G1 Two verdicts on Cicero

Cicero's political achievement may not have been as great as he himself imagined, but his prominence and skill as an orator gained him influence and many supporters as well as creating powerful enemies; for his opposition to Antony, see B7, 15; for his relationship with Octavian, B6–8. For his political career, see D. Stockton Cicero, A Political Biography (*Oxford 1971*).

(a)

This passage refers to Clodius' attack on Cicero and gives important insight into the strengths and weaknesses of Cicero's political position, which rested on rhetorical skill rather than on other attributes, such as birth. Clodius Pulcher, a member of the noble Claudian family and tribune in 58 BC, passed a measure exiling Cicero; a corrupt opportunist, he used violence to further his aims.

But since he decided that it was not easy to overthrow a man who had very great influence in the state by reason of his skill in speaking, he proceeded to conciliate not only the populace, but also the knights and the senate, by whom Cicero was held in the highest regard. His hope was that if he could make these men his own, he might easily cause the downfall of the orator, whose strength lay rather in the fear than in the good-will which he inspired. For Cicero annoyed great numbers by his speeches, and those whom he aided were not so thoroughly won to his side as those whom he injured were alienated; for most men are more ready to feel irritation at what displeases them than to feel grateful to any one for kindnesses, and they think that they have paid their advocates in full with their fee, while their chief concern is to get even with their opponents in some way or other. Cicero, moreover, made for himself very bitter enemies by always striving to get the better of even the most powerful men and by always employing an unbridled and excessive frankness of speech toward all alike; for he was in pursuit of a reputation for sagacity and eloquence such as no one else possessed, even in preference to being thought a good citizen. As a result of this and because he was the greatest boaster alive and regarded no one as equal to himself, but in his words and life alike looked down upon everybody and would not live as any one else did, he was wearisome and burdensome, and was consequently both disliked and hated even by those very persons whom he otherwise pleased.

Dio Cassius 38. 12,
tr. E. Cary (Loeb 1914)

(b)

Cicero became consul in 63 BC and was hailed as the saviour of Rome for defeating the conspiracy of Catiline, an ambitious aristocrat who had organized disaffected elements throughout Italy in an attempt to gain power; Cicero, finding proof of this, denounced the conspirators and had some of them put to death without a trial. This was used against him by Clodius.

Although Cicero was not expressly named in the wording of the bill, it was aimed at him alone. And so this man, who had earned by his great services the gratitude of his country, gained exile as his reward for saving the state. Caesar and Pompey were not free from the suspicion of having had a share in the fall of Cicero. Cicero seemed to have brought upon himself their resentment by refusing to be a member of the commission of twenty charged with the distribution of lands in Campania. Within two years Cicero was restored to his country and to his former status, thanks to the interest of Gnaeus Pompeius–somewhat belated, it is true, but effective when once exerted–and thanks to the prayers of Italy, the decrees of the senate, and the zealous activity of Annius Milo, tribune of the people. Since the exile and return of Numidicus no one had been banished amid greater popular disapproval or welcomed back with greater enthusiasm. As for Cicero's house, the maliciousness of its destruction by Clodius was now compensated for by the magnificence of its restoration by the senate.

Velleius Paterculus 2. 45. 1–3
tr. F.W. Shipley (Loeb 1924)

G2 Conflict and values in the late Republic

(a)

The speech was prepared in defence of Publius Sestius, a tribune of the plebs, who was prosecuted at the instigation of Clodius in 56 BC. The context is therefore that of the struggle between the factions of the Optimates and Populares during the declining years of the Republic. The extract is important for its identification of the qualities ascribed to the Optimates with the gloria *of Rome's Imperial expansion. For a detailed discussion of the relationship between social values and Imperial attitudes see P.A. Brunt 'Laus Imperii' in (eds.) P.A. Garnsey and C.R. Whittaker* Imperialism in the Ancient World (*Cambridge 1978*).

Those, then, who seek to win the praise of men of standing, which alone deserves the name of honour, must ever strive to win for others the peace and pleasures which they must deny themselves. They must toil and sweat for the common good; they must face hostility and often endure danger for the sake of the *res publica*; they must wrestle with many unscrupulous rascals and scoundrels; and sometimes they must even challenge the men of power. Such was the policy, such the achievement of our most distinguished statesmen; it is a tale made familiar to all of us by legend, tradition, and history. And, I ask you, do we ever find held up as paragons for emulation men who have at any time incited the people to revolution, or clouded their innocent judgement by wholesale distributions of largesse, or heaped calumny on any man of courage or distinction who served the *res publica* well? The general verdict of our citizens has always been that such men were irresponsible, reckless, criminal, subversive, while those who thwarted their attacks and assaults, those

whose authority, integrity, determination, and high resolve stood firm against the counsels of Rome's enemies, those are the men whom they have always called our men of principle, our most influential members, our leaders, and the sources of our great imperial achievement.

