

Andreola ROSSI

The camp of Pompey: strategy of representation in Caesar's *BC*

In this paper I analyze Caesar's description of Pompey's camp after the battle of Pharsalus (*BC* 3.96-97). I argue that in his description, fashioned in the guise of a *topos*, Caesar builds a net of correspondences with other events, so broadening and universalizing the significance of the narrated episode. It is Caesar's strategy of representation of events, not their falsification, which forces upon the reader the wished-for reading and interpretation. Damon (1994) has studied one of the narrative strategies adopted by Caesar. She points out how in *BC* Caesar presents events and characters in a way that "aims at fashioning in the reader a net of memory and understanding by tying the knots which link episodes and characters that are found on the long strand of narrative". It is this method, she argues, that leaves a great deal of the responsibility for interpretation to the readers. In this paper, I show how this net of memory, which Caesar aims at fashioning in his readers' mind, extends beyond the limits of his own text. After the debacle of Pharsalus, the Pompeians are dispersed and, while a panic-stricken Pompey abandons the region in flight, Caesar and his troops move against Pompey's camp, which was now defended especially by Thracians and barbarians. A detailed description of the camp follows (*BC*. 96.1). Pompey's camp, as Caesar himself points out, is a perfect reflection of the *nimia luxuria* and the excessive confidence in victory of the Pompeians. This passage, *prima facie*, could therefore be compared to many others of *BC*, where Caesar emphasizes the moral and military shortcomings of his enemies and their un-Roman behavior. But the episode has a far more subtle propagandistic purpose, for the typicality of its representation ought to suggest important comparisons to the reader. In particular, I focus on two important exemplary models which inform Caesar's behavior and Caesar's description of Pompey's camp: Pausanias' entrance into the Persian camp after the battle of Plataea (Hdt. 9.80-82) and Alexander the Great's arrival at Dareius' camp after the battle of Issus (Arr. *An.* 2.10-11; Diod. 17.35-38; Plut. *Alex.* 20; Curt. 3.11.20-12-18.). By assimilating Pompey's camp to that of an Oriental king, Caesar equates his victory at Pharsalus with these other great victories of the West over the East. Simultaneously, Caesar's narrative allows also for a different interpretation of the moral and military shortcomings of Pompey. Pompey, the great conqueror of the East, becomes the embodiment of an Oriental king who, in the fashion of Xerxes and Dareius, threatens the West at the head of a huge and heterogeneous barbarian army and endangers not only the existence of Rome, but also the survival of its national identity (*BC*. 1.44; 3.4-5; cf. also Hdt. 7.61-96; Arr. *An.* 2.8.5-8). I conclude with an analysis of the importance of such a representation in the context of the political climate of Rome. I show that with this representation, Caesar reechoes some criticisms leveled against Pompey (Cic. *Att.* 6.2) and exploits current Roman fears about the East and the threat it poses to Rome's national identity (Livy, 39.6.7; Sal. *Cat.* 11). Further, in this way Caesar creates a justification for his civil war, as a war against the foreign East, which foreshadows the Augustan propaganda of a generation later.