

TOBIAS BOLL, *Ciceros Rede »cum senatui gratias egit« Ein Kommentar*, Göttinger Forum für Altertumswissenschaft. Beihefte N.F. 10, Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2019, xii+260 pp., €109.95, ISBN 978-3-11-062921-7.

After his return from exile, Cicero had to reestablish his political and social standing and shape the record of who had driven him out of Rome and for what reasons. These concerns inform all of Cicero's *post reditum* speeches, the collective term given to the 14 speeches that the orator delivered between 57 and 52 BCE, to varying degrees.¹ *Cum senatui gratias egit* (hereafter *Red. sen.*), which thanks to Tobias Boll has now received its first modern commentary, has generally been treated as a rather marginal member of this collection and has received little critical attention as a rhetorical performance in its own right.² Since Cicero delivered the speech on the day after his return, it, together with its companion speech to the citizens of Rome (*Red. pop.*) given the following day, provides his most immediate response to his return. It dispenses praise and blame, stresses that all good and sensible Romans have always been on Cicero's side, and, perhaps most importantly, offers the orator an opportunity to portray himself as the savior of Rome.

The writer of a commentary on the speech faces four major points of difficulty: the dense treatment of events ripe with historical *exempla* and observations about contemporary politics, the relationship of the speech to the other *post reditum* speeches, a sometimes challenging manuscript tradition, and the rapidly growing bibliography on how Cicero's oratorical choices shape our impression of him as a historical actor.³ To varying degrees, Boll succeeds in responding to these challenges and offers specialists a reliable commentary that will serve as a productive basis for future work.

Boll starts his commentary with a 90-page introduction that serves primarily as a historical orientation for the reader. There are no reassessments or new insights into well-known events such as the circumstances that led to Cicero's exile, but even specialists will find the overview of the various politicians mentioned

¹ For an overview of the speeches and their major themes, see A. Riggsby, "The Post Reditum Speeches", in J. May (ed.), *Brill's Companion to Cicero: Oratory and Rhetoric*, Leiden 2002, 159–95.

² An important exception is J. Nicholson, *Cicero's Return from Exile: The Orations Post Reditum*, New York 1992, which offers an analysis of *Red. sen.* and its companion speech and is cited extensively by Boll. Since a commentary and a monograph naturally have different aims, the work under review is not a replacement, but the reader will find in it a considerably richer discussion of the speech's relationship to Cicero's corpus as a whole.

³ For example, J. Dugan, *Making a New Man: Ciceronian Self-Fashioning in the Rhetorical Works*, Oxford 2005; C. Steel, *Reading Cicero: Genre and Performance in Late Republican Rome*, London 2005; H. van der Blom, *Cicero's Role Models: The Political Strategy of a Newcomer*, Oxford 2010.

in the speech helpful. It is, however, less clear why the wealth of biographical information is repeated in the commentary proper, and one wonders whether some of it could not have made way for a more sustained discussion of the shifting political and personal networks that inform much of the content of the speech. While Boll mentions that Cicero had to negotiate his position vis-à-vis Caesar and Pompey, he never fully articulates what the speech can tell us about the relationship between Cicero and Caesar immediately after the orator's return from exile. Pompey, who is explicitly mentioned in the speech, is treated more successfully: Boll persuasively shows that despite the effusive praise at *Red. sen.* 29, the speech reflects the tensions that had developed between Cicero and Pompey at this point (see especially pp. 19–21). It would have been welcome if the nascent argument in the introduction (pp. 25–26) that the speech also prefigures Cicero's later relationship with Caesar had been allowed to develop more fully.

In the introduction Boll already offers a detailed comparison of *Red. sen.* and its companion speech to the Quirites. There is a useful table giving the full text of the 23 most notable parallels, which will be a launching point for those looking to explore what the rhetorical choices of *Red. sen.* and *Red. pop.* can tell us about how Cicero shaped his speeches for different audiences. It is certainly the case that *Red. sen.*'s marginal position in the corpus of *post reditum* speeches is due to the fact that it tells us little new: the rhetorical arguments are also found elsewhere. So, for example, the description of Piso and Gabinius, the two consuls who were instrumental in driving Cicero into exile, at *Red. sen.* 10–18 prefigures what is found in *In Pisonem*. The orator's efforts to stress that all good Romans have always been on his side and that his opponents constitute merely a minor group that is still devoted to Catiline is articulated more fully in *Pro Sestio*.⁴ A real strength of the commentary under review is the work that has gone into tracking down all the parallels. For practically every sentence in the speech the reader will find references to other relevant parts of Cicero's corpus (primarily, but not exclusively, the speeches and letters). It is a pity that the lack of an *index locorum* makes it more difficult to access the wealth of information contained in the commentary.

