

CICERO THE HISTORIAN AND CICERO THE ANTIQUARIAN

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Cicero's views on history and historians, and his general conceptions of the past, have received a good deal of attention—some, most recently, in Rambaud's short book *Cicéron et l'Histoire Romaine*; but his historical practice has had less consideration. True, practically every passage in which he refers to an event of the past has been somewhere thoroughly elucidated, and the sources to which he turned in any particular work have been investigated by a crowd of commentators. But the general accounts of Cicero's knowledge of and relation to the historiographical tradition of his time are either antiquated or disappointing, and estimates of Cicero's scholarship range from the enthusiastic admiration displayed, but hardly justified, by most recent writers,¹ to the contempt of older ones, most extravagantly Münzer,² who stigmatized the *De senectute* as a historical fantasy, or Zingler,³ who even accused Cicero of inventing his *exempla*. The subject is important both for Cicero's own sake, and in order to throw light on the historiographical standards and activities of his time. Advance can perhaps be made by distinguishing more carefully than has usually been done between the kinds of approach that he made to different types of historical subject at different stages in his career and in different literary genres.

In the first place we must draw a distinction between history and historical *exempla*. No one of course should look for lofty critical standards to be exercised on the latter. Cicero, in his speeches and elsewhere, serves up the traditional stories that the audience expects and is moved by; that add both *auctoritas* and *iucunditas* to the oration.⁴ To be brief, the historical knowledge that Cicero shows here is not very extensive, not very up-to-date—he seems to be reflecting the earlier Roman historians and annalists⁵—and not very accurate; though he sometimes, it seems, does some extra work for special purposes.⁶ So far the critics are perfectly right. But the use of *exempla* is the least important aspect of Cicero's historical practice. In some of the speeches, as for example the *De domo*, there is a tendency to use documentary sources for precedent;⁷ and here the lawyer's method begins to approach that of the antiquarian. Indeed, in many respects Cicero stood closer to the tradition of antiquarianism than to that of historiography proper.

It may be recalled that Cicero's youth fell in the first heyday of antiquarianism, and furthermore among those in close touch with the subject. He had presumably known both Atticus' learned father, and M. Junius Congus Gracchanus, a friend of both this last and of

¹ M. Rambaud, *Cicéron et l'Histoire Romaine* (1953), esp. 25 ff.; K. Fromm, *Ciceros Geschichtlicher Sinn* (Diss. Freiburg, 1954)—this analyses *De re pub.* II and *Brutus* well for their general views of historical development and historical epochs, but is superficial on their sources and does not consider other works of Cicero. Cf. also R. Schütz, *Ciceros Historische Kenntnisse* (1913); V. Poschl, *Römischer Staat und griechisches Staatsdenken bei Cicero* (1936); V. Paladini, 'Sul pensiero storiografico di Cicerone', *Rend. Acc. Lincei* II (1947), 511; P. Boyancé, 'Sur Cicéron et l'Histoire', *REA* XLII (1940), 388.

² F. Münzer, 'Atticus als Geschichtsschreiber', *Hermes* XL (1905), 50; however L. Laurand, 'L'Histoire dans les discours de Cicéron', *Mus. Belg.* (1911); H. Henze, *Quomodo Cicero de historia eiusque auctoribus iudicaverit* (1899); and B. L. Hallward, 'Cicero Historicus', *Camb. Hist. Journ.* 11 (1931), 22, grant him a limited knowledge suitable for an orator.

³ J. Zingler, *De Cicerone Historico Quaestiones* (1900).

