

## ‘INSTINCTIVE GENIUS’ The depiction of Caesar the general

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Tiberius was nibbling at a radish. ‘He’s very lucid,’ he said, ‘and the descriptions of battles ring true enough. Except for one thing. He’s always got to be the hero himself.’

Allan Massie, *Augustus, a Novel* (London, 1986), p. 238.

These words attributed by the novelist, Allan Massie, to Tiberius represent a fairly typical reaction to Caesar’s *Commentarii*. They were written with great skill, appear to present a largely accurate account of his campaigns, packed with military information, but are marred by the author’s excessive self-glorification. This propaganda is sometimes obvious and clumsy, with Caesar always being in the right place, at the right time, and doing the right thing. The *Commentarii* recount Caesar’s own and his army’s campaigns in detail, telling of their triumphs over everything that the enemy or nature could throw at them. They are an inspiring read, and the reader is encouraged to identify with the victorious army. If that reader was a contemporary Roman, then it must have been natural for him to revel vicariously in prowess displayed and glory gained by *nostri*, ‘our men’ or ‘our side’.

To say that the *Commentarii* were not simply factual narratives of campaigns, but also works of propaganda and self-justification, is stating the obvious.<sup>1</sup> The Gallic wars were represented as in Rome’s interest, the Civil War as forced upon Caesar by his opponents, whilst his sometimes dubious or unsuccessful activities on campaign were obscured or explained in a favourable way.<sup>2</sup> The great deal of interest in how Caesar presents these aspects of his narrative has tended to concentrate attention on a few passages within the text which collectively form a very small proportion of the whole. Far fewer studies have looked in detail at the broader propaganda message contained in the *Commentarii* as whole.<sup>3</sup> It is obvious that these present a picture of great military achievement, of the courage and skill of Caesar and his soldiers. The value of a great military reputation for a Roman senator

is equally well known. The ways in which Caesar creates this impression, and the specific qualities of his skills as a commander that he emphasises, have not really been analysed.

There have been countless studies of Caesar's generalship, as well as detailed investigations into his campaigns, often, in the last century and a half, trying to combine Caesar's narratives with archaeological and topographic confirmation.<sup>4</sup> Caesar has been compared to Alexander and Hannibal, to Wellington and Napoleon, and to Montgomery and Rommel.<sup>5</sup> Military history has tended to be written under the assumption that all warfare throughout history has been conducted according to the same set of principles. Technology may have changed, but the principles of war have not. Therefore an army commander in the first century BC performed much the same role, in much the same way, as one in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries. It is clear that aspiring soldiers can learn valuable lessons from military history. Napoleon placed Caesar as chief amongst the Great Captains of the past from whom a man could learn about generalship.<sup>6</sup> However, as I have argued elsewhere, this obsession with the aspects of a commander's role that have, or appear to have, remained constant throughout history has obscured the vast differences between the behaviour of generals leading armies produced by different cultures.<sup>7</sup> Thus for the historian looking at military history as a whole, it might seem an incisive comment to state that Caesar was not really a soldier at all, but a politician. Perhaps this distinction might have been significant in more recent centuries, but all Roman generals achieved command as part of a career including both military and civil posts. The clear distinction between military and political command maintained in modern democracies would have been incomprehensible to the Romans. The tendency to view the general's role as a constant throughout history has been a great hindrance to our understanding of how the Roman army worked, but it is even less useful in assessing the propaganda involved in Caesar's depiction of himself as a general. Caesar was writing primarily for a contemporary audience of politically significant Romans. Therefore, the works present not just a portrait of a great commander, but of a specifically Roman one.<sup>8</sup>

In this chapter I want to concentrate on some of the specifically Roman aspects of Caesar's portrayal of himself as a general. There is much that is distinctively Roman about Caesar the general as he emerges from the *Commentarii*. There are two reasons for this. The first is connected to the expectations of the audience. The Roman audience would have had a clear idea of the qualities and behaviour expected of

a good general, a figure that had already become a literary cliché.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the Caesar of the *Commentarii* needed to excel in all these qualities. The second reason is, of course, that Caesar really did command his army in a similar style to other Roman generals. The link between these two factors, between the literary ideal and the practical reality, is much closer than may at first be apparent. Roman generals received no formal training for command. There was never a Staff College at Rome. A member of Rome's elite learned how to command an army through a combination of experience in junior roles and more informal methods. The right and ability to command in war were fundamental attributes of the self-image of Rome's senatorial elite.<sup>10</sup> There was a clear image of the way in which a general should behave on campaign which created, but then fed off, the literary and intellectual ideal of the 'good commander'. *Commentarii*, combined with an oral tradition amongst the elite, played a major part in shaping this image. The image of the proper behaviour of a commander shaped the actual behaviour of a Roman aristocrat finding himself serving with or leading an army.<sup>11</sup>

How different was Caesar's style of command from that of other Roman generals, and in particular his near contemporaries? In this chapter we are concerned less with the effectiveness and wisdom of his strategy than whether or not it conformed to Roman military doctrine of the period, and in particular, whether Caesar's campaigns should be seen as especially reckless by Roman standards. We shall not deal with the abstract virtues which ancient literature conventionally ascribed to great commanders, but with the practicalities of his leadership. What did Caesar himself do during a battle, and did he do more to influence the outcome of an engagement than other commanders? In short, was Caesar the general an unorthodox genius employing methods which only his instinctive talents permitted, or were his successes the result of showing greater ability in the conventional Roman style of command?

### **Caesar's strategy**

The reasons for Caesar's success are not hard to find: decisiveness and instinct, rapport with the individual soldier and not a little dash of luck. His speed of movement, the legendary *Caesariana celeritas*, astounded Roman and Gaul alike. Yet we must beware of excessive adulation of his achievements. A careful reading of the *Gallic War* – and especially the *Civil War* – reveals Caesar as often rash and impulsive, with little interest in logistics. His swiftness of action could leave the troops ill-supplied with basic foodstuffs. Often, if his brilliance is shown by extracting the army

from a difficult situation, it was his rashness which created that situation in the first place. (Keppie)<sup>12</sup>

This qualified praise is fairly typical of the modern attitude towards Caesar – a military genius, but a flawed one, prone to bouts of recklessness which would have brought disaster if a combination of his own ability, his army's, and a good deal of luck had not saved the day. His gifts were instinctive, which raised him above the other amateur Roman generals. The standard view of the Roman army is that it campaigned in a highly methodical, machine-like manner. Its generals were so woefully unprepared for their role that the system placed more authority in junior ranks, which again encouraged a slow pace. The army did not move far in a day, and every night spent hours in the construction of an elaborate camp.<sup>13</sup> According to Suetonius, Augustus '...believed nothing less appropriate in a general than haste and recklessness, and so he often used these adages: "More haste, less speed"; "Better a safe commander than a bold"; and "That is done quickly enough which is done well enough."'<sup>14</sup> Should we see Caesar as a maverick, whose instinctive genius allowed him to fight his campaigns in ways that would not have occurred to, and could not have been emulated by, other Roman commanders?