The biggest problems with the formal presentation of the commentary, however, appear when we turn to the text of *Red. sen.* As is also the case with some other recent De Gruyter commentaries, there is no text printed.⁵ Instead, a sentence (or, more often, part of a sentence) is printed followed by notes and observations. Boll's discussions are extensive and detailed, often running to a

⁴ Cicero's vision of Roman unity and his crucial role in promoting it is prominent throughout the speech, but is articulated particularly clearly at *Sest.* 96–135. On the motif see R. Kaster, *Cicero: Speech on Behalf of Publius Sestius*, Oxford 2006, 22–37.

⁵ Similarly, C. Schwameis, *Cicero, »De Praetura Siciliensi« (Verr. 2.2)*, Berlin 2019, and L. Rivero García, *Book XIII of Ovid's »Metamorphoses«: A Textual Commentary*, Berlin 2019 do not print a separate text. Other commentaries by the publisher, for example, J. Briscoe, *Valerius Maximus »Facta et Dicta Memorabilia«, Book 8*, Berlin 2019, and S. Feddern, *Die Suasorien des älteren Seneca*, Berlin 2013, include a full printed text separately from the commentary.

page or more per phrase or even individual word. It is therefore easy to lose track of the content of the full sentence. While the text presented in this fashion is complete, the reader will need either Peterson's *Oxford Classical Text* (1911) or, preferably, Maslowski's Teubner (1981) to actually read the speech and follow the commentary. As a result, the fact that Boll presents a complete reedition of the speech is largely lost.

At the end of the introduction, Boll lists the 46 instances in which the Oxford edition and the Teubner differ or in which he proposes an alternative reading. Since the speech is only 39 sections long, this means that virtually every part offers something of interest to the textual critic. In disputes between the two editions, Boll rarely sides with Peterson (he adopts Peterson's readings eight times), preferring instead equally Maslowski and new readings (19 times each). Some of these new readings are Boll's own whereas others resurrect conjectures by previous scholars, many of them going back to the 18th and 19th century. Those who take the time to engage with Boll's extensive treatment of the history of the text (see, for example, the discussion of various editorial conjectures in response to the anacoluthon at the end of *Red. sen.* 27 on pp. 203–204) are thereby provided with a rich history of how Cicero's speeches have been edited, particularly in the French and German tradition. These are, however, challenging discussions to follow, especially given how the text is presented in the volume. Furthermore, since many of the differences are the result of scribal errors and none of them seriously alter the interpretation of the text, a presentation of the information in a more conventional *apparatus criticus* would have been clearer and would have freed up space in the commentary for Boll to make more extensive arguments for his preferred readings rather than having to painstakingly describe the differences between the various editions of *Red. sen.* Underlying this commentary is a meticulously researched study in Ciceronian textual criticism, but unfortunately the manner of presentation does not make it easy for the reader to appreciate this aspect of the work.

Observations about the text, restatements of the political situation, and parallels with other Ciceronian works take up most of the commentary, but unusual word choices, unconventional grammatical constructions, and rhetorical figures of speech receive due consideration. A somewhat advanced student who is also looking to the commentary for help with translating the Latin will therefore find their needs catered to. It is nevertheless clear that Boll's emphasis is primarily on the composition of the text and secondarily on *Red. sen.*'s relationship to other works and on the appreciation of the speech as a work of Ciceronian oratory or, more generally, as a literary text.

In this regard, it is understandable that a major concern of recent literary studies of Cicero only receives peripheral treatment: Cicero's use of his works to portray himself as a historical actor and thereby shape his place in history. Ciceronian self-fashioning has been an important scholarly concern, especially in the English-speaking world, for at least the past two decades.⁶ Because Cicero

⁶ For some important bibliography, see n. 3 above.

