum videtur ad paginas et formam memorialis libelli convertisse, cum antea consules et duces non nisi transversa charta scriptas mitterent. Extant et ad Ciceronem, item ad familiares domesticis de rebus, in quibus, si qua occultius perferenda erant, per notas scripsit, id est sic structo litterarum ordine, ut nullum verbum effici posset: quae si qui investigare et persequi velit, quartam elementorum litteram, id est D pro

24 <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/6400/6400-h/6400-h.htm>

A et perinde reliquas commutat. Feruntur [a puero et] ab adulescentulo quaedam scripta, ut 'Laudes Herculis,' tragoedia 'Oedipus,' item 'Dicta collectanea': quos omnis libellos vetuit Augustus publicari in epistula, quam brevem admodum ac simplicem ad Pompeium Macrum, cui ordinandas bibliothecas delegaverat, misit.

Pollio Asinius thinks that they were not drawn up with much care, or with a due regard to truth; for he insinuates that Caesar was too hasty of belief in regard to what was performed by others under his orders; and that, he has not given a very faithful account of his own acts, either by design, or through defect of memory; expressing at the same time an opinion that Caesar intended a new and more correct edition. He has left behind him likewise two books on Analogy, with the same number under the title of Anti-Cato, and a poem entitled The Itinerary. Of these books, he composed the first two in his passage over the Alps, as he was returning to the army after making his circuit in Hither-Gaul; the second work about the time of the battle of Munda; and the last during the four-and-twenty days he employed in his journey from Rome to Farther-Spain. There are extant some letters of his to the senate, written in a manner never practised by any before him; for they are distinguished into pages in the form of a memorandum book whereas the consuls and commanders till then, used constantly in their letters to continue the line quite across the sheet, without any folding or distinction of pages. There are extant likewise some letters from him to Cicero, and others to his friends, concerning his domestic affairs; in which, if there was occasion for secrecy, he wrote in cyphers; that is, he used the alphabet in such a manner, that not a single word could be made out. The way to decipher those epistles was to substitute the fourth for the first letter, as d for a, and so for the other letters respectively. Some things likewise pass under his name, said to have been written by him when a boy, or a very young man; as the Encomium of Hercules, a tragedy entitled Oedipus, and a collection of Apophthegms; all which Augustus forbade to be published, in a short and plain letter to Pompeius Macer, who was employed by him in the arrangement of his libraries.²⁵

Plutarch

Life of Caesar 3.1-2

ἐκ δὲ τούτου τῆς Σύλλα δυνάμεως ἤδη μαραινομένης καὶ τῶν οἴκοι καλούντων αὐτόν ἔπλευσεν εἰς Ῥόδον ἐπὶ σχολὴν πρὸς Ἀπολλώνιον τὸν τοῦ Μόλωνος, οὗ καὶ Κικέρων ἠκρόατο, σοφιστεύοντος ἐπιφανῶς καὶ τὸν τρόπον ἐπιεικοῦς εἶναι δοκοῦντος, λέγεται δὲ καὶ φῦναι πρὸς λόγους πολιτικούς ὁ Καῖσαρ ἄριστα, καὶ διαπονησαὶ φιλοτιμώτατα τὴν φύσιν, ὡς τὰ δευτερεῖα μὲν ἀδηρίτως ἔχειν, τὸ δὲ πρωτεῖον, ὅπως τῇ δυνάμει καὶ τοῖς ὅπλοις πρῶτος εἶη μᾶλλον ἀσχοληθεῖς, ἀφείναι, πρὸς ὅπερ ἡ φύσις ὑψηγεῖτο τῆς ἐν τῷ λέγειν δεινότητος, ὑπὸ στρατειῶν καὶ πολιτείας, ἣ κατακτήσατο τὴν ἡγεμονίαν, οὐκ ἐξικόμενος. αὐτὸς δ' οὖν ὕστερον ἐν τῇ πρὸς Κικέρωνα περὶ Κάτωνος ἀντιγραφῆ παραιτεῖται μὴ στρατιωτικοῦ λόγον ἀνδρὸς ἀντεξετάζειν πρὸς δεινότητα ῥήτορος εὐφυοῦς καὶ σχολὴν ἐπὶ τοῦτο πολλὴν ἄγοντος.