I have argued elsewhere that Roman military thinking at all levels in the late Republic and early Principate was dominated above all else by the offensive.<sup>15</sup> The army's strategy and tactics were highly aggressive. Is there anything to suggest that in Caesar's campaigns boldness and aggression were taken further than was usual for a Roman army, and became dangerous recklessness? Caesar's operations in Gaul were wars of conquest, which by their very nature must involve the attacking army in offensive operations. They do not appear significantly more reckless than many of the episodes in Lucullus', Pompey's, or Crassus' operations in the east. The urge to do the spectacular, whether it was Caesar bridging the Rhine or crossing to Britain, Pompey entering the Holy of Holies in the Temple after storming Jerusalem, or Lucullus attempting to emulate Alexander the Great, was a strong motivation for first century BC Roman commanders, although their freedom to do this was to be severely curtailed under the Principate.<sup>16</sup>

The campaigns Caesar fought to suppress rebellions during the Gallic conquest do seem to show a boldness verging on the reckless. In the winter of 54–53 BC the Eburones attacked 15 cohorts under Cotta and Sabinus at Atuatuca, and, after a period of negotiation, ambushed and annihilated the Roman force. Soon after, the Nervii began to

besiege another Roman camp, commanded by Quintus Cicero. On hearing of this Caesar marched quickly to relieve the garrison, leading a small force of two under-strength legions and some cavalry. His little army of 7,000 men was unprepared for a prolonged campaign, having a minimal baggage train with only a short supply of food which they were unable to supplement by foraging off the winter landscape. In the event he was able to lure the Nervii into a poor position and defeat them soundly and quickly, but had this not been the case, he risked being forced to fight a battle on the enemy's terms or letting his army starve.<sup>17</sup> By responding to the rebellion immediately with the only troops available, and then gaining a victory, Caesar seized the initiative. All the other large offensive actions in this conflict were made by the Romans, as, in a series of punitive expeditions, the first launched before the normal campaigning season to surprise the enemy, the revolt was shattered. In the narrative, Caesar takes care to explain that he had hoped to muster a larger force before marching to relieve Cicero, but had allowed Labienus to decide whether it was safe to move his legion from its garrison and join him. Labienus replied saying that the local threat was too great for him to risk leaving the area, a decision with which Caesar fully concurred.<sup>18</sup> Earlier he had similarly explained that his *hiberna* had to be dispersed so widely because of the problems of feeding the men in the aftermath of a bad harvest caused by drought.<sup>19</sup> Great care was taken to show that he was making the best of an imperfect situation created by factors beyond his control. Caesar's actions in this campaign were very bold, but it was a boldness based on as much careful preparation as was possible, and certainly not simple recklessness.

Caesar behaved in a similar way in the rebellion of 52, gathering whatever troops were available to strike as fast as possible, before moving on to confront another opponent.<sup>20</sup> Once again he was to take the field with small, ill-supplied forces before the start of the campaigning season. As the year went on he continually advanced against Vercingetorix, to Avaricum, Gergovia, and Alesia in turn, putting pressure on the enemy and trying to force a decision. The reaction to the rebellion of 51 was similarly fast and aggressive, with a succession of rapid punitive expeditions being mounted through the winter, employing whatever forces were immediately available.<sup>21</sup> This tendency to seize the initiative and then hold it by maintaining a constant offensive created an impression of force often far greater than the reality of the Roman military strength available at that time. Rebellions were weakest in their early stages, whilst many potential rebels were

waiting to see whether or not the enterprise would prosper. Roman reverses encouraged the waverers to join a rising, as the Nervii did in 54, encouraged by the Eburones' success.<sup>22</sup> Even Roman inactivity suggested weakness and encouraged the number of rebels to grow. However, if the Romans could strike quickly and confront the rebels successfully, then they stood a very good chance of defeating the rebellion before it gained momentum. Concentrating a large enough body of troops to ensure success and gathering sufficient transport and supplies to maintain them in the field for a protracted campaign took time, when any delay favoured the rebels not the Romans. The alternative was to gather whatever men were available and attack quickly hoping that the enemy were still weak. These operations were primarily displays of force, attempts to create an impression of such overwhelming strength that Roman success was inevitable. It did not matter if this impression of force was a façade, and that the Roman army was incapable of fighting a full scale campaign and might well be beaten if it encountered strong opposition. When Caesar chose to lead small armies against these rebellions he risked disaster if he encountered strong opposition.

Caesar's swift reaction to these rebellions helped to turn the tide on Rome's behalf, but in each case risked disaster. Was this type of boldness out of character with the normally methodical behaviour of Roman armies on campaign? An examination of the Roman reaction to insurrection during the late Republic and early Principate suggests on the contrary that Caesar's campaigns were typical. In the early stages of the Jewish rebellion in AD 66, the *procurator* Florus attempted and failed to control the uprising with the small auxiliary garrison of the province and the forces of Herod Agrippa II.<sup>23</sup> When news of these reverses reached the Syrian *legatus*, Cestius Gallus, he mustered all the troops available at short notice and led them straight to the centre of the uprising at Jerusalem, pausing only briefly en route to send flying columns against any signs of open resistance. The army he led was impressive in numbers, but poorly supplied and many of its units were untrained or of dubious morale. In short it was not an army capable of fighting a full-scale campaign. When Gallus encountered unexpectedly strong opposition at Jerusalem and his first assaults were repulsed, he was unable to mount a proper siege and was forced into a disastrous retreat.<sup>24</sup> The next year, a properly organised and supplied Roman army returned to reconquer Judaea systematically. Earlier Syrian governors had mounted similar operations to that of Gallus with better results. Both Varus in 4 BC and Petronius in AD 40 had led

hastily-gathered armies in very short campaigns which were little more than demonstrations of force.<sup>25</sup> In AD 9 Varus reacted to reports of a rising in Germany in exactly the same way, leading an ill-prepared force straight at the supposed centre of the uprising. The Roman force was incapable of dealing with the strong opposition it encountered and was destroyed.<sup>26</sup> Another famous rebellion, that of Boudicca in AD 60, provoked a similar Roman response, Roman commanders choosing to confront the rebels immediately with whatever forces were available, rather than waiting to muster an army large enough to ensure victory. First the *procurator* Decianus Catus sent 200 poorly-equipped men to defend Camulodonum, then Petilius Cerialis led a vexillation of his *Legio IX* against the rebels, before finally Suetonius Paulinus managed to defeat the Britons with the field army, still a force of no more than 10,000 men.<sup>27</sup> Both of these examples date to the first century of the Principate and were chosen because they can be described in rather more detail than similar operations dating to the Republic. At least as early as the Second Century BC, the normal Roman reaction to insurrection was to mount an immediate offensive.<sup>28</sup> In 152 BC the Lusitanians rebelled, attacking tribes allied to Rome. Servius Sulpicius Galba moved against them as soon as the rebellion was reported, allegedly force-marching his troops over 60 miles in 24 hours and then sending his fatigued men straight into an unsuccessful action.<sup>29</sup> Pompey's Judaeian campaign was as swift and aggressive as any of these operations, but far less risky as the forces at his disposal were numerous, well supplied and trained, and proved fully capable of undertaking the full-scale, formal siege of Jerusalem.<sup>30</sup> All of these operations show the Roman army behaving in a way that was anything but methodical, sacrificing the practical advantages to be gained by delaying to make proper preparations, in favour of striking immediately to create an impression of overwhelming force. It did not matter if this impression was a façade and the Roman force was incapable of fighting a full campaign or beating a strong opponent, since often the enemy was dismayed by the quick and confident response and a spectacular Roman victory resulted. Less often in reality, but likely to be recorded in more detail in our sources, an even more spectacular Roman disaster occurred.<sup>31</sup>

