Elaine Fantham, *Cicero's Pro L. Murena Oratio*. Oxford: OUP, 2013, 224 pp. ISBN 978-01-9997-453-5.

Pro Murena is one of Cicero's most rhetorically appealing forensic speeches, and offers a provocative glimpse into Roman political and social priorities at a particularly exciting juncture in history. However, it is seldom taught to Latin undergraduates (in North America, at least) due to the pedagogical challenges of steering students through Ciceronian periods with one hand, and the diversity of historical events and prejudices invoked in Murena's defence with the other. The book under review is a teaching commentary by the well-known Latinist and scholar of ancient literary culture, Elaine Fantham (hereafter F.). It is the first English-language commentary on *Pro Murena* to be published since C. Macdonald's Macmillan school edition of 1969 (which will be familiar to many from its subsequent reprinting by the Bristol Classical Press), and is part of the American Philological Association's Texts and Commentaries series.

Like the other Texts and Commentaries, this book is primarily intended for use in intermediate and advanced undergraduate Latin reading courses. In her introduction, F. says that she wishes specifically to target fourth-year (i.e. final-year) students who were Latinless when they entered university but are now on the cusp of attaining facility with the language. Her desire to help these aspiring classicists and literary scholars to "make a linguistic breakthrough... and to be released from the straitjacket of syntactical comments" (p. 3) underpins the entire book, which has been sensitively compiled to support its target audience. It consists, in the main, of a brief introduction to *Pro Murena*, a reproduction of A.C. Clark's 1905 Oxford Classical Text of the speech, a commentary with an excursus offering practical guidance for translating the text, and a sourcebook-like appendix of "related texts" which provide additional context for the events and people connected with Murena's trial. A map of Asia Minor, index of persons and places, and bibliography are also supplied.

The introduction chiefly concerns the historical background to Murena's trial and the main literary features of Cicero's speech; textual matters are reserved for a single page (a single paragraph plus two sentences) at the end, where F. outlines the transmission of *Pro Murena* concisely in non-technical language and explains her preference for Clark's text. The historical narrative rightly emphasizes the link between electoral malpractice – the charge against Murena – and political instability at Rome in this period, as ambition and greed inflamed already intense competition for the consulship.

The discussion is helpfully divided into two phases dealing with the broader context of Murena's trial (beginning with the troubled consular elections of 66BC, which had to be re-run after both successful candidates were convicted of electoral malpractice), and the elections in 63BC which he was accused of manipulating. The section on rhetoric and eloquence is less effective: an outline of the speech is badly needed, and F.'s choice of focal points seems arbitrary (esp. "figures", which is made to encompass both figures of speech and historical persons mentioned by Cicero). However, the analysis of the role of psychological manipulation in the speech illustrates the high political stakes of this defence well.

F.'s expertise on rhetoric comes to the fore in the commentary, where many notes draw from her work on Cicero's *De Oratore*[1]. The commentary is generally well-balanced between grammatical notes and those providing background information. All strictly grammatical notes are conveniently (if ambitiously) cross-referenced with the relevant chapters of J.H. Allen and J.B. Greenough's *New Latin Grammar* and E.C. Woodcock's *A New Latin Syntax*, thus providing a valuable resource to students and instructors alike. In addition to the excursus on translation, several longer notes offer summaries of major and/or complex themes in Cicero's narrative (e.g. the Mithridatic War, pp. 130-34; Catiline's threat to Rome, pp. 153-55; Stoic philosophy, p. 168). These are valuable but often obstruct the flow of the commentary: because only the first note to each section of the speech is numbered, and line numbers are not used, it is very easy to lose one's place (as sequencing errors with notes on pp. 84, 107, 138, and 162 illustrate).

The appendix is comprised of three groups of texts: a series of excerpts from *Commentariolum Petitionis* about the experience of canvassing for the consulship; a handful of passages from *Brutus* and *Paradoxa Stoicorum* describing the skills and personalities of Murena's other advocates M. Licinius Crassus and Q. Hortensius Hortalus; and a fictional letter, from Sallust's *Histories*, purporting to be from Mithridates to Arsaces of Parthia seeking an alliance against Rome. At 21 pages in length – including English translations which seem to be F.'s own – the appendix is rather long considering the indirect relationship between these texts and *Pro Murena*. But it does make a handy self-study unit for ambitious students, and could be mined for examination material. The map and index of persons and places are self-explanatory, but it should be noted that the index is for the speech only and is thus tantamount to an onomasticon (RE numbers and highest offices held are recorded for most of the persons listed).

I applaud F.'s aim for this book, and am grateful that she has applied her

[1] See E. Fantham, *The Roman World of Cicero's De Oratore*, Oxford 2004; J. Wisse, M. Winterbottom, and E. Fantham (edd.), *M. Tullius Cicero De Oratore Book III. Volume 5: A Commentary on Book III, 96–230*, Heidelberg 2008.

considerable gifts to the exegesis of this important speech. She is a personable guide, and her observations on Cicero's use of language – from metaphor and idiom to the sounds of particular words – are a salutary reminder about the orality of oratory, and that speeches were intended to be heard, not read. This point cannot be overemphasized to students, especially when their primary objective (quite reasonably) is simply to prepare a passable translation of the text.