⁴ See especially H. Schönberger, *Beispiele aus der Geschichte, ein rhetorisches Kunstmittel in Ciceros Reden* (1910). Rambaud, op. cit. 27, lists references by subject. Cicero's Greek *exempla* are equally moralizing and inaccurate: note *De re pub.* I, 5 on Miltiades, and that in *De Amic.* 42 Cicero still lets Laelius talk of the suicides of Themistocles and

Coriolanus, in spite of the sophisticated *Quellenkritik* of *Brutus* 41–3. See E. Bréguet, 'Quelques exemples historiques dans le 'de republica' de Cicéron', *Latomus* XXVI (1967), 597, and H. Berthold, 'Die Gestalt des Themistocles bei M. Tullius Cicero', *Klio* XLIII (1965), 38.

⁵ Cicero is apparently ignorant of the interpretation of early members of the patrician Claudii as rigid reactionaries (esp. *Pro Cael.*); Horatius, as in Polybius, is unaccompanied on the bridge; *Pro Mur.* 15 seems to speak of the Secession to the Aventine—a rare version, according to Livy, II, 32, found in the early writer Piso. References to the Hannibalic and Eastern Wars follow the strongly moralizing Roman tradition, not Polybius. It is inaccurately stated that Cato and Scipio took part together in the war against Antiochus, *Pro Mur.* 32; Cicero is probably also inaccurate on the date of the trial of Cotta, ib. 58.

⁶ The fragments of his most *popularis* speech, the *Pro Cornelio*, seem to have dealt in some detail with the Struggle of the Orders, perhaps from an early annalist; the account of the restoration of the tribunate is most unlike that of Livy and Dionysius, and apparently omits all reference to Valerius and Horatius, whose roles were elaborated in all probability by Valerius Antias and his contemporaries.

⁷ They come 'ex rebus palam per magistratus actis ad conlegiumque delatis, ex senatus consulto, ex lege' (138).

M. Antonius the orator. Cicero probably speaks of Gracchanus in the *Pro Plancio*, possibly implying knowledge of the man as well as his work.⁸ He had also listened *perstudiose* to the lectures of Aelius Stilo.⁹ Even in his earlier works Cicero shows familiarity with several learned writers; in 60 he is complaining to Atticus that Procilius is much inferior to Dicaearchus.¹⁰ In the same year he has been moving heaven and earth to get hold of the library of Ser. Clodius,¹¹ the son-in-law of Stilo, and like him probably an antiquarian as well as a grammarian: 'uterque eques Romanus multique et varii et in doctrina et in re publica usus,' says Suetonius.¹² The books were, as far as Cicero then knew, largely if not entirely Latin, and when he writes concerning them to Atticus, 'ego autem cotidie magis quod mihi de forensi labore temporis datur in iis studiis conquiesco',¹³ it is hard to suppose that he is thinking only of strictly grammatical studies. It is only a short time after this that we find him deep in a political and antiquarian *politeia* of Dicaearchus.

Part of Cicero's inheritance from this older generation of antiquarians may be his sophisticated feeling for the past, not unlike that of the modern sensibility.¹⁴ We can believe in the picture he draws in the *De finibus* of his studies in an Athens haunted for him and his friends by the great figures of the past,¹⁵ and of his excitement when as quaestor he discovered the tomb of Archimedes at Syracuse. And the passion with which, in the year 70, he deploras Verres' historic as well as artistic vandalism in Sicily¹⁶ already shows the lines on which his interests are to run. Cicero makes Piso in the *De finibus* regret the rebuilding of the ancient *curia*, with the loss of all its old associations, just as Atticus delighted in the *sal* of his old house and refused to modernize it.¹⁷ This sort of attitude was due not only to the somewhat juster feel for past changes and developments in Rome encouraged by recent antiquarian and grammatical studies, but directly to the deeper Greek education of the new generation and in particular, perhaps, to the influence of Dicaearchus. For Dicaearchus both Cicero and Atticus had the greatest admiration and affection.¹⁸ Varro also called him *doctissimus homo*,¹⁹ and may to some extent have attempted to imitate his great *Bios Hellados* in the *De vita populi Romani*, which was dedicated, perhaps significantly, to Atticus. The extent to which this admiration was already to be found in Stilo's generation can unfortunately not be estimated.