Placed in the context of other similar operations undertaken by the Roman army, Caesar's campaigns do not appear unusually reckless. We must view all his operations in the same context of a Roman army that was normally very bold in its methods. If Caesar's landings in Britain, his decision to invade Italy with a single legion in 49, or his

landing of small, ill-supplied forces in the face of overwhelmingly stronger enemies in Macedonia in 48 and Africa in 46, all seem foolhardy to modern military commentators, they would not have done to a Roman audience reading the *Commentarii*. The boldness of Caesar's campaigns was typically Roman. When Augustus praised caution and methodical preparation as the highest virtues for a general, this was not because these were the normal attributes of a Roman senator placed in command of an army, but, on the contrary, the precise qualities that they most often lacked.<sup>32</sup> It is doubtful that Augustus desired cautious generals, but rather men who were able to moderate their instinctive aggression and boldness with a degree of calculation. This sentiment is not really a reflection of the different behaviour expected of the commander-in-chief, a magistrate fighting under his own auspices, and the subordinate *legati* who led most of the armies under the Principate. Imperial generals lacked the strategic freedom of action of their Republican counterparts, a sentiment famously expressed by Gnaeus Domitius Corbulo, and were far less likely to get away with starting or escalating a conflict purely for their own glory.<sup>33</sup> Caesar did not encourage too much initiative amongst his own *legati*.<sup>34</sup> Even those who were allowed greater freedom of action, such as Labienus and Publius Crassus, were never allowed to rival Caesar's own glory and ability.<sup>35</sup> Whilst a *legatus* under the Principate lacked Caesar's freedom to conquer, the operations of their campaigns were characterised by boldness. As we have seen, in Britain in AD 60 and Judaea in 4 BC and AD 66, the Roman reaction to rebellion was as swift and aggressive as Caesar's response to uprisings in Gaul in 54, 52, and 51 BC. Punitive expeditions and the suppression of rebellion were far more common experiences for the army of the empire than wars of conquest, and both were conducted in much the same way as they had been under the Republic.<sup>36</sup> The most famous military disaster of Augustus' Principate, the loss of three legions in Germany in AD 9, occurred when a Roman commander reacted in a traditionally bold way to confront the first signs of insurrection in the new province.<sup>37</sup>

Only the reputation of one of Rome's great generals might appear to suggest that caution was valued more highly than boldness in Roman commanders. Quintus Fabius Maximus Cunctator was the man who saved Rome by delaying tactics, avoiding direct confrontation with Hannibal, whilst slowly weakening the Carthaginian army. He was the man who prevented a final disaster in Rome's darkest hour. Is this an indication that caution rather than boldness was the greatest virtue for a Roman commander? Yet Fabius Maximus was not



the only hero of the Second Punic War. Posidonius claimed that in popular regard he was paired with the far more aggressive commander, Marcus Claudius Marcellus, the former as the 'shield', the latter as the 'sword' of Rome.<sup>38</sup> The most successful and revered Roman general to emerge from this conflict, the man who was finally to defeat Hannibal in an open battle at Zama in 202, was Publius Scipio Africanus. From the first operation he mounted after taking up his Spanish command, the attack on New Carthage, Scipio's campaigns were marked by boldness and a willingness to confront the Carthaginian armies.<sup>39</sup> The Romans seem to have viewed Fabius Maximus as an exceptional man in exceptional circumstances. In the literature he appears as a man alone, always trying to restrain the people and other senators from their instinctive urge to bring Hannibal to battle and sometimes failing to do so.<sup>40</sup> The memory of cautious Fabian tactics, although enduring, does not seem to have played a major part in shaping the Roman aristocratic ideal of the proper behaviour for a general. More prominent was the memory of '...the places where the Roman people defeated vast hosts of the enemy with a tiny force, and of the naturally fortified cities stormed...' <sup>41</sup> The behaviour of Roman commanders in the late Republic was marked by aggression more than caution.<sup>42</sup>

Warfare in this period was decided as much by moral as physical factors. Wars were decided when one side lost the will to fight on. Very rarely did any army, including the Romans, have the potential to destroy an opponent's ability to fight on. The precise events (defeat in battle or a series of battles, the loss of a city or cities, or attacks on property and possessions) that triggered the collapse of a side's will to continue the struggle varied from culture to culture. The appearance of force was often more important than its reality in deciding the outcome of these conflicts.<sup>43</sup> Throughout the *Commentarii* one of the most striking attributes of Caesar is his complete inability to doubt his ultimate victory. His army was more than once in a desperate, even apparently hopeless situation, and his subordinates might despair, but Caesar was always sure of eventual victory.<sup>44</sup> If he suffered a defeat, he returned to the offensive as soon as this was possible. There is no trace of the Caesar who contemplated suicide at Munda.<sup>45</sup> Rosenstein, in his study of the effects of military defeat on the subsequent careers of Roman senators, has argued that men whose incompetence led to disaster were unlikely to suffer politically, if they displayed the *virtus* expected of a member of the Roman elite.<sup>46</sup> He interpreted *virtus* far too narrowly, denying that it implied military competence, when it is

clear that it did embrace technical skill, in particular the very Roman need to pay attention to the small detail of a battle.<sup>47</sup> One important aspect of *virtus* highlighted by Rosenstein was the refusal of a commander to admit that he had been beaten, and, more importantly, to concede that this defeat could possibly result in Rome's losing the war. A general who, after a disaster, still expected the enemy to surrender to Rome was a figure to be held up as an ideal. The Romans not only expected to win a conflict, but they were incapable of envisaging anything other than total victory as the ultimate end of any war. This ethos dominated all Roman military thought. Frontinus in his *Strategemata* acknowledged the possibility that Roman armies might suffer defeat in battle, but then explained what was to be done to stabilise the situation and win the war.<sup>48</sup> An outright Roman victory was the only possible end to a conflict, no matter how long this took to achieve. The Romans' refusal to lose the will to fight on made it very difficult for them to suffer a permanent defeat in a war. It also made Roman civil wars far more bitter struggles, ended only by the death of a leader. Caesar in the *Commentarii* represents the ideal of behaviour for a member of Rome's elite in charge of one of her armies. The correct behaviour for a Roman general faced with impending disaster is highlighted in the *Commentarii* by the contrast between Sabinus on the one hand, and Cotta and Quintus Cicero on the other.<sup>49</sup>

We have seen that in 54 and 52, Caesar was willing to take the field with poorly supplied forces if the situation demanded an immediate response. Supply figures prominently in the *Commentarii*. Frequent references are made to Caesar arranging the logistical support for a forthcoming campaign, and the demands of supply often appear in explanation of a decision during a campaign.<sup>50</sup> Some commentators have taken the prominent place of logistics in the text as a clear indication that Caesar took great pains to ensure that his army was in most circumstances properly supplied, whilst others have inferred the exact opposite, claiming that, had his logistical arrangements been sound, they would scarcely have been mentioned.<sup>51</sup> On many occasions Caesar was able to mount an operation outside the normal campaigning season, a capacity which gave him and many other Roman commanders significant advantages, especially over tribal opponents.<sup>52</sup> In 57 BC, when neither side had been confident enough to provoke a battle, a Belgic army was forced to withdraw when it started to run out of food, and suffered heavily when Caesar sent his men in pursuit.<sup>53</sup> Caesar stresses how much care he took to keep his army well supplied throughout the *Commentarii*, but, as with other types of

preparation, he acknowledges that the demands of the campaign in practice meant that the situation was not always ideal. Therefore, he did lead out forces with very limited supplies of food when the military situation demanded immediate action to relieve a beleaguered garrison or rescue a threatened ally, as in the winters of 54–53 and 52. Caesar's army came closest to starvation at Dyrrachium in 48 BC, as a result of an invasion of Macedonia mounted in winter and inadequately supported because of the enemy possessing local naval superiority. Once again, Caesar's preparations were as thorough as the situation allowed. These campaigns were mounted at some risk, but the potential gains of success, and the realisation that the situation would not improve if he delayed, made the attempt worthwhile. Where the situation did not favour immediate action, Caesar could be far more cautious, refusing to risk the lives of his own men to plunder the Eburones, when the task could as easily be accomplished by allies.<sup>54</sup> In the *Commentarii* Caesar's campaigns are portrayed as bold, but never reckless.

