
The five surviving commentaries of Asconius are not only of great use to those studying the speeches of Cicero and the period to which they are relevant, but they are themselves highly important sources for the political life in Rome between about 70 and 50 BC. Asconius wrote far more commentaries than those which we possess (*in Pisonem, pro Scauro, pro Milone, pro Cornelio, in toga candida*) as the internal evidence clearly indicates; and they form moreover the prototype of a particular, or peculiar, contemporary genre, the historical commentary, in that it is historical fact rather than style or syntax which interested the writer on this occasion—he was otherwise quite prolific—and in his designated purpose, the education of his sons (xi). Although this material represents a significant ancient source, its accessibility has hitherto been limited to the Latin text of Asconius in the Oxford edition of Clark (1907), a partly translated Asconius' *pro Milone* in the *Loeb Classical Library* edition of Cicero's orations by Watts (1931), the historical commentary on Asconius' commentaries by Marshall (1985), and the discussion of Cicero's lost speeches and the fragmentary speeches collected by Crawford (1984, 1994). Therefore, this single volume devoted to Asconius' works is a very welcome addition to studies of this period of Roman history.

It appears that Lewis’ original project had been, following other volumes in this series, to provide simply a translation and a commentary, preceded by introductory notes (xi-xxii), which here deal with the author, his output, his sources, a definition of the *Commentaries*, and some evaluation of his worth as an indicator of topographical features in Rome. However, the Latin text was fortuitously added subsequently (vii). The editors of this “all but completed” (vii) work (Harris, Richardson, Smith and Steel), which had been left unfinished at Lewis’ death, revised the format so that each of Asconius’ *enarrationes* (xiv) is collected according to the Clark numbering, Latin to the left, translation to the right, easily negotiated, and, like its fellows in this series, very readable (pp. 1-189). This decision does, nonetheless, conflict somewhat with the opening statement (v), which suggests that this authorial comment was left unrevised. Following the text is a detailed commentary (pp. 193-304), which for the most part is highly informative and will prove extremely useful to those intending to study Asconius and this lively epoch of Roman history. L.’s observations are overwhelmingly erudite, perceptive and

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sensible; and where points of disagreement may arise it is only with regard to interpretation of the evidence, or when L. happens to be supportive of one specific argument over another without too much justification. For example, (p. 274) his assessment of the political leanings of C. Aurelius Cotta, consul in 75, takes no account of his great friendship with P. Sulpicius (trib. 88), which is attested and stressed by Cicero (Brut. 182, de Orat. 3.31). And so it is hardly surprising that Cotta should have championed a law restoring the rights of the tribunes of the plebs, arising not from any great ideological basis, but merely out of affection and respect for Sulpicius and their past connection, even if that tribune’s legislation had provoked such contention. That Cotta waited until he was consul to pass his law is also fully explicable given the current political climate at Rome. The lex Servilia repetundarum of Glaucia dated here to “in (probably) 101” (p. 269) although following modern tradition, is probably incorrect, with an earlier date being more likely if the political circumstances of its passage are given full account.2) L. himself seems to imply some doubt here as well. The tribune Q. Mucius Orestinus (p. 291) is possibly the monetalis of about 70, with the cognomen Cordus, who issued denarii with a Calenus, probably Q. Fufius Calenus, consul in 47. A minor, perhaps editorial, error has also crept in here (p. 157), since Gaius Marius’ consular colleague in 104 was C. Flavius Fimbria not “L.”.

Following the commentary there is a useful Glossary (pp. 305-12), ideal for newcomers to the subject, and an Index of Personal Names (pp. 313-32), which, although for the most part instructive and impartial, does on occasion diverge from previous immaculate scholarly standards. The object of L.’s vitriol is reserved for M. Aemilius Scaurus (cos. 115): “archetypal political survivor and schemer” (p. 314); and the Caecilii Metelli of the second and first centuries BC, who, while undoubtedly political forces of some considerable substance, are curiously subjected to descriptions such as: “No distinction whatsoever except aristocratic blood” (p. 316), “Ineffectual pontifex maximus” (p. 316), “overshadowed by the young Cn. Pompeius” (p. 317), “Widely detested” (p. 317). It seems as if L. has, unexpectedly perhaps, fallen into the trap of accepting ancient propaganda at face value. At the very least his comments are certainly a distraction. Laws and proposals (rogations) referred to by Asconius are listed (pp. 333-5), and a Bibliography (pp. 336-47) and an Index (pp. 348-58) round off this study.

It may appear that too much attention has been paid to a very few, even trifling, negative aspects of this valuable work. The positive, of course, far outweighs those comments, which feature here solely for elucidation rather than for criticism.

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