At any rate, Cicero's interests in the past bear a close resemblance to those of Dicaearchus; who treated of political theory in conjunction with the development of individual states, who was in his *Bioi* one of the founders of biography, and who was of course the pioneer of intellectual and cultural history. That these are the aspects of the past that Cicero cares for begins to be plain in his first important treatise, the *De oratore*. It is the feel of the past, and the knowledge of the way the *maiores* thought and felt, and of what its great men were like, that attracts Cicero. This is what makes the study of civil law pleasant: 'nam, sive haec Aeliana studia delectant, plurima est et in omni iure civili et in pontificum libris et in XII tabulis antiquitatis effigies, quod et verborum vetustas prisca cognoscitur et actionum genera quaedam maiorum consuetudinem vitamque declarant.'²⁰ Already, too, we see him making comparisons with Greek cultural history; he shows the superior wisdom of the *maiores* by comparing their laws with those of the archaic Greek legislators: 'incredibile est enim, quam sit omne ius civile praeter hoc nostrum inconditum et paene ridiculum.'²¹

Cicero was no doubt aware that one didn't get this feel of the past from reading the annalists; at best one got the feel of the age in which they were written. This, combined with their notorious literary inadequacy—but the form was anyway in danger of being

⁸ *Planc.* 48, 'neque fuisse qui id nobis narraret, praesertim mortuo Congo' (*Congo* is corr. Roth).

⁹ *Brutus* 207.

¹⁰ *Ad Att.* II, 2, 2. Cicero is reading Dicaearchus' Περὶ Ἑλληνικῶν Πολιτικῶν, so whether or not Procilius wrote a periegetic work on Rome, as Münzer conjectured on the basis of the fragments, he must surely have produced a book of political theory or political and legal antiquarianism. If he was related to or identical with the tribune of 56 it may have had *popularis* leanings.

¹¹ *Ad Att.* I, 20, 7.

¹² Suetonius, *De gramm.* 3.

¹³ *Ad Att.* I, 20, 7.

¹⁴ See P. Boyancé, 'Les Méthodes de l'histoire littéraire: Cicéron et son œuvre philosophique', *REL* XIV (1936), 288.

¹⁵ *De fin.* V, 2-6; cf. *De leg.* II, 6.

¹⁶ *Verrines* II, IV, 123.

¹⁷ Nepos, *Atticus* 25, 13, 2.

¹⁸ *Ad Att.* II, 2, 2; XIII, 30, 2.

¹⁹ Varro, *RR* I, 2, 16.

²⁰ *De oratore* I, 193 (*Aeliana* Madvig; *aliena* codd.).

²¹ *ib.* I, 197.

boring, see the letter to Luceius²²—and perhaps in some cases their military bias, which would not commend itself to Cicero, explains his comparative neglect of them. Though his letters often inform us that Cicero is reading a Greek historian simply for the pleasure of it, there are no such passages for their Roman equivalents. The *De Oratore*, as is well known, only mentions the *Annales Maximi*, Piso, the Latin Fabius, Cato and Caelius. The first four are twice listed in such a way as to suggest that if Cicero had had other examples to hand he would have used them.²³ Cassius, Tuditanus or Gellius for example were not likely to have been undeserving of his strictures. Unless one accepts the old suggestion that the passage is closely based on a late second-century historian (compare the sentiments of Asellio, frags. 1–2 Peter) one would suspect that these are the only historians with whom Cicero is familiar—and it is not likely that he had read every word of, at least, the *Annales Maximi*. However this may be, Cicero's scholarship is as yet amateurish in the extreme, with that amateurishness that he justifies as right and proper in the statesman and orator. He has not yet engaged in any piece of scholarly research; shortly before this time, in 59, when Atticus was urging him to write a book on geography, he was quite unprepared for and appalled by the amount of labour he found it would entail.²⁴