Roman generals were supposed to be very active during a campaign, engaged in a number of tasks including organising supply.<sup>55</sup> Another important activity was the gathering and processing of intelligence. Austin and Rankov have commented on the comprehensive range of topics about which Caesar attempted to gain information during the planning of his expedition to Britain in 55. They noted the massive gap between what he hoped to discover and the little information he ultimately received, and pointed out that Polybius would have been critical of his decision to go anyway.<sup>56</sup> There is little to suggest that either Caesar's attitudes or methods in this respect were significantly different to those of other Roman commanders.<sup>57</sup> The failure of Caesar's army to locate the Belgic ambush at the Sambre owed more than a little to his cavalry, which was predominantly Gallic.<sup>58</sup> Scouting was of little importance in inter-tribal Gallic warfare, and these cavalry seem simply to have been not very good at it.<sup>59</sup> All Roman armies in this period relied heavily on locally recruited troops to provide supporting arms, and their effectiveness for some of the roles expected of them had much to do with the significance of this activity in local warfare. This was only to change as the *auxilia* became more regular under the Principate. Much of the intelligence-gathering was delegated to junior officers, but Caesar, like other commanders might choose to question captives himself.<sup>60</sup> When contemplating an assault on a city or fortification it was normal for a Roman general to inspect the defences himself.<sup>61</sup> Caesar made two reconnaissances of the

defences of Gergovia before mounting an attack.<sup>62</sup>

A good commander took personal care to provide his army with the logistical backing and intelligence needed for its successful operation. Yet these were just two factors amongst the many which influenced an army's behaviour in the field. In an ideal situation an army would never have run short of food or failed to have complete information concerning enemy activity. In the reality of the Roman army's operations the situation was seldom so perfect. What is important to note is that Caesar's campaigns do not seem significantly different from the wars fought by other Roman armies in the late Republic or early Empire. Once again, what may seem to be failures of care or of judgement to modern commentators need not have invited special comment from a Roman audience. Caesar represents himself as behaving in the way that a good Roman general was supposed to behave.

### Caesar in battle

Caesar was typical of Roman commanders in attempting to seize the initiative and maintain the offensive during his campaigns. This did not mean that he was willing to engage the enemy in open battle under any circumstances. It was common at this period for two armies to move swiftly into close proximity, but then to hesitate, camped a few miles apart and wait for days before fighting a battle, or even separate without having fought. Caesar shadowed the Helvetii for a fortnight, at a distance of only six miles, but several times refused to meet them in battle after they had deployed to meet him.<sup>63</sup> There was a week of manoeuvring during which Caesar challenged the Germans to battle five times before the battle against Ariovistus actually took place.<sup>64</sup> Often both sides had taken up such strong positions that they were reluctant to abandon these and attack the enemy at a disadvantage. Caesar's army and the Belgians stood for days staring at each other from either side of a valley, each hoping that the other would cross and be disordered by the marshy ground in the valley bottom.<sup>65</sup> The time was taken up with manoeuvring and skirmishing as each side attempted to gain an advantage, however slight, over the enemy.<sup>66</sup> Offering battle, but having the enemy refuse, gave the impression that the other side was frightened and so boosted morale.<sup>67</sup> On the two days after his reverse at Gergovia, Caesar led out his army, deployed it in a suitable, presumably strong, position (*idoneo loco*) and offered battle, only for it to be refused by Vercingetorix. Caesar did this '...to curb the ostentatious displays of the Gauls and to restore the morale of his soldiers',<sup>68</sup> and his subsequent withdrawal suggests that he was not

yet truly confident enough in his army to risk an immediate fight. A general's job was to judge when his army had gained a sufficient moral advantage to ensure success and then force the enemy to fight. The Caesar of the *Commentarii* is depicted as judging all these decisions to perfection. On the rare occasions that he did not, the narrative makes it clear that factors beyond his control were to blame. The surprise at the Sambre resulted from the failure of his Gallic cavalry to scout properly and an unusually devious Belgic plan.<sup>69</sup> Gergovia turned from a limited attack to an all-out assault due to his men's over-confidence.<sup>70</sup>

Pitched battles were too important to be entered lightly, before a commander was confident that he had given his army every possible advantage, however slight. A defeat in battle, even one in which the casualties represented only a small proportion of an army's numerical strength, drastically reduced its confidence. Morale was always the critical factor in battles decided by hand-to-hand combat, and an army lacking in confidence was unlikely to be victorious, even if it was superior to the enemy in equipment, organization, and tactics. The rituals of the formal pitched battle became established during the third century BC, developing in the frequent wars between the Successor Kingdoms fought by very similar armies, composed of carefully trained professional soldiers who were almost impossible to replace from the limited sources of military manpower available to Hellenistic monarchs. The result was a far more cautious and tentative type of fighting than the frenetic campaigns of Alexander the Great. The blossoming literature of military theory dwelt in detail on all the minor advantages which a general should seek for his troops before chancing an open battle.<sup>71</sup> Ensuring that the enemy was hungry when your own army was well fed, that they had the sun in their eyes or wind against them, did not in themselves guarantee victory, but the acquisition of as many as possible of such edges might contribute significantly to it. Formal pitched battles decided the Punic, Macedonian, and Syrian Wars.<sup>72</sup> A good general took great care to restrain his army from battle until he had decided that the situation was favourable. The importance of a pitched battle and its potentially catastrophic results do much to explain why Caesar felt that it was inappropriate for a *legatus* to commit the army to battle on his own initiative.<sup>73</sup> The decision was too important to be made by anyone other than the commander-in-chief.

The formal manoeuvring and long delays before a battle were features of the campaigns in Gaul, but were even more characteristic of the Civil War. Twice in Spain in 49 BC, both Caesar and the Pompeians

deployed for battle, without either side choosing to force the combat.<sup>74</sup> For several days in the Macedonian campaign Caesar offered battle, but was unable to entice Pompey's line away from its camp and was unwilling to provoke a battle with an enemy enjoying artillery support from the camp's ramparts.<sup>75</sup> Fighting against another Roman army removed the advantages enjoyed in facing the less well organized and trained Germans or Gauls, which in part explains the greater tentativeness of the battles of the Civil War. More important were political considerations, Caesar being keen to emphasise that he wanted to win with minimum cost to Roman lives.<sup>76</sup> Caesar defeated the Pompeians in Spain in 49 BC without the aid of a pitched battle, after a prolonged period of manoeuvring and much fortification and entrenchment, but the same approach failed at Dyrrachium in 48. Not only was this relatively bloodless victory useful propaganda, but it also emphasized Caesar's skill as a general, being able to defeat the enemy by manoeuvring him into a hopeless position.

Once the battle began Caesar was even more active. The *Commentarii* represent him as involved in nearly all the crucial actions of an engagement, his absence or presence often being the difference between defeat and victory. The Sambre was not a typical battle, but a crisis in which Caesar had to do a great deal to stave off disaster. However, the way in which he commanded in this battle, moving around the lines and paying attention to the small detail of the battle, was typical of his style of generalship in other actions where he describes his own actions in less detail:

Caesar had to do everything at the same time: to raise the standard, which was the signal to stand to arms, to sound the trumpet call which recalled the soldiers from work, to bring back the men who had gone further afield in search of material for the rampart, to form the line of battle, to address the soldiers, and to give the signal for battle.<sup>77</sup>

After addressing *Legio X*, Caesar hurried to the right wing, where he saw his men hard pressed, and the standards of *Legio XII* clustered in one place (or its units positioned in one mass) and the soldiers so crowded together that it impeded their fighting. All the centurions in the fourth cohort had fallen, the *signifer* was dead and his standard captured; in the remaining cohorts nearly every centurion was either dead or wounded, including the *primus pilus* Sextus Julius Baculus, an exceptionally brave man, who was exhausted by his many serious wounds and could no longer stand; the other soldiers were tired and some in the rear, giving up the fight, were withdrawing out of missile range; the enemy were edging closer up the slope in front and pressing hard on both flanks. He saw that the situation was critical and that there was no other reserve

available, took a shield from a man in the rear ranks, – he had come without his own – advanced into the front line and called on the centurions by name, encouraged the soldiers, and ordered the line (lit. the standards) to advance and the units to extend, so that they could employ their swords more easily. His arrival brought hope to the soldiers and refreshed their spirits, every man wanting to do his best in the sight of his general even in such a desperate situation. The enemy's advance was delayed for a while.<sup>78</sup>

