
This is the latest in the series of translations and commentaries by the Clarendon press aimed at “a new generation of readers” (endpiece). In this volume, Kaster tackles, undoubtedly, one of Cicero’s most important defence speeches, certainly from his later career, ostensibly in support of his friend Sestius, charged with “public violence” (p. 18), but in reality a celebration of his own return from exile, and a sustained attack on Clodius, the politician responsible for that event. The presence of Marcus Crassus (*triumvir*) among the defence counsels (so too Pompey’s sympathetic presence, p. 22) was a sure indication of an easy acquittal (unanimous by the *iudices*, p. 37), which allowed Cicero, speaking last, much flexibility and freedom in his choice of subject material, especially allowing him again to defend his previous actions as consul, and pour invective on his political enemies.

Following others in this series (for example, Siani-Davies 2002), the work is divided into an introduction (pp. 1-41), with background historical material, notes on the political situation in the 50s, the main elements of the speech, and reference to the text employed. Then follows the translation (pp. 43-105), which is clear, straightforward and a little less archaic in style than the *Loeb Classical Library* translation of 1958. However, some translated words, such as ‘fatherland’ for *patria*, ‘commonwealth’ for *res publica*, ‘brigand’ for *latro*/*latrocinium*, which perhaps convey little meaning for a younger audience, could have been rendered more easily as ‘country’ and ‘state’ or ‘thug’, and what is one to make of ‘bruited about’ (pp. 61 and 64)? The bulk of the work, naturally, comprises the commentary (pp. 107-392), which is very usefully divided into explicable units: “Introduction” (sections 1-5); “Anticipatory Review of Character and Career” (sections 6-13); “An Account of the Events Relevant to the Charge” (sections 14-92, subdivided into “The Events of 59-58: The Attack of Clodius, Gabinius and Piso”, 15-35; “A Consular *apologia*”, 36-50; transitional passage, 51-2; “The Account of 58 Resumed”, 53-66; “The Balance of 58”, 67-71; “The Events of Early 57”, 71-92); “A Conclusion, and a Transition” (sections 93-6); “Optimates, Populares and the Political Condition of Rome (sections 96-135, subdivided into “The Popular and Best Sort Defined and Redefined”, 96-105; “A New Dispensation”, 106-27; “A Conclusion, of Sorts”, 127-35); Conclusion (sections 136-47). There follow four appendices (pp. 393-414) dealing with: “Ciceronian Chronology, 58-56 BCE”, “Clodius’ ‘Incest’”, “The Geographical Terms of Cicero’s Exile”, and notes on the text. A glossary, index of persons, maps of Rome (an error is clearly noticeable here), Italy and the empire, references (bibliography), and index complete the volume.
One of the motivations for this study was that the pro Sestio “has received no commentary in any language since H.A. Holden’s edition, first published in 1883” (vii) and that “another 120 years might pass before the speech receives another” (viii). With that in mind K. has tried to address the needs and concerns of both the specialist and the newcomer to the subject. For the most part this objective has been accomplished with much detail to satisfy fellow scholars and yet more than enough acute observations on Roman politics and practice, coupled with more basic information to suit a student reader or a casual audience. Having noted this, it is also worth pointing out that research, even in Roman republican politics, is never idle, and while K.’s commentary may stand for over a century, readers can be directed, where appropriate, to the results of current scholarship, missed by the author here, or published only after this work was finalised. Thus on the date of the lex Lutatia (p. 18), more likely 102 than 78, and ritualised written and oral communication among the elite at Rome (p. 30) the reader should now consult Benjamin Kelly’s and Jon Hall’s contributions, respectively, in Welch, K., Hillard, T.W. (eds.) 2005. Roman Crossings: Theory and Practice in the Roman Republic (Swansea).

In discussing the precision or its lack in this speech of Cicero, K. sometimes falls into the trap of inaccuracy himself. For example, Cicero presumably did not seek the tribunate in the 70s (p. 121), since in that decade he would have debarred himself from further offices in the cursus honorum; and no one could then predict that the tribunate would regain its former powers in 70, by which time Cicero was already aedile-elect. Moreover, the tribunate was never a public position sought by all politicians. The consul L. Cornelius Scipio Asiagenes (cos. 83) is described (p. 126) as “an adherent of Marius”, although there is no evidence for this if it is Gaius Marius the elder who is meant here, and not the younger Marius (cos. 82) whom Asiagenes certainly seems to have lent support. To suggest (p. 205) that the well attested inimicitia between Marius and Metellus Numidicus “began in 109” is not supported by the ancient evidence, while K.’s “times of Cinna” must rather refer to 86-84 (p. 238), and Cato’s command in Cyprus (57-56) was based most recently on the command in 64 to Hispania Citerior (quaestor pro praetore) of Cn. Calpurnius Piso (Sal. Jug. 19.1). In the Glossary, the tribunate of the plebs is described as having “formal status as a magistracy (without imperium) entailing membership of the senate” (p. 428), and although ex-tribunes were recognised as senators, the tribunate cannot have been a magistracy, since it was not an office elected by the entire populus Romanus. If Sestius was defended by Cicero a second time in 52 (pp. 21 and 38) on a charge of ambitus, this would suggest either an initial attempt at a praetorship in that year (cf. Broughton, Magistrates, vol. 2, 620), or the result of his successful election, which would, therefore, place his holding of this office to 51. An aedileship or a canvass for that magistracy would