That said, the efficacy of this book is impaired by a number of factors. One serious issue is an apparent lack of awareness about existing commentaries and editions. It is not the case – contrary to the publisher's blurb – that this is the first English-language commentary on *Pro Murena*. In addition to Macdonald's school edition (mentioned above), teaching commentaries in English were also published by W.E. Heitland (Cambridge 1874, 1914) and J.H. Freese (London 1894). Although F. stops short of claiming to be breaking new ground, none of these commentaries is acknowledged in her discussion or bibliography; Macdonald's Loeb translation (1977), which has excellent notes, is also absent. Similarly, F.'s assertion that "there has been no new edition since Clark's Oxford Classical Text of 1905" (p. 31) is also mistaken, and disregards editions by H. Kasten (Leipzig 1932, 1961, 1972), A. Boulanger (Paris 1943), M. Marín y Peña (Madrid 1950), and, most recently, J. Adamietz (Darmstadt 1989). Bizarrely, F. praises Adamietz in the same sentence as "the most learned editor of our generation." Whether or not Adamietz's text should supersede Clark's is a live question and beyond the scope of this review. Nevertheless, F.'s rejection of Adamietz's contribution ("only very modest choices or suggestions in doubtful passages", p. 31) will surprise even undergraduates who are accustomed to being steered towards the most recent sources for their research. Most of Adamietz's conjectures are mentioned in the notes, but a separate list would be helpful – and consistent with practice in J.T. Ramsey's commentary on Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae* for this series (2nd ed. 2007). The fact that Macdonald's edition is still in print, comparably priced, and also based on Clark's text invites comparison. Ultimately, the books are set apart by the educational environments for which they were written. Macdonald's commentary emphasizes the historical and legal context of the speech, and is better suited for students with some previous experience of reading Latin authors, whereas F.'s commentary focuses on language/literary features and is tailored to her target audience of fledgling Latinists.

It is an unfortunate consequence of F.'s efforts to reassure these students that her informal writing style often detracts from the importance of the information she is trying to convey. Open-ended questions are routinely used to signpost historical material in the introduction: "Who was Murena? Who were his accusers? What were the charges against him and the political circumstances of this trial?" (p. 3); "What do we know about Cicero's client,

and his political and military career?" (p. 6); "But why resort to prosecuting Murena? Maybe Murena was so flagrantly guilty of malpractice that prosecution was inevitable?" (p. 9); "And when all had been said and done, what was the point of being consul?" (p. 22). The notes are peppered with personal reflections (e.g. "I would translate...", p. 124; "I offer a close paraphrase..." p. 131"; "we have come to the part of the *peroratio*...", p. 191), and attempts to modernize the narrative of Murena's trial are jarring and require familiarity with (North) American politics and culture (e.g. candidate attrition in the American presidential primary elections, p. 19; the acquittals of Canadian abortionist Henry Morgenthaler and American ex-footballer O.J. Simpson despite compelling evidence of their guilt, p. 104; the ritual name "Gaia" as a placeholder equivalent to "Jane Doe", p. 122; the importance of political pedigree in the careers of Justin Trudeau, George W. Bush, and certain Japanese parliamentarians, p. 161). The tone of the notes also varies widely. At one end of the spectrum, very basic grammatical constructions are repeatedly identified for the reader, and "glosses" frequently amount to the paraphrasing of entire passages (especially towards the end of the commentary). At the other extreme, a significant minority of notes assumes familiarity with technical literary terms and textual criticism. The addition of a glossary, and more attention to the manuscript tradition in the introduction would go some way towards levelling out the reader's experience.

Lastly, a large number of misprints gives a poor impression. The titles of ancient works are variously written out in full and abbreviated (sometimes in more than one form), sometimes capitalized and other times not, and even placed in quotation marks (e.g. "Catilinarian" speeches, p. 86). Other errors include: "MRR 2: 80-81" for "MRR 2: 580-581" (p. 6), "Plb. 6.56 4 and 15" for "Plb. 6.56.2 and 14" (p. 13), "Sex. Caesar" for "L. Caesar" (p. 18), "*norma*" for "*normam*" (p. 88), "Sall. *Cat.* 13" for "Sall. *Cat.* 11" (p. 101), dating Q. Metellus Macedonicus' praetorship to 146BC instead of 148BC (p. 128), "Nisbet 1962" for "Nisbet 1961" (p. 147), "our ancestors" for "the ancestors" (p. 164, but *maiores* here clearly refers to aged people rather than ancestors in the traditional sense), "*fixum atque statutum*" for "*fixum et statutum*" (p. 170), and assigning the consulship of L. Licinius Lucullus to 73BC instead of 74BC (p. 224). On p. 174 a note explaining a variant reading in Adamietz's edition is attached to the wrong *conducti* (further showing the need for notes to have both section and line numbers attached), and words and punctuation have been changed in a quotation from a modern author. In a related vein, the map of Asia Minor on p. 2 is not correct for the time of the Mithridatic Wars and *Pro Murena*. Among other anachronisms, this results in Cabira-Diospolis, a city mentioned in one of the extracts in the appendix (Sall. *Hist.* 4.15), appearing with its Imperial name Neocaesarea (Byzantium is similarly labelled Constantinople).

In sum, this is a teaching commentary with a prescribed audience and scope that is further limited by errors and omissions. Although it contains

much that will be of use and interest to advanced students and scholars, this material gets lost in the crowd of elementary notes. The text is neither new nor improved, and excellent alternative commentaries and annotated translations are readily available. Nevertheless, F.'s efforts to facilitate a problematic transition for many Latin students are praiseworthy. *Pro Murena* is an inspired choice of gateway speech: if this book stimulates the production of the first English-language non-pedagogical commentary on the speech, or further discussion about pedagogy, it will have done a great service.

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