
Gent

Wolfgang de Melo


Andrew R. Dyck (D.) ist der most prolific living commentator on the works of Cicero. After publishing large-scale commentaries on the entire De Officiis (1996) and De Legibus (2004), both with the University of Michigan Press, D. turned to the Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics, publishing editions of De Natura Deorum I (2003) and the complete Catilinarians (2008); these are now followed, a mere two years later, by a third ‘green-and-yellow’ edition, of Pro Sexto Roscio.1 The Catilinarians and Pro Roscio are among the most important speeches of Cicero and are texts that teachers will want to read with their students, provided only that suitable editions are available. In the case of the Catilinarians, there was no previously existing modern commentary, and D.’s edition is an indispensable resource for scholars and students (the book was reviewed by the present writer at JRS 99, 2009, 256–7). In the case of Pro Roscio, scholars had the still valuable but inevitably outdated commentary of G. Landgraf (ed. 2, 1914) and the recent Budé edition, with a substantial introduction and notes, by F. Hinard and Y. Benferhat (2006), but English-speaking students had only the antiquated school editions by St G. Stock (ed. 2, 1921), E.H. Donkin (ed. 2, 1916, largely based on K. Halm’s edition) and J.C. Nicol (ed. 2, 1934; D. does not see fit even to mention Stock and Nicol). The edition under review therefore allows Pro Roscio to be prescribed once again to students in the English-speaking countries who, as D. rightly observes in his preface, are likely to be attracted to the picture which the speech gives of the «modest and struggling young orator» (IX) that Cicero was when the speech was delivered in 80 BC. At the same time the book will be welcomed by scholars worldwide as the standard scholarly commentary on the speech.

1 D. prefers this title to the more usual Pro Sex. Roscio Amerino, the title by which Cicero himself refers to the speech at Off. 2,51, because «the ethnic ... may not have formed a part of the title when published» (57). But presumably Cicero called the speech Pro Sex. Roscio until he had published Pro Q. Roscio Comoedo, and thereafter called it Pro Sex. Roscio Amerino whenever there was a possibility of confusion between the two speeches. In that case, it is hard to see that anything is gained by reverting to the original title, particularly in view of the survival of Pro Q. Roscio Comoedo.
The book opens with an introduction dealing expertly but in summary fashion with the following topics: the charge (parricidium); the court; the proscriptions (a brief narrative of events from 89 to 82 BC); the date of the trial; the principal characters; the advocate’s role; language and style (a particularly illuminating discussion of Cicero’s characteristics pre-Molon); Cicero’s achievement; the afterlife of the speech; and the text. The order in which these topics are introduced makes no concessions to those not already familiar with the speech and the issues it raises. The reader has to wait until the fifth section, for example, to find out who is on trial, and on what charge; parricidium is discussed in the first section without any reference to Roscius; the dispossession of Roscius and his flight to Rome are mentioned before the reader is told who he is; Chrysogonus is mentioned a number of times before the reader is told who he is; and so on. The specialist will perhaps admire the austerity of D.’s presentation; but other readers will probably opt to read an introduction to the speech elsewhere (for example, in a translation) and turn to D.’s introduction only once they have acquired the knowledge to enable them to follow it.

One section which does not occur in the introduction, but which it would have been valuable to have, is «Was Roscius guilty?», since this has been a major preoccupation of recent scholarship. Scholars have focused on the following questions: (1) did Roscius, despite Cicero’s arguments, in fact murder his father?; and (2), if he did not, was the elder Roscius killed (a) by Magnus and Capito, as Cicero alleges, or (b) by Magnus, Capito and Chrysogonus, or (c) by persons unknown? The traditional view is that Roscius was indeed innocent, but that Cicero is unlikely to be telling the truth when he accuses Magnus and Capito of having committed the murder themselves. D., however, in an important article (CQ 53, 2003, 235–46), has argued forcibly that the defence of Roscius was one of Cicero’s weakest cases, that it is just possible that Cicero’s version of events is correct, but that it is at least as likely that Roscius commissioned his father’s murder in order to forestall his own disinheritance (235, 243). In his edition, D. repeats many of the arguments and theories of his article, in particular his theory that the societas between Magnus, Capito and Chrysogonus was formed only after the sale of the elder Roscius’ property (article, 245; book, 9, 18, 79, 95). But there is one significant change: he now puts forward the view that the elder Roscius was murdered by Chrysogonus and Magnus (10, 170, 179), and that consequently Roscius (although he does not in fact say so) was innocent.