But the next work was the *De re publica*; and this involved a great deal more effort. More, again, it seems that Cicero had bargained for: 'rem magnam complexus sum et gravem et plurimi oti, quo ego maxime egeo,' he writes to Atticus.²⁵

For some time now there had been a lull in the study of the remoter past (more recent times had been treated in various memoirs and laudatory monographs, and by the far from contemptible Sisenna). People doubtless read the older annalists less, for stylistic and political reasons; the compromise of 70 perhaps discouraged others from following up Macer's attempt to revive interest in the Struggle of the Orders, even if *popularis* politicians still made sporadic efforts to employ history in the service of political agitation. Antiquarianism had also come to a near standstill. Since Stilo, Cicero makes Varro say in the *Academica*, there has been no original work done.²⁶ There may be polite exaggeration in this, but the *Pro Plancio* passage also suggests that Congus had left no successor ('neque fuisse qui id nobis narraret, praesertim mortuo Congo'). In fact we know of nobody, unless it be the mediocre Proculius, who came to the fore in this field between Sulla and the late fifties. It may be noted that some of Cicero's friends appear to be remarkably ignorant about the past.

But just as the crisis of the late second century had stimulated a first flowering of antiquarianism, the breakdown of Republican order in the fifties gave the impulse for a second. The *De re publica* was openly a reaction to the danger.²⁷ It in its turn inspired Atticus to embark on his chronological researches.²⁸ These seem also to have been the years in which Varro was busy on his *Antiquitates*, perhaps the first as it was the greatest of his antiquarian works. And Appius Claudius—'cum auguralis, tum omnis publici iuris antiquitatisque nostrae bene peritus'²⁹—wrote his augural work and dedicated it to Cicero. Atticus' protégé Nepos had also entered upon a historical career with his *Chronica*.³⁰

Cicero himself was not going to contribute real antiquarian monographs to the movement. They were a fit subject neither for the greatest stylist of Rome nor for one of her greatest political figures. He never, in fact, again gets so deeply entangled in the study of antiquity as in the *De re publica*; but for the rest of his life he finds it a fascinating sideline.

The practical ends that Roman writers had always in mind when dealing with the past tend to prevent their being regarded as proper scholars by our standards. The new antiquarianism of the fifties proclaimed its conservative political ends frankly; Varro has been strongly attacked for his attempts to prove the great antiquity of Rome and his perpetual tendency to assume that the *maiores* were all-wise and all-knowing. Cicero proclaimed that literary historiography should aim at the truth, and *a fortiori* will have believed that scholarly writings for a limited circle should do so. But he was a true Roman in his attitude to the past, from the time of the *De oratore*, when he compared Roman and Greek *ius civile* to show the *prudentia* of the *maiores*, to that of the *De finibus*, where he pronounces historical

²² *Ad fam.* v, 12, 5.

²³ *De or.* II, 52–3.

²⁴ *Ad Att.* II, 4, 2; 6, 1; 7, 1.

²⁵ *ib.* IV, 16, 2; cf. *Ad Q. fr.* II, 12, 2.

²⁶ *Acad.* I, 8.

²⁷ *De re pub.* I, 1–13.

²⁸ *Brutus* 19.

²⁹ *ib.* 267.

³⁰ Catullus 1.

enthusiasm only worthy of an *ingeniosus* rather than a mere *curiosus* if it leads to the emulation of great men (it is therefore ridiculous in *homines infima fortuna*).³¹ Furthermore, the *archaeologia* of Book II of the *De re publica* functions as an embodiment of the abstract ideas of Book I, especially those concerned with reason and justice, and also as a *laudatio* of Rome, which develops into a perfect state; so that it hardly deserves the title of *historia* that is at one point given to it, and we should not be surprised by a strong simplification of persons and events, or even by some chronological vagueness. Nonetheless, Cicero at times allows the scholarly to override the patriotic considerations, and at others reconciles them with some subtlety. His justified refusal to believe that Numa was a Pythagorean is turned *ad maiorem gloriam Romae* to show her culture was not borrowed; when Rome does borrow, she often improves (a cliché).³² But Cicero can say that in certain matters our ancestors ought to have copied Solon.³³

