

JAKOB WISSE—MICHAEL WINTERBOTTOM—ELAINE FANTHAM, *M. Tullius Cicero, De oratore Libri III. A Commentary on Book III, 96-230*, Heidelberg: Winter, 2008, pp. xx + 438, ISBN 978-3-8253-1588-7.

When the first volume of this authoritative commentary, then the responsibility of Anton Leeman and Harm Pinkster, appeared in 1981, everyone knew it was an important piece of work, but nobody knew quite how important it would turn out to be. How much has changed since then! Over the last twenty-plus years, emerging interests not just in rhetoric but in performance broadly defined, in the place of Greek learning in the intellectual life of the Roman Republic, in oratory as cultural practice, and in Cicero himself as an intellectual as well as literary and political figure have so significantly altered the scholarly landscape that *De oratore* has grown from being an important text to being an essential one. It is now widely recognized as a key work for understanding this key period in the Roman experience. The readership for this fifth and final installment of the commentary project is thus likely to be, if anything, bigger, more diverse, and for that very reason more appreciative of its guidance than anyone might have expected in 1981. That readership will not be disappointed.

The present volume is especially relevant to the new interests for several reasons. This last part of *De oratore* completes the transition from theoretical and philosophical discussion to technical explication, and it proceeds to treat among these technical matters two subjects, rhythm (171-98) and delivery (213-27), that are central to the analysis of prose style and to the appreciation of performance. This latter part of *De oratore* is also, and not by coincidence, a significant source of the tragic quotations long mined by the editors of poetic fragments, but the interest here is not exclusively textual. Cicero's use of tragic examples is increasingly appreciated as evidence for tragedy's reception in the late Republic, and his affection for the genre figures in such contested questions as the relationship of orators to actors and of book culture to performance culture. Yet the treatment of such matters in the work can be complex and difficult for modern readers, often as much for external reasons beyond our immediate experience—the sound of Latin, the way one wears the toga, the details of tragedies now lost to view—as for the inherent sophistication of Cicero's argument, and the clarity of the commentary offered here benefits in significant ways from fundamentally wise decisions that were made at the very start of the project. Most obvious, as attested by the five successive title pages, was a willingness to expand the team of contributors as the text's own needs dictated. That practice began with the second volume, which called for special expertise in Roman law. Now primary responsibility has passed entirely to Jakob Wisse (JW), no stranger to *De oratore*, and he has recruited Michael Winterbottom (MW) to contribute the sections on prose rhythm and Elaine Fantham (EF) to treat delivery. The language of

explication has consequently shifted to English, a change likely to benefit more readers than it will inconvenience. In significant respects, however, this remains 'Leeman–Pinkster.' The initiators, whose continued presence on the new title page rightly acknowledges their enduring contribution to Roman studies, set the standards, the focus, and the format of this project, and all remain much in evidence. What was very good in the earlier volumes remains very good. The few things that provoked sighs will probably continue to do so.

On the positive side, the decision to divide Cicero's text into large thematic units and to provide detailed summary of the content and equally detailed scholarly analysis of the argument before offering linear commentary on each unit of text continues to prove its value. The advantage is clear at the outset in the sections labeled 'Function' and 'Background and Sources' that introduce the opening discussion of figures (96–103). Here the important distinction between the virtue of variety and the importance of restraint in the use of figures is explained with reference both to the Greek rhetorical tradition and to Cicero's own conceptual innovations, and this is accomplished with a clarity and precision especially valuable to readers, surely a significant number of readers, who are not well versed in the Hellenistic tradition in which Cicero was trained and to which he responds. This welcome overview will allow them to keep a clear head when confronted by the inevitable complexity of the linear annotation that follows.