In 2007, Robin Seager published a point-by-point rebuttal of D.’s article (Athenaeum 95, 2007, 895–910), but there is no mention of this in the book. In his article, D. makes much of the absence of family and local support for Roscius (236; also book, 5); but Seager points out (900) that Roscius’ mother and friends may well have been afraid of Chrysogonus and Sulla, and that in any case § 49 shows that some of Roscius’ relatives were present in court. Similarly, D. conjectures that Roscius ran up debts (article, 238); but Seager (897) points to Cicero’s claim at § 39 that Roscius has never been in debt. Again, D. argues that Capito’s inclusion in the decem primi sent by the Amerians to Sulla shows that the Americans did not consider Capito to be connected with the murder (article, 239; book, 8, 77, 79, 168); but Seager explains (905) that the decem primi were not specially chosen for their mission but were an already established standing committee.
Moreover, D. cites the fact that none of the *decem primi* were testifying for Roscius (article, 242; book, 9); but Seager suggests (900) that they may have been afraid of Sulla and have thought Roscius’ cause hopeless, and may not have known Roscius in any case. Again, D. argues that the slaves who witnessed the murder must have been questioned by Roscius before being handed over to Chrysogonus (article, 241); but Seager points out (899) that after the murder the slaves and Roscius were not necessarily in the same location. Seager argues in addition that Roscius’ relegation to the country was, as Cicero maintains, a sign of his father’s trust (897) and that, if Roscius had indeed suborned his father’s slaves to kill their master, then Chrysogonus would surely have surrendered them to the court for examination (899, 907). Seager’s conclusion therefore is that Roscius was innocent, and that either Magnus, Capito and Chrysogonus were guilty, or, his preferred view (the traditional one), that the elder Roscius was murdered by persons unknown (928–9). In his edition, then, D. has moved closer to Seager’s view, because he no longer argues for Roscius’ guilt; but it is greatly to be regretted that he has not taken the opportunity to engage with each of Seager’s points and comment on his overall argument.

Another question that has been debated by scholars is whether or not the speech was revised before publication, and whether it was published immediately or at a later date. D. states his position in a sentence: «Like C.’s other speeches, ours will have been published shortly after delivery to advertise his success and attract potential clients» (19); a footnote refers the reader to notes on §§ 3, 22, 131 and 153. But not all of Cicero’s speeches were published shortly after delivery (there was a delay in the case of the *Catilinarians, In Pisonem* and *Pro Milone*), and immediately after the Roscius trial Cicero found himself working through the night on many other cases (*Brut*. 312), and so may have had no time to advertise his success or need to attract potential clients. D. repeats his point in the commentary: «the young C. is unlikely to have held back this speech, a striking recommendation of his talent, for so long a time» (207). But this is an argument only that Cicero may have wished to publish his speech soon after delivery, not that he did so; and Cicero reveals that he was working so intensively on his other cases at this time that he damaged his health, at which point he went abroad for two years (*Brut*. 313–14). The notes to §§ 3 etc. offer brief comments on the passages that some scholars (including this reviewer) have considered to have been revised (generally because they appear to contain criticisms of Sulla); in each place, D. rejects the arguments for revision. It may be that those who have argued for revision have failed to prove their case; but D. equally fails to prove that publication was immediate. Certainty may be unobtainable either way; but limiting the discussion in the introduction to a sentence runs the risk of giving the impression that the issue is unproblematic and the answer obvious.

A third topic of debate, touched on for example by Hinard and Benferhat, is the political importance of the trial and of Cicero’s speech. Were they of any importance? Why did the Metelli appear in support of Roscius, but not speak? And did Cicero, who had links with Marius, place himself in danger by his defence? Many years later, he represented it as an attack on Sulla (*Off*. 2.51). (If he did place himself in danger, then that would be a strong argument against the immediate publication of the speech.) Readers may also ask whether Roscius,
after his acquittal, went on to recover his property. D., perhaps wishing to avoid speculation, does not address these questions; he could usefully have cited the discussions of them by Robin Seager and T.E. Kinsey at LCM 7, 1982, 10–12 and 39–40.

The Latin text is printed without apparatus, and the reader is referred to Hinard and Benferhat’s edition for textual information. There is a list of the 61 places where D.’s text differs from that of Hinard and Benferhat. Many of these differences are fairly minor; often they consist of the restoration of omitted praenomina.

The commentary is extremely helpful throughout. Student readers are given a great deal of help with translation; on almost every page there are numerous references to the OLD. Students will also learn much from the commentary about Cicero’s style, particularly features of his early style. There are succinct introductions to each part of the speech, with schematic analyses of the structure of Cicero’s arguments. Close attention is paid to Cicero’s tactics; D. is assiduous in citing points made by scholars on Cicero’s strategy. The commentary, like D.’s previous commentaries, is densely referenced. It is characterised by brevity and concision; there are no lengthy discussions. Although the speech is a relatively long one and the commentary itself, at 154 pages, a relatively short one, there is no sense of inadequate coverage. In keeping with the conventions of the series, little is said about the text; but D. has published his views in a review of Hinard and Benferhat’s edition at Mnemosyne 62, 2009, 675–8.

The book concludes with an appendix on prose rhythm, a substantial but nevertheless selective bibliography and three indexes. There are also two maps (reprinted from the Catilinarians edition and showing places of Catilinarian interest) and a chronological table.

D.’s Pro Roscio is a fine modern commentary of meticulous scholarship. If the larger issues surrounding the speech – what Seager calls «Whodunnit?», publication and political importance – are not dealt with as fully as they might have been, the book will at least have the effect of contributing towards a better informed debate. In this book, D. has yet again given Ciceronians much to be grateful for.

Edinburgh

D. H. Berry