The *De re publica* is a microcosm of all Cicero's historical interests. On his treatment of the great men of the second century we will say something later; here let us take that interest in political institutions and *mores* which is at the back of the revived antiquarianism proper. This leads us back to the early republic and even the monarchy, and was most fully displayed in the *archaeologia* of Book II and in the largely lost Book IV. Over the sources employed, particularly for the *archaeologia*, there has been much argument. All that is certain is that Cicero openly appeals to Cato (for political theory and a saying of Africanus) and to Polybius and *Graecorum annales* (for chronology); but that he also used later writers, whom historical verisimilitude forbade him to name. Here if anywhere, where Cicero has to give a connected account of early Rome, one would expect him to turn to the historians, however aware he was of their shortcomings. In fact, the preface to the *De legibus*, in striking contrast to the *De oratore*, can name Fannius, Vennonius, Clodius, Asellio and Licinius Macer; and as they would have been of little direct use for the *De legibus*, it would seem highly probable that they were read for the *De re publica*—Fannius and Asellio no doubt largely for the *mise-en-scène*, the others chiefly for the *archaeologia*. There are indeed some traces in this of a late annalist—probably Macer³⁴—but Cicero can show scepticism of the annalistic tradition. Apart from doubting the Pythagoreanism of Numa as 'non satis declaratum annalium publicorum auctoritate'³⁵ (whatever precisely this means; at any rate he preferred Greek chronologists) he points out that documentary sources show that the dictator was originally called *magister populi*; and that the *pontificales* and *augurales libri* contradict the annalistic account by stating that there was *provocatio* under the monarchy. He adds that the XII Tables bear out the existence of *provocatio* in their time.³⁶

This tendency to quotation and argument is typical of the antiquarian approach; and Cicero was certainly using antiquarian sources as well. *Ad Atticum* IV, 14, 1 shows that Cicero was borrowing the works of Varro and others from Atticus' library in Rome;³⁷ and *Ad Atticum* IV, 16, 6, half-promising to insert a polite mention of Varro in a proem, confirms that he was being used. The Varronian passages are rarely identifiable. But, for example, from some kind of learned work must come the reckoning back to the eclipse in which Romulus disappeared;³⁸ this is not mentioned in any other account of Romulus' end, and the argument from Ennius and the *Annales Maximi* points directly to a work of post-Gracchan antiquarianism. The use of Ennius suggests the grammarian, and I have argued elsewhere that the annalists made little use of the *Annales Maximi*.³⁹ The story of Sulpicius Gallus and the globe occurs in no surviving historian; Münzer suggested that it came from a writer who was not a historian, and it has been held that the whole account of Sulpicius is due to Varro, from whom Pliny at least got his knowledge of this second-century astronomer.

³¹ *De fin.* v, 6.

³² *De re pub.* II, 30.

³³ *ib.* II, 58; cf. *De leg.* III, 46.

³⁴ Valerius Antias has been suggested, but though it is true that Valerius and his *provocatio* law bulk larger than they did in the *pro Cornelio* (while the *leges Porciae*, in striking contrast to that speech, have become three but insignificant), it might be wiser to suggest Macer's name. We know he was read about now, and his account was probably close

to that of Antias (their contributions are hard to disentangle in Livy and Dionysius).

³⁵ *De re pub.* II, 28–9.

³⁶ *ib.* II, 33.

³⁷ D. R. Shackleton-Bailey, *ad loc.*, suggests that 'Varro's books' were books purchased by him, but this seems less likely.

³⁸ *De re pub.* I, 25.

³⁹ 'Prodigy Lists and the use of the *Annales Maximi*', *CQ* XXI (1971), 158.