After this, Sulla's power being now on the wane, and Caesar's friends at home inviting him to return, Caesar sailed to Rhodes to study under Apollonius the son of Molon, an illustrious rhetorician with the reputation of a worthy character, of whom Cicero also was a pupil. It is said, too, that Caesar had the greatest natural talent for political oratory, and cultivated his talent most ambitiously, so that he had an undisputed second rank; the first rank, however, he renounced, because he devoted his efforts to being first as a statesman and commander rather, and did not achieve that effectiveness in oratory to which his natural talent directed him, in consequence of his campaigns and of his political activities, by means of which he acquired the supremacy. And so it was that, at a later time, in his reply to Cicero's "Cato," he himself deprecated comparison between the diction of a soldier and the eloquence of an orator who was gifted by nature and had plenty of leisure to pursue his studies.²⁶

26 Perrin, trans. (1919).

Aulus Gellius

Attic Nights 19.8.3

Gaius enim Caesar, ille perpetuus dictator, Cn. Pompei socer, a quo familia et appellatio Caesarum deinceps propagata est, vir ingenii praecellentis, sermonis praeter alios suae aetatis castissimi, in libris, quos ad M. Ciceronem de analogia conscripsit...

For Gaius Caesar, the famous life-dictator and father-in-law of Gnaeus Pompeius, from whom the family and the name of the Caesars are derived, a man of wonderful talent, surpassing all others of his time in the purity of his diction, in the work *On Analogy*, which he dedicated to Marcus Cicero, wrote...²⁷

Apuleius

Apology 95.5

quamcumque ora<tio>nem struxerit Avitus, ita illa erit undique sui perfecte absoluta, ut in illa neque Cato gravitatem requirat neque Laelius lenitatem nec Gracchus impetum nec Caesar calorem nec <H>ortensius distributionem nec Calvus argutias nec parsimoniam Salustius nec opulentiam Cicero:

Whatever speech Avitus composes will be found so absolutely perfect and complete in all respects that it would satisfy Cato by its dignity, Laelius with its smoothness, Gracchus with its energy, Caesar with its warmth, Hortensius with its arrangement, Calvus with its point, Sallust with its economy and Cicero with its wealth of rhetoric.²⁸

²⁷ <http://perseus.uchicago.edu/perseus-cgi/citequery3.pl?dbname=LatinAugust2012&query=Gell.%2019.8.3&getid=1>

²⁸ <http://classics.mit.edu/Apuleius/apol.4.4.html>

Roberts, John Maddox

Caesar's view of his own style:

“While I am away, I want you to organize my dispatches to the Senate. I intend to provide a detailed history of the campaign for the Conscript Fathers, as Cicero likes to call them, and you are the only man here with the education to be of assistance. Also, I know that you detest the Asiatic style of rhetoric as much as I do, so you won't be tempted to throw in a lot of nymphs and obscure Paphlagonian deities and salacious affairs of Zeus.”

So I was to be a glorified secretary. No argument there. At least I would be under a roof when it rained.²⁹

Decius' shock at Caesar's style:

I despaired of the task Caesar had set me. Not only were these mere, skeletal notes, but there was a difficulty I had not foreseen: Caesar's handwriting was astoundingly bad, so that I had to strain my eyes just to make out the letters. To make things worse, his spelling was more than merely atrocious. Among his many eccentricities, he spelled some of the shorter words backwards and transposed letters on many of the longer words.

I thought of the times I had seen Caesar at his ease, usually with a slave reading to him from the histories or the classic poems. Of course, most of us employ a reader from time to time, to spare our eyes, but I now realized that I had rarely seen Caesar with his nose buried in a scroll. It was an incredible revelation: Caius Julius Caesar, Proconsul and darling of the Popular Assemblies, would-be Alexander, was nearly illiterate!

29 Maddox (2001, p. 50).

I decided that I would first have to copy Caesar's notes verbatim. His literary oddities were so distracting that making any sort of sense of them was a daunting task in itself. I spent most of the morning copying the first scroll into my much more polished hand. When I had it rendered into acceptable form, I went over it again. Then a second time, then a third.

After the third reading I put the scroll down, aware that I confronted something new in the world of letters. Having copied the notes into readable form, I realized that I could do nothing to improve them. I was, as Caesar had said, no admirer of the ornate, elaborate, Asiatic style, but Caesar's prose made mine as mannered as a speech by Quintus Hortensius Hortalus. He never used a single unnecessary word and nowhere could I find a word that could be excised without harming the sense of the whole.³⁰

30 Maddox (2001, pp. 57-58).

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On-Line Resources

Loeb Classical Library

Perseus Digital Library

The Latin Library