At the Sambre Caesar's army faced a disaster, so perhaps his direct intervention in such an exposed position should not be surprising. Yet Caesar showed a great tendency to involve himself at a low level in the crucial phases of most of his battles. During the final day's fighting at Alesia in 52, Caesar rode to a good observation point to assess the situation and from this position sent Labienus to lead six cohorts up to relieve a threatened part of the line. Moving around his lines he encouraged his soldiers and, acting on what he could see, sent detachments under Decimus Brutus and then C. Fabius to reinforce the troops where the defences had been breached. On two occasions he led reserves in person up to crisis points.<sup>79</sup> Caesar spent Pharsalus with *Legio X* on the right of his line. After the battle began he issued two orders by signal, the first for the fourth line to move against the Pompeian cavalry, the second to commit his third line in support of the first two.<sup>80</sup> All the major tactical moves of the battle occurred on this flank.

Caesar's Continuators depicted his style of command in a very similar way. The author of the *African War* described an action in 46 when Caesar's troops were hard pressed by Numidian cavalry and light infantry. He ordered two changes of formation, then

Caesar urged his surrounded cohorts and the cavalry to settle things with one attack and not to halt until they had pushed the enemy back beyond the far hills and to position themselves there. And so he gave the signal as soon as the enemy volleys became weak and poorly-aimed, and suddenly he let loose his cohorts and *turmae*. In an instant the enemy was driven back from the disputed plain and pushed back off the hill Caesar had pointed out.<sup>81</sup>

During a battle Caesar kept close to the fighting, moving, almost invariably riding (only in his first battle in Gaul, against the Helvetii, does Caesar explicitly say that he commanded on foot<sup>82</sup>), around just behind the front line. From this position he could assess from what he saw and heard how well the fight was going and make decisions based upon this. He was able to alter the deployment of the units nearby and send messengers or senior subordinates to bring up reserves, or even

go and lead them up himself. He also encouraged his men and acted as a witness, and a witness who could reward and promote, to any acts of conspicuous courage or cowardice performed by individuals or units. Throughout the *Commentarii* it is assumed that Roman soldiers fought better under the observation of their commander-in-chief.<sup>83</sup> The account of Gergovia mentions Lucius Fabius, a centurion of *Legio VIII*, who had made it known that he intended to win a prize from Caesar for being the first Roman to mount the enemy wall.<sup>84</sup> The attack at Pharsalus was led by Crastinus, a former *primus pilus* of *Legio X*, who is depicted telling Caesar that he would earn his gratitude by his behaviour even at the expense of his own life.<sup>85</sup> Caesar is normally represented as being always at the point of crisis, able to make the critical decisions which ensure victory. However, in the battle against Ariovistus it was Publius Crassus, '...who commanded the cavalry and was able to move more freely than those in the main line...', who spotted the Germans' threat to the Roman flank and ordered up the third line to oppose them.<sup>86</sup> It is important to remember that all along the line Caesar's senior subordinates were attempting to control the battle in much the same way as their commander.<sup>87</sup> The distinction was that whereas they were tied to one section of the line under their command, Caesar could choose to range where he wished. They too moved around the area held by the troops under their command, encouraging the troops and committing local reserves as the situation required it. When in independent commands, or in the case of Labienus on the other side in the civil war, these men attempted to command in battle in exactly the same style as Caesar, but, of course, they are depicted as being not quite as good at it.<sup>88</sup>

Sulpicius Galba described himself and the other commanders leading their troops at Forum Gallorum in 43 BC in much the same way as Caesar, riding round close behind the front line, encouraging the men and paying attention to the small detail of a battle.<sup>89</sup> Cato the Elder was very active at Emporion in 195 BC, riding around the battlefield to observe the fighting and sending in his reserves accordingly, at one point galloping amongst his own troops and striking with a hunting spear at any men whose enthusiasm led them to surge ahead of the formation and disorder it.<sup>90</sup> The other famous generals of the late Republic also adopted a similarly mobile and interventionist style of command.<sup>91</sup>

The author of the *African War* on one occasion describes a set of skirmishes outside Caesar's camp. Caesar

...did not himself go to the spot, and look out from the rampart, but, so



marvellous was his skill and knowledge of war, he directed the action sitting in the *praetorium*, employing scouts and messengers.<sup>92</sup>

Austin and Rankov suggest that this vignette depicts Caesar's normal style of command in which a detached perspective was more important than personal observation.<sup>93</sup> This is certainly incorrect. Everywhere else in the Caesarean corpus Caesar is depicted as closely involved in the direction of a battle, and often physically close to the fighting. The author of the *African War* explains Caesar's calm, dispassionate direction of this action as due to confidence in his own ability, and in the tactical advantages enjoyed by his troops; it is an indication of Caesar's exceptional brilliance that he was able to command in this way. This is not a description of the normal, but of the exceptional. It is notable that Caesar never describes himself as commanding in this way, but depicts himself commanding in a more conventional style.

Caesar was very active during a battle, moving round the line, encouraging and directing his army. Was this attempt to 'be everywhere and do everything' unusual for a Roman commander? Our image of the Roman army as a force of hardened professionals led by superb junior leaders and amateur, rather mediocre, generals might suggest that the commander played little part in a battle. He supervised the army's deployment, ordered the advance and then stood back to watch the outcome of the fighting, something that he could do little to influence.<sup>94</sup> Is Caesar concentrating on his own activities in an effort to convince his audience that he, unusually among Roman generals, did more than anyone else to bring victory? There is only one clear instance during the late Republic and early Principate of a Roman general commanding an army throughout a battle from an observation point well in the rear. At Mons Graupius, Agricola aped Caesar in the battle against the Helvetii by sending away his horse, but did not then move forward with the main line. Instead he remained detached from the fighting to maintain a wider perspective, sending messages to commit his reserves as required.<sup>95</sup> This was an unusually distant style of command. It is not indicative of the changed circumstances of the Principate, when a general could not afford to display too much talent lest he incur the hostility of the emperor. Many other commanders in the first century AD were depicted leading a battle in the traditional mobile style.<sup>96</sup> Every other Roman commander attempted to control a battle in the same style as Caesar, moving around close behind the fighting line, directing and encouraging the troops, and able to assess accurately how the fight was going, whilst a very, very few may even have chosen to fight in the front line. The classic

Roman style of command is well described by Onasander:

The duty of a general is to ride by the ranks on horseback, show himself to those in danger, praise the brave, threaten the cowardly, encourage the lazy, fill up gaps, transpose a unit if necessary, bring aid to the wearied, anticipate the crisis, the hour and the outcome.<sup>97</sup>