Cicero *Pro Sestio* 139 tr. W.K. Lacey and B.W.J.G. Wilson
Res Publica: Roman Society and Politics according to Cicero (Bristol/Oxford 1978)

(b)
On the desire for peace after the civil wars see also B27

But just at the present time there is no reason for the People to disagree with their picked and chief men. They demand nothing, they do not desire revolution, they delight in their own peace, in the honour of the 'Best Men,' and in the glory of the whole State. And so those who are for revolution and riot, unable any longer to arouse the Roman People by state-bounty, because the common folk, after passing through so many serious insurrections and disorders, welcome peace–they now hold meetings packed with hirelings, nor is it their aim to say or propose what those present wish to hear, but they use corruption and bribery to make it appear that everything they say is listened to with pleasure.

Cicero *Pro Sestio* 104
tr. R. Gardner (Loeb 1958)

G3 Standing for public office

The Short Guide to Electioneering (Commentariolum Petitionis) *a pamphlet on how to seek election to the consulship, is attributed to Quintus, Marcus Cicero's brother. It may indeed have been written by Quintus, or by a contemporary, or even by a later author imitating the style and language of the late Republic (see M.I. Henderson 'De Commentariolo Petitionis'* JRS *40 (1950) 8–21). There are many similarities to Marcus Cicero's speech* In Toga Candida, *delivered a few days before the elections of 64 BC. A* novus homo *(pl.* novi homines*) was literally a new man; someone who sought public office from outside the ruling Senatorial class. Although influential in their own area, Cicero's family were Equestrian* (equites), *and, although Equestrians could enter the Senate by being elected to a lower magistracy, it was almost unheard for a new man to seek the consulship (cf. Velleius Paterculus, 2, 76, 4). The* publicani *were very rich Equestrian businessmen who bid for public contracts tendered by the censors;* collegia *here refers to the politically active societies of the late Republic;* amici *were friends with political influence or political allies. The* municipia *were towns in Italy with independent municipal administrations.*

2 Consider what city this is, what you are seeking, who you are. Almost every day as you go down to the forum, you must bear this in mind–'I am a *novus homo*. I am seeking the consulship. This is Rome.'

The fact that you are a *novus homo* will be made considerably less harsh by the reputation of your oratory; for oratory has always conferred great distinction. A man who is thought worthy to be the advocate of men of consular rank cannot be considered unworthy of the consulship. Since you have this reputation to start with, and your position, whatever it is, is the result of this, come prepared to speak as though in each individual case a verdict were to be made on your whole character and ability.

3 See that the aids to this ability which I know are your special gifts are ready and available: remind yourself time and again of what Demetrius wrote about the study and practice of Demosthenes. Secondly see that people know how many friends you have and what sort of men they are. For what *novi homines* have possessed the advantages which you have? You have all the *publicani*, virtually all the *equites*, many *municipia* loyal to you alone, many men of every class whom you have defended, several *collegia*, and in addition very many young men who have been won over to you by the study of oratory, and a large and constant circle of *amici* in daily attendance.

[Q. Cicero] *A Short Guide to Electioneering* 2–3
tr. D.W. Taylor and J. Murrell *LACTOR* 3 (1968)

G4 Cicero on writing philosophy

Titus Pomponius, nicknamed Atticus, a wealthy equestrian, was a loyal and devoted friend to Cicero. Their edited correspondence is full of information about their characters, families, friends, and occupations, as well as being a rich source for the political and social life of their times. For text, translation and commentary, see D. R. Shackleton Bailey Cicero's Letters to Atticus; Cicero's Letters to his Friends *(Cambridge 1965–8; 1977).*

(a)
The De Officiis *was published in November 44 BC; Quintus Cicero was married to Atticus' sister, not very happily.*

4 Now to your more recent letter. I have completed the subject of Duty, so far as Panaetius goes, in two books. He has three. He begins by dividing the enquiries on Duty into three categories: (*a*) when the question is whether an action is right or wrong; (*b*) whether it is expedient or inexpedient; and (*c*) how to judge in cases of apparent conflict between the two, e.g. that of Regulus–right to go back, expedient to remain. He gives an excellent exposition of *a* and *b*; *c* he promises to

discuss in due course but never actually did so. That topic was followed up by Posidonius. I have sent for his book and have also written to Athenodorus the Bald asking him to send me an abstract, for which I am now waiting. Would you please give him a push, ask him to send it as soon as possible? It includes a section on 'Duty depending on given circumstances'. As for your query about the title, I make no doubt that [*kathēkon*] is 'duty', unless you have some other suggestion. But the fuller title is 'On Duties'. I address it to my son Marcus. That seemed not inappropriate. . . .

