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A CICERONIAN ODYSSEY

My title is taken from the heading of a review in the London *Times Literary Supplement* in 1986, which ran "The End of the Ciceronian Odyssey." It would seem that reports of my death had been exaggerated. The end was not in 1986 and may not be in 1991.

For the beginning, let me go back sixty years to a time when I was attending an English school, what we should here call a High School, and had reached a point at which under the enlightened system of those days I could give up such uncongenial studies as mathematics and science and concentrate on Greek and Latin. The classics teaching at that school was excellent, but somehow the classroom routine failed to satisfy, and I formed a resolution which I have always regarded as crucial. I decided that every day I would read privately a quota of Greek or Latin, one hundred lines of verse or four pages of prose in an Oxford Text. I started with four works, taking them in daily rotation: Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, Xenophon's *Hellenica*, the poems of Catullus, and Cicero's Catilinarian speeches. The reading was conducted on a system of my own devising. It proceeded sentence by sentence, with a dictionary and usually a translation and / or commentary for checking.

The sentence would then be read aloud. At the end of a paragraph or other appropriate stopping-place the sentences covered would be read aloud consecutively. At the end of the day's ration I would traverse its content in a mental review. I have recommended this method to many students, but I am not aware of any that adopted it. For me it worked like a charm. Naturally, the daily quotas were increased as time went on.

One other resolution I followed with very rare exceptions. I always started a work at the beginning and read on to the end. No skipping, no selections.

It was in 1935, just before leaving for Cambridge University, that I began Cicero's letters in Tyrrell and Purser's edition. This edition has been much praised, but also severely criticized, especially in more recent times. Lily Ross Taylor called it, not unfairly, a mine of misinformation. One thing you cannot say against it: it is not dull. The introductions and

notes have an engaging buoyancy, which makes one wish to have been a guest of an evening in contemporary Trinity College, Dublin. But even the driest of editors could not have made these letters of Cicero other than enthralling. "Nothing comparable," I once wrote, "has survived out of the classical world: not the 'literary' letters of Plato, Seneca, and Pliny; not Fronto's correspondence with imperial pupils or patrons, the prosings of a hypochondriac pedagogue in a dull epoch; not the flotsam of papyrus finds. In Cicero's letters we see a Roman Consular, on any reasonable estimate one of the most remarkable men of his eventful time, without his toga."

I read through the correspondence again before leaving Cambridge for wartime distractions in 1941. At that period I had no thought of doing anything with it except read. And when I returned to Cambridge in 1946 and a few years later became University Lecturer in Tibetan, such time as I could spare for Latin was devoted to a very different author, resulting in the publication of *Propertiana* in 1956, my first classical book.

But in 1954 I did conceive a Ciceronian project, an edition of the letters, nearly all of them to Atticus, from January to June of 49 B.C., the opening months of the Civil War, when Cicero was at one or other of his Campanian villas, in the painful process of making up his mind whether, and later when, to join Pompey in southeast Italy and subsequently in Greece. During this period the correspondence is rich and copious as never before or after, reflecting every change of mood, every reaction to incoming news and rumors. To read it is almost to live under the same roof.

For some reason that project never got past the preliminary stages, but another took its place. W. S. Watt, Professor of Humanity in the University of Aberdeen, was about to publish his admirable Oxford Text edition of the Letters to Brother Quintus, etc., and was proceeding with the Atticus correspondence. A collaboration was agreed upon, he to take primary responsibility, for the first eight books, I for the remainder. However, for geographical and other reasons, the arrangement had to be abandoned and we ended up producing our portions independently, mine in 1961, his in 1965. The former was preceded by several articles and a monograph called *Towards a text of Cicero, Ad Atticum* under the auspices of the Cambridge Philological Society in 1960.

This may be an appropriate point at which to explain why for me Cicero's letters offered the ideal theater of operations.

First, there was the interest of the material, on which I have said something already and shall say a little more presently. Also I saw here a unique opportunity for interpretative and critical advance. The two main

textual traditions both rest on manuscripts seriously corrupted, worst of all in the later books *Ad Atticum*, where the extant authorities date from the end of the fourteenth century. Since the sixteenth, the letters had attracted hardly any notice from great critics, Madvig excepted, and from him only to a very limited extent. No even passably satisfactory modern edition existed, apart from Watt's already mentioned. For *Ad Atticum* Hjalmar Sjögren's held the field. Its apparatus, putting into practice the discoveries of C. A. Lehmann, was epoch-making, but its text represents conservatism at its most forbidding. There was still some not totally unprofitable collation to be done and in both traditions re-evaluation of manuscripts produced results of some significance, but the main challenge lay in interpretation and emendation, to which Sjögren's contribution had been negligible.

Conjectural emendation, which is an aspect of rational criticism, criticism by thought instead of by rote, is sometimes publicly portrayed as at best an elegant pastime for scholars who have nothing more important to do, yielding results, nowadays at least, to which responsible editors give no more than passing attention. As originator of perhaps two or three thousand conjectures in Latin texts, I take leave to offer in return for such pleasantries a brazen statistic. As many here will know, the Budé series of Cicero's letters has been taken over to its no small benefit by Jean Beaujeu of the Sorbonne University. The ninth volume appeared in 1988. According to my count, out of 57 original conjectures in my text Beaujeu adopted 33 in his and placed 16 more in his apparatus. Out of 44 in my apparatus Beaujeu placed two in his text and 23 in his apparatus. No two critics can be expected to see eye to eye on every point, the world would be a duller place if they did. But so large a measure of endorsement from a highly competent and independent source should speak for itself — especially if that source happens to be in the Sorbonne. It may be as well to add that M. Beaujeu and I have never met or corresponded.