This was a style of command that demanded considerable ability from Roman commanders, which in itself does much to refute the traditionally low opinion of their expertise. A general was expected to pay attention to the small detail of a battle, his close proximity to the fighting allowing him to judge how things were going from the appearance and noise made by the combatants. The Roman tactical system, with the *triplex acies* formation being most common, invariably placed a high proportion of the army in reserve, spread evenly along the army's frontage. One of the general's most important tasks was to employ these men effectively.<sup>98</sup> A general close to the front lines lacked the overall view of a battle granted to someone like Agricola in the rear, and needed to anticipate where the crucial phases of the action would occur and move from one to the next. This required instinctive judgement, but there should always have been a senior subordinate controlling each part of the line if the commander-in-chief misjudged events. The Caesar of the *Commentarii* is almost always in the right place at the right time, his presence contributing massively to the army's success. His behaviour represents the ideal of how a Roman commander should behave. When things went wrong his actions were the correct reaction to reverses, even if they failed to restore the situation. In the disaster of Gergovia Caesar was able to control the legion he was actually with, and used this and the reserve troops to extricate his army.<sup>99</sup> At Dyrrachium Caesar was undismayed by his men's panic and attempted to stem the rout by the classic action of trying to stop a standard bearer and gather some men around the *signum*.<sup>100</sup> The Caesar of the *Commentarii* never really seems to lose control, even when the situation collapsed around him. This façade is weakened somewhat in the works of his Continuators. The author of the *African War* describes how Caesar's troops urged him to begin the attack at Thapsus, but that

Caesar was doubtful, resisting their eagerness and enthusiasm, yelling out that he did not approve of fighting by a reckless onslaught, and holding back the line again and again, when suddenly on the right wing a *tubicen*, without orders from Caesar, but encouraged by the soldiers, began to sound his instrument. This was repeated by all the cohorts, the line began to advance against the enemy, although the centurions placed

themselves in front and vainly tried to restrain the soldiers by force and stop them attacking without orders from the general.

When Caesar perceived that it was impossible to restrain the soldiers' roused spirits, he gave the watchword 'Good Luck' (*Felicitas*), and spurred his horse at the enemy front ranks.<sup>101</sup>

The picture of Caesar in this passage is scarcely a critical one, although the tone has shifted towards how wonderful was the army he had created and led. It is a slightly less perfect image and confirms the suspicion that Caesar's own version of events in earlier campaigns deliberately omitted such incidents. Caesar might admit that his men were over-confident when he had to excuse the defeat at Gergovia, but their uncontrolled rashness is in marked contrast to the disciplined enthusiasm of his army at Pharsalus.<sup>102</sup> In the *Alexandrian War* Caesar is depicted as surprised by Pharnaces' advance to contact at Zela which, given the importance of a general never joining battle unless he had chosen to, comes closer to a criticism of his generalship.<sup>103</sup> Caesar makes no direct admission of fault in his account of the, in many ways similar, surprise attack at the Sambre.<sup>104</sup>

It is obvious that the *Commentarii* were intended to depict Caesar as a great general. Less frequently noted, as a result of the traditional approach to military history, is that he is presented as a great Roman general. His attributes in the *Commentarii* showed that he possessed in their most highly developed form all the qualities of *virtus* expected in a Roman senator placed in charge of an army. He displayed not just the physical courage and tactical ability necessary to command an army in battle in the approved manner, but the moral courage never to doubt his ultimate success in a conflict. The principles underlying his strategic decisions were typically Roman, even if to us they seem bold to the point of folly. This paper has examined some aspects of Caesar's behaviour as a general. Others, for instance his leadership, might have been studied had space permitted. These would have produced the same conclusion that the Caesar of the *Commentarii* is not just depicted as good, but good in a specifically Roman way.

I would like to close with a more tentative suggestion. The conquest of Gaul provided Caesar with unambiguous military glory achieved over a foreign, and rather alien, enemy. The *Bellum Civile* faced the more difficult task of trying to celebrate victories over Roman opponents. It is clear that Caesar took care to stress the foreignness of his enemies.<sup>105</sup> If Caesar is throughout the ideal Roman commander, how does this influence the depiction of his main rival, Pompey? Pompey's

decision to abandon Italy in 49 and mass an overwhelming force to confront Caesar in Greece may make good military sense, while Caesar's decision to cross to Macedonia in 48 may, at least to the modern eye, make very little. Yet Caesar's strategy may well have been more Roman.<sup>106</sup> Their respective decisions did actually happen, but this attitude might influence their presentation. More significant is the difference according to the *Commentarii* in their respective behaviour at Pharsalus. Caesar kept close to the fighting on the right flank and controlled the critical moves of the battle. Pompey abandoned the field after his cavalry attack had been routed and went to his tent. Finally, when Caesar's men had entered his camp and saw the signs of the 'foreign' luxury in which the enemy lived, he removed his insignia of office and fled.<sup>107</sup> Caesar is clearly shown as a better representative of the *virtus* expected of a member of the Roman elite. By the standards of their class, the better man had won. Perhaps Pompey's un-Roman or even foreign behaviour was intended to help a Roman reader to forget that he was reading an exciting tale of a triumph of Roman over Roman.

### Acknowledgements

This paper was written during my term as a Research Fellow at University of Wales Cardiff. I would like to thank all the Ancient History department at Cardiff, especially Kate Gilliver and Louis Rawlings, for assistance in its preparation. I would also like to thank Kathryn Welch for her very helpful comments on the first draft of the paper.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> For the influence of the *Commentarii* on the style of later military history see J. Keegan 1976, 62–8.

<sup>2</sup> e.g. That the campaign against the Helvetii was in Rome's interest, explaining the emphasis put on the consul Lucius Cassius being killed and his army sent under the yoke in 107 BC, *BG* 1.7, 12. Another controversial incident was the massacre of the Usipetes and Tencteri during a truce, *BG* 4.11–15. In general see J. Balsdon 1957, 19–23.

<sup>3</sup> Some exceptions to this are C. Hammond 1993; J. Collins 1952. Neither pays much attention to the practicalities of Caesar's style of command.

<sup>4</sup> e.g. J. Harmand 1967.

<sup>5</sup> e.g. Maj-Gen. J.F.C. Fuller 1965, esp. p. 74; Hans Delbrück 1975, 565–71; P.J. Cuff 1957, 29–35; T.N. Dupuy 1969. J. Keegan 1987 questioned this approach, but did not examine the Roman period in any detail.

<sup>6</sup> D. Chandler 1966, 137–9. Chandler quotes Napoleon as saying 'In the Art of War – as in Nature – nothing is lost, nothing is created', p. 137. However,

Napoleon was critical of the veracity of several aspects of Caesar's narrative, see Napoleon I<sup>er</sup> 1836.

<sup>7</sup> See A.K. Goldsworthy 1996, 116–70.

<sup>8</sup> It is difficult to find any ancient criticism of Caesar as a general. The Elder Pliny, who claims that Caesar held the record for the largest number of battles fought, does condemn the great loss of life resulting from his campaigns, *NH* 7. 91–2. Plutarch *Caesar* 15, considered Caesar to have been greater than all other Roman commanders of the mid- to late Republic, pairing him with Alexander the Great in his *Parallel Lives* because they were the most successful commanders of Roman and Greek history. Appian compares Caesar to Alexander for much the same reasons and concentrates on their achievements, although he also highlights qualities they had in common, such as ambition and boldness in military action, *BC* 2.149–54.

<sup>9</sup> See N.S. Rosenstein 1990, 114–52; Goldsworthy 1996, 167–70.

<sup>10</sup> When Sallust attributed a speech to Marius in which the latter contrasted his own military qualities with those of his opponents, the clear implication was that these failed to show the martial qualities expected in a senator, Sallust *Bellum Jugurthinum* 85.5–43.

<sup>11</sup> See R. Holmes 1986, 68–9 on the influence of movie characters played by John Wayne on the behaviour of American soldiers, and especially Marines, in Vietnam.

<sup>12</sup> L. Keppie 1984, 101.

<sup>13</sup> For the traditional view of the Roman army and the weaknesses of this approach see Goldsworthy 1996, *passim*, esp. 1–11, 76–115.