6 I have not buried myself down at Pompeii as I wrote that I should, partly because the weather is abominable, partly because I get letters every day from Octavian urging me to put my shoulder to the wheel, come to Capua, save the Republic a second time, and at all events return to Rome at once. 'Durst not refuse for shame, for fear accept.' He has certainly shown, and continues to show, plenty of energy, and he will go to Rome with a large following; but he is very much a boy. Thinks the Senate will meet at once. Who will come? And who, supposing he comes, will run up against Antony in so uncertain a situation? On the Kalends of January he may be some protection; or perhaps the issue will be fought out before then. The boy is remarkably popular in the towns. On his way to Samnium he passed through Cales and stayed the night at Teanum. Amazing receptions and demonstrations of encouragement. Would you have thought it? For this reason I shall return to Rome sooner than I had intended. I shall write as soon as I decide definitely. . . .

Cicero *To Atticus* 16. 11. 4; 6 (5 Nov. 44 from Puteoli)
tr. D. R. Shackleton Bailey (Cambridge 1965-8)

(b)

Cicero was aware of the difficulties inherent in translating Greek philosophical concepts into Latin; (cf. also Cicero Academica *1. 6. 24).*

1 I have really nothing to write about. It was a different story at Puteoli, when every day brought something afresh about Octavian and much (some of it untrue) about Antony. In answer to what you write (I got three letters from you on the 11th), I strongly agree with you that if Octavian were to have much power the tyrant's measures would be far more solidly approved than in the temple of Tellus, and that this will be bad for Brutus. On the other hand, if he is beaten, you can see that Antony will be intolerable, so one can't tell which to prefer. . . .

3 But, one thing leading to another, I don't feel any doubt that what the Greeks call [*kathēkon*] is our 'duty'. Why do you doubt that it would apply perfectly well to public, as well as private, life? We talk of the Consuls' duty, don't we, or the Senate's duty, or a general's duty? It fits perfectly—or give me something better.

Cicero *To Atticus* 16. 14. 1; 3 (12(?) Nov. 44 from Arpinum)
tr. D. R. Shackleton Bailey (Cambridge 1965-8)

G5 Cicero justifies turning to philosophy

The De Officiis *(conventionally translated as 'On Duties') is written in the form of advice given to Cicero's son Marcus (whom he addresses as Cicero, often 'my Cicero'). It was among his last works composed between 45 and 44 BC. The following passages provide an indication of Cicero's attitude to philosophical pursuits (cf. also Cicero* Academica *2. 5-6, on the appropriateness of Greek learning and philosophy for public men).*

(a)

2 Although my books have aroused in not a few men the desire not only to read but to write, yet I sometimes fear that what we term philosophy is distasteful to certain worthy gentlemen, and that they wonder that I devote so much time and attention to it.

Now, as long as the state was administered by the men to whose care she had voluntarily entrusted herself, I devoted all my effort and thought to her. But when everything passed under the absolute control of a despot and there was no longer any room for statesmanship or authority of mine; and finally when I had lost the friends who had been associated with me in the task of serving the interests of the state, and who were men of the highest standing, I did not resign myself to grief, by which I should have been overwhelmed, had I not struggled against it; neither, on the other hand, did I surrender myself to a life of sensual pleasure unbecoming to a philosopher.

3 I would that the government had stood fast in the position it had begun to assume and had not fallen into the hands of men who desired not so much to reform as to abolish the constitution. For then, in the first place, I should now be devoting my energies more to public speaking than to writing, as I used to do when the republic stood; and in the second place, I should be committing to written form not these present essays but my public speeches, as I often formerly did. But when the republic, to which all my care and thought and effort used to be devoted, was no more, then, of course, my voice was silenced in the forum and in the senate.

(b)

5 Therefore, amid all the present most awful calamities I yet flatter myself that I have won this good out of evil—that I may commit to written form matters not at all familiar to our countrymen but still very much worth their knowing. For what, in the name of heaven, is more to be desired than wisdom? What is more to be prized? What is better for a man, what more worthy of his nature? Those who seek after it are called philosophers; and philosophy is nothing else, if one will translate the word into our idiom, than 'the love of wisdom.' Wisdom, moreover, as the word has been defined by the philosophers of old, is 'the knowledge of things human and divine and of the causes by which those things are controlled.' And if the man lives who would belittle the study of philosophy, I quite fail to see what in the world he would see fit to praise.

Cicero *De Officiis* 2. 2-3; 5
tr. W. Miller (Loeb 1913)