Indeed, these introductory sections have always been the most attractive feature of Leeman–Pinkster, and they continue throughout to prove their worth here. Especially helpful to me—others will no doubt find other favorites—are JW's long discussion of the orator's claim to true knowledge (pp. 42–57), which provides the relevant background in Hellenistic rhetoric and philosophy so difficult to acquire independently, and MW's elegant explanation of what happens in Cicero when Greek theorizing about rhythmic prose meets Roman practice (pp. 237–43). Not that these discussions are always easy reading. Their substance often comes wrapped, sometimes very tightly wrapped, in its history, though how tight the wrapper seems to depend on who prepared the package. The variation is considerable. Here, for example, is JW on the function of sections 96–103: "Yet, as Prümm (1927) 11–2 argued against von Arnim (1898), 106 (contrast also Kroll 1903, who took the 'digression' to be all of a piece: 554 et alib.), our passage must be seen as a 'digression within a digression'" (p. 5). Contrast MW on sections 171–98: "The structure of this passage may be summarised as follows (for an earlier discussion, see Primmer 1968, 72, building on Schmid 1959, 93; 103)" (p. 233) and, at the opposite end of the scale, EF on *actio* (sections 213–27) engages almost exclusively with ancient authorities, but then appends a bibliographic postscript and acknowledgment that "some of this work has been taken into account if and where relevant..." (p. 349). Her brevity may be a special case, since scholarly attention to *actio* has only recently gotten serious, but it is also refreshing, since much of the analysis in these pages is very traditional, and older lines of thought sometimes marginalize newer ones.¹

¹So, for example, the attention to philosophic argument tends to slight by omission the more

The treatment of text is not nearly so helpful. The original decision to base the commentary on Kazimierz Kumaniecki's 1969 Teubner text continues to encourage extensive, often intrusive attention to textual matters, especially when the commentary elects to question K.'s decisions. Fussiness over textual variation produces another long list of Addenda et Corrigenda to K.'s apparatus criticus (pp. xi-xviii, the work of D.S.A. Renting), a full compilation from all five volumes of variants from his printed text (pp. 398-414), which works down to the level of misprints (e.g. "*Graccus*, mendose *Gracchus*," ad 3.2), and sometimes conspires to produce a virtual apparatus embedded in the linear commentary.² As before, symbols indicate when the commentator thinks K.'s text in the lemma should be rejected (*) or doubted (□). All substantive judgments on textual matters are discussed, with full attention to who thought (and printed) what and when and why. The doxological and grammatical issues are set out with masterly concision, but the passion for detail is not always so very helpful. Two cases in point:

Among Cicero's examples of the fact that less can be better than more is one drawn from scent, for mild perfumes are ultimately more pleasing than strong ones: *et magis laudari quod ceram quam quod crocum olere videatur* ('what seems to have the fragrance of wax receives more praise than what hints of saffron', 3.99)³. His point is clear, but no less clear is the fact that the elder Pliny read *terram...sapere* in his text of Cicero and, although he found *sapere* an odd choice of word (it is used only here of smell), he thought it was deliberate (*hoc enim maluit dixisse quam 'redolent'*). JW, impressed by the age of Pliny's testimony, therefore suspects *ceram* (printing □*ceram*) and rejects *olere* outright as an intrusive gloss (i.e. **olere*), although how the earthy smell pleasant to the farmer (Pliny's subject at *Nat.* 17.39) may apply in a positive way to a cosmetic scent is not easily imagined. The correction may be right, despite loss of the appealingly balanced *ceram...crocum*, but a reader who pauses to think through the problem could be excused for wondering how JW's discussion of odorous soil facilitates understanding the point of the exercise, viz. Cicero's argument about ornament, or what it adds to what an interested reader can easily learn from K.'s own, very full apparatus.

literary dimension of Cicero's engagement with Greek tradition, e.g. pp. 109-12 "Confronting Plato", which would have been a good place to mention J.E.G. Zetzel, "Plato with Pillows: Cicero on the Uses of Greek Culture," in C. Gill and S. Braund (eds.), *Myth, History and Culture in Republican Rome: Studies in Honour of T. P. Wiseman*, Exeter 2003, 119-38.