In response to an article published in 1968 by a scholar who referred to conjectural criticism as a mania (“une manie, (en grec μανία)”) endemic in Britain and Germany, Professor Martin West in his recently published *Studies in Aeschylus* (Teubner, Stuttgart 1990) allows that these two nations, along with the Netherlands (he might have added Denmark for Madvig's sake) have been pre-eminent in this field since the seventeenth century just as France was pre-eminent in the sixteenth. “That,” he says, “is not a consequence of ‘mania’ but of the development of exact verbal scholarship”.

Granted that conjectural change is a tiresome, if fairly harmless, waste of effort when irresponsibly or incompetently employed, it remains

nonetheless an important component in the therapy of ailing vulgates. Only one component, of course. I have mentioned investigation and re-evaluation of manuscripts. Closer attention to their readings can bring surprising revelations, as in the case of *ci-devant* Sextus Clodius. Judicious choice among variants can help. Verbal interpretation, vital in a commentary, may improve a text, sometimes vindicating the paradosis against misguided interference. The Letters gave occasion in plenty for these activities.

One other thing that attracted me to them was their fecundity in historical, prosopographical, and onomastic problems. Long before reading them I had developed an interest in Roman personal names, starting with the great noble families of the Republic. At the age of twelve, I think it may have been, the discovery of a list of republican consuls afforded many hours of childish entertainment. Then came the lesser magistrates in Livy, and the disheartening news that his epitomist had not cared to preserve them after Livy fails. The same proclivity was behind two much later productions. *Two studies in Roman nomenclature*, published in 1976 by the American Philological Association in its series of American Classical Studies, consists of a catalogue raisonné of false or dubious names in Cicero facetiously entitled "Onomasticon Pseudotullianum," followed by a study and register of adopted names in the late Republic. The book is out of print, or about to become so, but I hope that an updated reprint is on the way (1). In 1988 a real onomasticon to Cicero's speeches came out in the Oklahoma University Press. A corrected edition, in the Bibliotheca Teubneriana, is planned (2).

To return to 1960, that was the year in which I started work on a text and commentary edition of the Atticus letters in the Cambridge series founded by C. O. Brink. It appeared by instalments in six volumes between 1965 and 1968, the year of my removal to America, with an index volume in 1970. Exceptionally for this series, a translation was included, and let me here repeat something I wrote long ago, that ideally an editor of a text should translate it, whether or not the translation is published. The discipline is almost sure to bring out points that would otherwise go unnoticed. Admittedly that is a counsel of perfection, which I have myself not always followed.

After finishing with the Atticus letters, I had not originally intended to carry on with the rest. Instead, in 1971, I put out a short biography of Cicero in Duckworth's Classical Life and Letters series, designed as an

(1) It arrived later in 1991 (Scholars Press, Atlanta).

(2) Appeared in May 1992.

accompaniment or introduction to the correspondence. And I found that Cicero is a hard man to pin down. Take him at face value and you may write an excellent study — if you are Gaston Boissier — but below the surface the going gets treacherous. What, for example, did Cicero really feel about Pompey?

Finally though, urged by a University of Michigan colleague and friend, J. H. D'Arms, I set about the *Ad Familiares*. Two volumes in the same Cambridge series appeared in 1977 and another containing the letters to Quintus and Brutus in 1980. An annotated selection for students appeared in another Cambridge series in the same year.

For economic reasons the later texts and commentaries were not accompanied by translations. But Penguin Classics produced a three-volume translation of the whole collection in 1978. When this went out of print, Penguin decided not to reprint, but instead issued a translated selection in 1986. Then, in 1988, the whole translation, *Ad Atticum* excepted, was reprinted by the American Philological Association as the first volume of a new series, called, rather obliquely I cannot help feeling, "Classical Resources".

The Cambridge edition of the letters is now mostly out of print. It seemed worth while to issue a new text in smaller compass, which would correct errors, include afterthoughts, and take account of more recent work, especially Watt's Oxford Texts, but also Beaujeu's editions and the series of "Gnomon" reviews by the late F. R. D. Goodyear. Hence four volumes in the Stuttgart Bibliotheca Teubneriana in 1987 and 1988, the last including the fragments and Quintus Cicero's tract on electioneering (if it is his), neither of which had previously been edited by me.

Various notes in periodicals presaged two volumes of Cicero's speeches, one of them yet to come. An edition of the *Philippics*, published in 1986 by the North Carolina University Press, was designed as something like an American Budé: text with short apparatus and translation on facing pages, and some elucidatory notes but no commentary. In spite of their historical importance and considerable literary merit, no adequate English translation of these speeches existed and they still await a commentator, who should be a historian and expert on Roman political institutions but might be less well equipped in verbal scholarship.

The other contribution, now imminent (3), is a translation of six speeches centering on Cicero's exile and return in 58-57 B.C., with notes mainly for the non-specialist. It too will appear as a "Classical Re-

(3) *Back from exile* duly appeared later in 1991.

source". Though it presents no Latin text, a list of divergences from the Oxford Classical Text makes a skeleton of one.

Not seldom I find myself labelled, with whatever adjuncts, as a Ciceronian scholar. That may be a convenient mode of reference, but I always feel inclined to put in a caveat. Cicero as a personality and actor in the historical drama, yes, I have spent much time and ink on him; but Cicero the philosopher and political theorist, Cicero the Latin stylist, Cicero the rhetorical technician, Cicero the lawyer, Cicero the animating influence on western thought and culture, to say nothing of Cicero the poet — with these I have never meddled, at least not in print. Even as a philologist, my concern has been with the letters and speeches. On the other hand, most of the items in my bibliography (4) are non-Ciceronian. But the other authors in it came and went. Cicero continues.

(4) "Harvard Studies in Classical Philology" 92, 1989, 457-470.