<sup>14</sup> Suetonius *Augustus* 25.4. *Nihil autem minus perfecto duci quam festinationem temeritatemque convenire arbitrabatur. Crebro itaque illa iactabat: σπεῦδε βραδέως. ἀσφαλὴς γάρ ἐστ' ἀμείνων ἢ θρασὺς στρατηλάτης. et: 'sat celeriter fieri quidquid fiat satis bene.'* The second proverb is a quotation from Euripides *Phoenissae* 599. Much the same idea is expressed in Appian *Iberica* 87.

<sup>15</sup> See Goldsworthy 1996, 83, 90–5, 101–2, 113–15, 141–2, 192–7, 227, 246–7, 281–2.

<sup>16</sup> e.g. Lucullus attempted to extend the war, Plutarch *Lucullus* 14, and fought against a far more numerous enemy contrary to the advice of his officers, Plutarch 27–8; Plutarch *Crassus* 20–2 emphasises his overconfidence; for the speed and aggression of Pompey's Judaeian campaign in 63 bc see Josephus *BJ* 1.131–154.

<sup>17</sup> *BG* 5.24–52. For a more detailed discussion of this campaign see Goldsworthy 1996, 79–84.

<sup>18</sup> *BG* 5.46–7.

<sup>19</sup> *BG* 5.24.

<sup>20</sup> *BG* 7 *passim*, esp. 6–13.

<sup>21</sup> *BG* 8.3–13.

<sup>22</sup> *BG* 5.38, Nervii and Atuatuca persuaded to join Ambiorix by his report of his success against Cotta and Sabinus.

<sup>23</sup> *BJ* 2.318–456.

<sup>24</sup> *BJ* 2 499–555.

<sup>25</sup> Varus *BJ* 2.39–79, Petronius *BJ* 2. 184–203.

<sup>26</sup> Dio 56.18–22. On Varus' unpreparedness for war see 56.19.

<sup>27</sup> Tacitus *Ann.* 14.32–7.

<sup>28</sup> e.g. in Cisalpine Gaul in 216 BC, Livy 23.24; in 200 BC, Livy 31.20–1; in 197 BC, Livy 32.29–31.

<sup>29</sup> Appian *Hisp.* 58. The long succession of campaigns against Viriathus and the Numantines shows other instances of very aggressive Roman operations, many of which resulted in disaster, Appian *Hisp.* 63–97.

<sup>30</sup> Josephus *BJ* 1.131–54.

<sup>31</sup> For rebellions in general and the aggressiveness of Roman responses to them see Goldsworthy 1996, 79–95.

<sup>32</sup> Suetonius *Augustus* 25.4.

<sup>33</sup> Tacitus *Ann.* 11.20. One partial exception was the annexation of Commagene in AD 72–3 by Caesennius Paetus, the governor in Syria, when he sent false reports to Vespasian claiming that King Antiochus was plotting rebellion and as a result of these was authorised to invade, Josephus *BJ* 7.219–37.

<sup>34</sup> e.g. *BG* 3.17, *BC* 3.51. For a full discussion of Caesar's attitude to his *legati* see the paper by K. Welch in this volume.

<sup>35</sup> See *BG* 6.8, 7.62, where Labienus urges men under his command to fight as bravely as they would under Caesar's personal command.

<sup>36</sup> See Goldsworthy 1996, 76–115.

<sup>37</sup> Dio 56.18–22.

<sup>38</sup> Plutarch *Fabius Maximus* 19, *Marcellus* 9.

<sup>39</sup> For the surprise assault on New Carthage in 210 BC, see Polybius 10.6–15. Polybius considered the night attack against the twin camps of the Carthaginian and Numidian armies in 203 to have been the boldest action Scipio ever fought, Polybius 14.5.

<sup>40</sup> Most famously in the dispute with his *Magister Equitum*, M. Minucius Rufus, Polybius 3.101–5, Livy 22.23–30, Plutarch *Fabius Maximus* 9–13. Both Livy and Plutarch seem critical of Fabius' opposition to Scipio's invasion of Africa, Livy 27.40–5, 29.19–20, Plutarch *Fabius Maximus* 25–7.

<sup>41</sup> ...*quibus in locis maxumas hostium copias populus Romanus parva manu fuderit, quas urbis natura munitas pugnando ceperit*..., Sallust *Bellum Catilinae* 7.7. This is part of a passage where Sallust praises the eagerness of former generations to excel in warfare.

<sup>42</sup> Roman commanders were expected to be careful before committing themselves to join battle with the enemy, doing so only when the situation was favourable; see the section on 'Caesar in Battle' below.

<sup>43</sup> See Goldsworthy (1996), pp. 94–95, 97, 99–100, 102–104.

<sup>44</sup> e.g. famously in 58 when his army was frightened of facing Ariovistus' Germans, *BG* 1.39–41; after Gergovia, 7.52–3; after Dyrrachium, *BC* 3.73–4.

<sup>45</sup> This version is not given by the author of the *Spanish War*, but appears in Suetonius *Caesar* 36. Appian claims that when Caesar's army wavered, he rode alone to within 10 feet of the enemy and was the target for 200 missiles before his officers, and then the whole army, joined him, Appian *BC* 2.104.

<sup>46</sup> Rosenstein 1990, 133–40. For the influence of this on the frequency with which Rome won wars see Goldsworthy 1996, 165.

<sup>47</sup> See Goldsworthy 1996, 165.

<sup>48</sup> Frontinus *Strategemata*, esp. 2.10, 13. See C.M. Gilliver 1993.

<sup>49</sup> *BG* 5.28–52.

<sup>50</sup> e.g. *BG* 1.16; 2.10, 38; 4.7; 5.31; 6.10; 7.10, 32; 8.3. For decisions dictated by supply, *BG* 1.23, 49; 5.24; 6.29.

<sup>51</sup> Contrast Fuller 1965, 316–17 with T. Rice Holmes 1923, 232–3.

<sup>52</sup> Note the surprise attacks on individual Gallic tribes mounted before the campaigning season, *BG* 6.3, 4, 5, 30; cf. Tacitus, *Agricola* 18. See Goldsworthy 1996, 92–4.

<sup>53</sup> *BG* 2.9–11.

<sup>54</sup> *BG* 6.34.

<sup>55</sup> For a full discussion of the general's role see Goldsworthy 1996, 116–70.

<sup>56</sup> See N.J.E. Austin and N.B. Rankov 1995, 13. They refer to *BG* 4.20.2–4, 4.21.6, and Polybius 3.48.

<sup>57</sup> For a discussion of scouting see Goldsworthy 1996, 125–31. Caesar's abortive night attack on the Helvetii, *BG* 1.21–2, employed a method essentially the same as that taught by the modern British Army for mounting a Fighting Patrol.

<sup>58</sup> *BG* 2.19. Caesar gives prominence in his account of the battle to the cowardice of his Treviran cavalry, 2.24.

<sup>59</sup> e.g. *BG* 1.22 where the Helvetii failed to notice two Roman columns which had advanced against them during the night, and marched on as if nothing had happened.

<sup>60</sup> e.g. *BG* 1.50; 5.48, 52; 7.18. See also Austin and Rankov 1995, 67–81.

<sup>61</sup> e.g. Titus at Jerusalem, *BJ* 5.56, Suetonius *Titus* 4; Trajan at Hatra, Dio 68.31.3.

<sup>62</sup> *BG* 7.7.36, 44.

<sup>63</sup> *BG* 1.15.

<sup>64</sup> *BG* 1.48–51.

<sup>65</sup> *BG* 2.8–9.

<sup>66</sup> e.g. against Ariovistus and the Belgae; cf 5.17, Gauls offered battle outside Sabinus' camp; 7.19, 53, with Vercingetorix.

<sup>67</sup> e.g. Crassus against the Gauls, *BG* 3.24; Scipio against Domitius, *BC* 3.37; Scipio and Caesar in 46, *African War* 30. The attitude is well described in a conversation between Marius and an Italian General reported by Plutarch *Marius* 33. 'If you are a great general, Marius,' he said, 'come down and fight me.' Marius replied, 'If you are, make me.' (Penguin translation).

