

RICHARD W. WESTALL, *Caesar's Civil War: Historical Reality and Fabrication*. By. Mnemosyne Supplements 410, Leiden, NL and Boston, MA: Brill, 2017, pp. xvi+400. Hardback, €116.00, ISBN 978-90-04-35614-6.

'History written by the protagonists' Westall stresses, 'is a rhetorical exercise in shaping a partisan vision of the past that can convince contemporaries' (89-90), something Caesar was amply capable of. On the flip-side, whilst acknowledging the problematic nature of Caesar as 'narrator of history' (84), Westall also emphasises the value of such an account for grappling with the socio-economic issues of the late Republic. Caesar's *Civil War*, much like the events themselves, may be framed as a product of the financial crises and questions of legitimacy of the period. Indeed, in this detailed and thought-provoking book, Westall sets out to combine these two threads of historiographical analysis and socio-economic history, deliberately following the geographical course and structure of Caesar's narrative in order to provoke his own reader to reflect on the relevance of the socio-economic factors behind the outbreak of war. Factors which were in part central to, and in part obscured by, Caesar's own shaping of history.

Westall demonstrates an admirable knowledge of the material and draws on his previous work on the sources for Appian's *Emphyilia* and in particular his knowledge of Asinius Pollio to provide a nuanced if not corrective version to Caesar's own narrative. He reveals the significance of fully understanding details obscured and distorted in the historical traditions, such as his repeated reminder that the consular year was almost two months ahead of the solar year. This has implications for our understanding of Caesar's own strategies. Caesar's departure for Greece on 4 January 48 BCE in fact took place on 6 November 49 BCE, revealing that his crossing occurred just short of the *mare clasum* (11 November – 10 March) and indeed serving to underline Caesar's rapid movement forwards Pompey's forces. Westall contextualises 'Caesar's fleeing forwards' within a fully realised moment of socio-economic crisis, with Italy starving and the potential of a protracted campaign or an invasion from the east with Pompey's strengthened forces, if Caesar did not press the issue (197-210).

The geographical structure of Westall's analysis affords him a certain amount of selectivity in terms of the episodes of the narrative he explores. This allows him to open up the account into a series of in-depth digressions on the nature of the Roman army, the imperial drive for resources and attitudes towards mineral-rich territories, relationships with, and exploitation of, foreign communities and questions of political and military

legitimacy within the Roman state. Chapters 3-9 follow the narrative of *Civil War*, highlighting the issues central to the events that unfold in various geographical regions. As an aid to each geographical region, a map of the respective area and also one of the Mediterranean as a whole is provided. Although Westall does not really refer to these at any point in his analysis, the maps along with information on weights, measures and currencies (309) provide the reader with useful contextualising material. Westall also supplies extensive indices (ancient authors and non-literary sources; modern authors; persons; places; subjects; Greek and Latin words and expressions).

Following his introductory chapter and an overview of the course of events during 49-48 BCE (Chapter 2), Westall begins his main analysis with the invasion of *Italia* (Chapter 3), bringing Caesar's narrative into juxtaposition with the *Historiae* of Asinius Pollio, who most likely opens his account with the dramatic crossing on the Rubicon; an episode Caesar himself omits entirely. Caesar's strategy is one of omission and reshaping, striving to highlight the unconstitutional and un-Roman behaviour of his opponents, dependent on foreign forces in contrast to himself. Chapter 3 is a study in demography and wealth distribution, examining Caesar's mendacious account of the opening of the *sanctius aerarium*, and the levying of soldiers, which in turn reveals insights into the landholding wealth of individuals such as Pompey and Domitius Ahenobarbus.

The drive for resources, both in terms of manpower and mineral wealth is the focus of Chapter 4, following Caesar's movement westwards to *Hispania* in an attempt to break Pompeian forces there after his own failed attempt to take political control of Italy. Not only does Westall tease out the long historiographical tradition of the wealth of Spain for Rome, but he also reassesses the role of *clientelae* within the late Republic, stressing the misrepresentation of their influence. The issues of Rome's, and indeed individual Romans', relationships with allied communities is more fully explored in Chapter 5 on *Gallia*. Here Westall combines an analysis of Caesar's claims to the total pacification of *omnis Gallia Germanique* with the siege of Massilia, emphasising its significant geopolitical position. This significance is underlined by Westall through an examination of the historiographical tradition of Massilia's long alliance with Rome, which further serves to stress the pointedly Caesarian omission of the community's role in his conquest of *Gallia Transalpina*. As Westall notes, the Massiliotes's acceptance of Ahenobarbus 'in effect recognized the illegitimacy that now attached to Caesar's exercise of power' (152).

The economic drive of the war is once again brought to the fore in Chapter 6 and the role of *Africa*. Westall identifies three areas as the focal points of Caesar's narrative: provincial administration and legitimacy of command, the distribution of armies and the grain supply. Westall also raises an intriguing examination into Caesar's sources for his African narrative,

seeing communications from his quaestor Marcius Rufus as a likely source for the failed campaign of Curio. The move to *Macedonia* in order to secure a rapid conclusion to the conflict is the focus of Westall's seventh chapter. He also offers a reconstruction of Pompey's strategy for the war, as well as bringing the realities of army life and the needs of the soldiers to the forefront, emphasising the economic imperative and need for Caesar to emphasis supplies and rewards within his narrative. The economic capital of *Asia* (Chapter 8) serves as another examination of Caesar's capacity to misrepresent both his own and his opponents' activities, notably with his account of saving the Sanctuary of Diana at Ephesus. Westall also examines the juxtaposition of local panegyrics and reception of Roman benefactors with the maladministration of the province. Westall brings his analysis to a head with examining the role of *Aegyptus* (Chapter 9) within the story of Roman imperialism, examining the relationship between the wealth of Egypt and the credit crisis that had ultimately lead to the outbreak of civil war and the reasons for both Pompey's and Caesar's involvement in the kingdom.

Perhaps unusually, Westall does not dedicate a single whole chapter to unpicking the reasons for the composition and subsequent publication of the work. Instead, he discusses these issues at different points as they arise relevant to the portion of Caesar's work: his intriguing examination of the specific context and purpose of composition fall at the start of his final chapter (*Aegyptus*), as he reaches the end of Caesar's own account (271-280). Whilst in many respects this analysis of the political reasons behind the composition may be more logically suited to the beginning of the monograph, it again serves to emphasises Westall's combination of historiographical and history: the lack of resolution of the work provides a means to examine Caesar's purpose in writing his *commentarii* on the civil war (which Westall accompanies with an equally useful contextualisation of the function of the *Gallic War*) and to imagine a scenario wherein Caesar strove to resolve the internal disputes of the Egyptian kingdom and thereby promote himself as a peace-bringer on all fronts.

Westall's work offers the reader fascinating insights into many facets of late Republic socio-economic history and its structure does enable them to focus on specific aspects or episodes. Its value, however, is surely in the work as whole; in the balance of literary criticism and historical analysis to use Caesar's narrative as a tool for revealing history but also to examine Caesar's narrative itself as a deliberative and persuasive product of these issues.

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