² Thus, to choose an example at random, of fifteen lemmata annotated on p. 263 (3.179-80), nine consist largely or entirely of emendations to K.'s apparatus, of the sort "**antemnae** L, edd.; **antemna** M," that "edd." being JW's sole addition to what readers will find on the bottom of K.'s page. Cui bono?

³ Translation is from J. M. May and J. Wisse, *Cicero, On the Ideal Orator*, Oxford 2001, a significant interpretative work in its own right, to which this commentary makes frequent and appropriate reference.

Preoccupation with text may also distract from other, more pressing matters, as at 3.214, the famous ‘dilemma’ of Gaius Gracchus (*quo me miser conferam?*, fr. 61 Malcovati). Cicero quotes the passage to illustrate the unique power of Gracchus’ delivery *oculis, voce, gestu*, but his words are no less important as evidence for the development of Roman oratorical style in the all too shadowy second century and for their role in the web of literary allusion which embeds them. Little of this interest is reflected here. A fussy note on *at fratris sanguine redundat* again adds nothing significant to what is found in K.’s apparatus, and the commentary never gets to things that should be said, viz. that the passage was a favorite of the rhetorical curriculum (relevant to its echoes at *Cat.* 3.24 and *Mur.* 88) and that Gracchus’ words recall Ennius’ Medea (217-8 Jocelyn). Though the Ennian echo is duly recorded in a note at 3.217, it is no less relevant here and deserves mention for readers who may stop at this point and do not intend to read the commentary continuously. And while bibliography comes thick and fast on textual matters, no reference appears to the work that opened up the literary discussion of this fragment in important ways, R. L. Flower, “The Rhetoric of Desperation,” *HSCP* 91, 1987, 3-38.

Annotation of an embedded quotation will always be problematic and can often be disruptive. The text under the lens demands attention in its own right as a fragment of one (usually lost) work, but also as an integral part of the second work that preserves it, and as a document in the process of reception that led the one author to quote the other. These rival claims to attention can be difficult to balance. At 3.219, for example, Cicero quotes three lines probably derived from Pacuvius’ *Iliona*, which begin *Qua tempestate Helenam Paris innuptiis iunxit nuptiis*. Or not. Most manuscripts of *De oratore* read *Paris Helenam*. A textual note here sides with those manuscripts, thus contradicting all editors of Pacuvius, who follow Lachmann’s lead and print *Helenam Paris* in deference to “Ritschl’s Law,” which discourages continuation of a resolved element across a word division. The metrically problematic *Paris Helenam* may in fact be what Cicero wrote—that same order also appears in a passing reference to the line at *Orator* 164—but whether that metrical anomaly is also what *Pacuvius* wrote, as the commentary here implies, is a separate question that merits some attention to Cicero’s record as a citer of texts. Editors of the tragedian could be excused for their reluctance to print (and to explain) what, after all, may only be a quirk of Cicero’s memory.⁴

Happily, the long run of passages that includes this line (217-9) as Cicero illustrates standards of voice control with a series of tragic quotations, is in most respects very well handled, and the commentary’s concern with textual matters is entirely appropriate. No literary fragment is ever more secure than the text from which it is gleaned, and students of Roman tragedy will be grateful to EF

⁴ P. Schierl, *Die Tragödien des Pacuvius*, Berlin 2006, 330-1 evidently appeared too late for mention here, though as it happens, her presentation of the textual question (fr. 150, p. 330) makes no new contribution.

and JW, who share responsibility for the annotation here, for giving such full attention to the text and the interpretation of these fragments. Readers of Accius, Ennius, and Pacuvius will still want to think through the problems discussed here for themselves, but whatever they eventually decide, they will gladly and thankfully add this commentary to their bibliography.

And so, of course, will every student of Cicero, of rhetoric, and for that matter, everyone with interests in the cultural life of the late Republic. *De oratore* is, as I said at the start, a major work by a major author of a major period in Roman studies. It now has a complete commentary worthy of that significance.

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