<sup>68</sup> *BG* 7.53, *ad Gallicam ostentationem minuendam militumque animos confirmandos*.

<sup>69</sup> *BG* 2.17–19.

<sup>70</sup> *BG* 7.44–52.

<sup>71</sup> On pre-battle manoeuvring in the first century BC see Goldsworthy 1996, 143–5. For the development of the pitched battle and military theory see Goldsworthy 1999, ch. 2.

<sup>72</sup> e.g. before the Battle of Magnesia in 190, eleven days were spent in manoeuvring and challenges to battle, the armies remaining less than a mile apart for much of the last week, Livy 37.38–9, cf. Cannae, Polybius 3.110–13.

<sup>73</sup> *BC* 3.51, cf. Polybius' praise for Hannibal's skill in not being drawn into a battle which he had not planned, Polybius 3. 69.

<sup>74</sup> BC 1.41, 83.

<sup>75</sup> BC 3.55.

<sup>76</sup> e.g. BC 1.71–2, 74, 81, 85, 3.10.

<sup>77</sup> BG 2.20, *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.*

<sup>78</sup> BG 2.25, *Caesar ab decimae legionis cohortatione ad dextrum cornu profectus, ubi suos urgeri signisque in unum locum collatis duodecimae legionis confertos milites sibi ipsos ad pugnam esse impedimento vidit, quartae cohortis omnibus centurionibus occisis signiferoque interfecto, signo amisso, reliquarum cohortium omnibus fere centurionibus aut vulneratis aut occisis, in his primipilo P. Sextio Baculo, fortissimo viro, multis gravibusque vulneribus confecto, ut iam se sustinere non posset, reliquos esse tardiores et nonnullos ab novissimis deserto proelio excedere ac tela vitare, hostes neque a fronte ex inferiore loco subeuntes intermittere et ab utroque latere instare et rem esse in angusto vidit neque ullum esse subsidium, quod summitti posset, scuto ab novissimis uni militi detracto, quod ipse eo sine scuto venerat, in primam aciem processit centurionibusque nominatim appellatis reliquos cohortatus milites signa inferre et manipulos laxare iussit, quo facilius gladiis uti possent. Cuius adventu spe illata militibus ac redintegrato animo, cum pro se quisque in conspectu imperatoris etiam in extremis suis rebus operam navare cuperet, paulum hostium impetus tardatus est.*

<sup>79</sup> BG 7.85–8.

<sup>80</sup> BC 3.93–4.

<sup>81</sup> *African War* 17–18, ...*cohortibus equitibusque circumdatis cohortatur ut uno ictu contenderent neque remitterent, donec ultra ultimos collis hostis reppulissent atque eorum essent potiti. Itaque signo dato cum iam hostes languide tela neglegenterque mitterent, subito immittit cohortis turmasque suorum; atque puncto temporis hostibus nullo negotio campo pulsus post collemque deiectis nacti locum...*

<sup>82</sup> BG 1.25.

<sup>83</sup> BG 3.14, 6.8, 7.62.

<sup>84</sup> BG 7.47, 50.

<sup>85</sup> BC 3.91, 99. For the competition to earn reward and promotion as a motive for the centurions in Caesar's army see BG 5.44.

<sup>86</sup> BG 1.52, *Id cum animadvertisset Publius Crassus adulescens, qui equitatu praeeerat, quod expeditior erat quam ei qui inter aciem versabantur, tertiam aciem laborantibus nostris subsidio misit.*

<sup>87</sup> And also acting as witnesses of the men's behaviour, BG 1.52.

<sup>88</sup> e.g. Cotta, BG 5.35; Labienus, *African War* 16. For a detailed discussion of this style of command see Goldsworthy 1996, 156–63.

<sup>89</sup> Cicero, *ad Familiares* 10.30.

<sup>90</sup> Livy 34.13–16. The detail of Livy's narrative, and its highly flattering tone, suggest that the passage owes much to Cato's own account.

<sup>91</sup> e.g. Sertorius, Plutarch *Sertorius* 19; Crassus, Plutarch *Crassus* 26; Sulla, Plutarch *Sulla* 29; Marius, Sallust *Bellum Jugurthinum* 98.1–5, cf. Metellus reforming his men during the fighting at Muthul, 51.2–5; Pompey was twice singled out and attacked by individual enemies which suggests that he was close to the fighting-line, Plutarch *Pompey* 19, 35.



<sup>92</sup> *African War* 31, *At haec non ipse per se coram, cum vallo prospectaretur, sed mirabili peritus scientia bellandi in praetorio sedens per speculatores et nuntios imperabat quae fieri volebat.*

<sup>93</sup> Austin and Rankov 1995, 60–1.

<sup>94</sup> This is the view presented in G. Webster 1985, 233–7.

<sup>95</sup> *Agricola* 35–7.

<sup>96</sup> e.g. Germanicus and Caecina, Tacitus *Ann.* 1.51, 65, 2.20–1; Antonius Primus at Cremona, Tacitus *Hist.* 3.24; Petilius Cerealis in the Rhineland, *Hist.* 4.77, 5.20–1; Titus in Judaea, Josephus *BJ* 3.487, 5.82–4, 287–9, 311–16, 486–7, 6.70; Julianus in Domitian's Dacian War, Dio 67.10. Whilst some of these men were connected to the imperial family and therefore might be expected to be presented in a more traditional way, that others are depicted commanding in this style suggests that this was the normal Roman approach to leading an army.

<sup>97</sup> Onasander *The General* 33.6. For a possible example of a general fighting in the front rank see Marius at Aquae Sextiae, Plutarch *Marius* 20.

<sup>98</sup> See Goldsworthy 1996, 137.

<sup>99</sup> *BG* 7.47–51.

<sup>100</sup> *BC* 3.69. Other generals who rallied a line in this way were Sulla, Plutarch *Sulla* 21; Augustus, Suetonius *Augustus* 10; Mark Antony, Plutarch *Antony* 8; Antonius Primus, Tacitus *Hist.* 3.17. Caesar himself does not mention the version of events reported in Appian *BC* 2.62, and Plutarch *Caesar* 39, in which not only did the *signifer* not stop running, but actually aimed a sword blow at Caesar.

<sup>101</sup> *African War* 82–3, *Dubitante Caesare atque eorum studio cupiditatieque resistente sibi eruptione pugnari non placere clamitante, etiam atque etiam aciem sustentante, subito dextro cornu iniussu Caesaris tubicen a militibus coactus canere coepit. Quo facto ab universis cohortibus signa in hostem coepere inferri, cum centuriones pectore adverso resisterent vique continerent milites, ne iniussu imperatoris concurrerent, nec quicquam proficerent.*

*Quod postquam Caesar intellexit incitatis militum animis resisti nullo modo posse, signo felicitatis dato equo admissis in hostem contra principes ire contendit.*

<sup>102</sup> Gergovia, *BG* 7.47–52; Pharsalus, *BC* 3.90–1, and 93 where they checked their initial charge and reformed their ranks when the Pompeians failed to advance to meet them.

<sup>103</sup> *Alexandrian War* 74–5.

<sup>104</sup> *BG* 2. 17–20.

<sup>105</sup> e.g. Pompeian legionaries fight in a 'Spanish' way, *BC* 1.44; the vast number of foreign auxiliaries recruited by Pompey in 48 are listed in great detail by Caesar, *BC* 3.4; Gabinus' legionaries are said to have ceased to think of themselves as Romans, *BC* 3.110.

<sup>106</sup> Cicero was scathing of Pompey's decision to abandon Rome and Italy, *ad Atticus* 9.10.

<sup>107</sup> *BC* 3.93–6.

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