It has been argued by Ruch that much of the rest of the astronomical lore in the *De re publica* is Varronian too.⁴⁰

The *De re publica*, especially the largely lost fourth book, seems to be the one work where Cicero makes frequent use of that favourite weapon of the antiquarians, etymology. One need only note the number of etymological fragments from Varro's *Antiquitates*. Cicero uses the technique primarily to throw light on social and political history; he explains *assiduus* and *proletarius* to illustrate Servius' political intentions in setting up his political system; *pecuniosus* and *locuples* to show that livestock and land were the only forms of wealth in early days; ⁴¹ there are other examples. It matters little whether the source for all these etymologies is Varro, or his and Cicero's old master Stilo (who 'Stoicus esse voluit' ⁴²) or both or others as well. Cicero had Ser. Clodius' library to hand; he was in touch with the fashionable subject of philology—he knew personally, apart from the Romans Stilo, Nigidius and Varro, Atticus' friend and adviser the elder Tyrannio.⁴³ He is even supposed to have at some time followed part-time courses ('post laborem fori') by Antonius Gniphio.⁴⁴ He was the dedicatee not only of Varro's *De lingua Latina*, in 47–5 B.C., but of Caesar's book on analogy. Thus it is interesting to see that Cicero never again behaves as he did in the *De re publica*, and that scholars who have considered the matter unite in declaring that he distrusted the whole procedure of etymologizing.⁴⁵ This is shown most clearly in a well-known passage of the *De natura deorum*,⁴⁶ where after producing a long list of Stoic etymologies of gods' names he gives his sceptic, Cotta, some nice jibes about this *periculosa consuetudo*. It is clear that this view was now his own. In the *De gloria* he derived *oppidum* from *opem dare*, but added 'ut . . . imitemur ineptias Stoicorum',⁴⁷ and in the *De officiis* he similarly apologizes for connecting *fides* with *quia fit*—he had not done so in the *De re publica*.⁴⁸ Otherwise there are few, and usually obvious and sensible, appeals to the method; for example the *De senectute* uses the obvious explanations of *senatus*, *convivium* and *viator* to throw light on social history. *Viator*, the name for the officials summoning the senate to meet, is said to show that the *patres* lived out of Rome in rustic simplicity; *convivium* proves that the *maiores* had a superior idea of social life to the Greeks, who spoke more mundanely of συμπόσιον and σύνδειπνον.⁴⁹

It is not surprising, then, that Varro in the opening pages of Book VII of the *De lingua Latina*, addressed to Cicero, is somewhat on the defensive.⁵⁰ But it is interesting to see that, whether he was supported by widespread scepticism in non-Stoic circles or not, Cicero was ready to take an independent position against the greatest scholar of his day; and also that, just as he finally came out against all forms of divination in the *De divinatione*, so in scholarly matters too he became more critical as he grew older. Is it in fact rash to suggest that, if Cicero's learning was far less extensive than Varro's, his judgement was a good deal better? One notices that he never shows any interest in the pre-Romulean period, unlike Varro.

We may now take our leave of issues raised by the *De republica*. The *De legibus* was perhaps worked on concurrently. It certainly shows the same pattern—a preference for antiquarian sources and methods—though this is natural given the subject matter. Apart from the historians discussed in the proem, the only authors mentioned are two interpreters of the XII Tables, Sex. Aelius and L. Acilius, along with L. Aelius (Stilo) and M. Junius Congus (for his *De potestatibus*).⁵¹ Documents appealed to are the XII Tables, the *leges sacratae*, and the *libri pontificales* (whence perhaps the 'senatus vetus auctoritas de Bacchanalibus').⁵² These are in fact the primary sources that Cicero has long known, that

⁴⁰ M. Ruch, 'Météorologie, astronomie et astrologie chez Cicéron', *REL* xxxii (1954), 200.

⁴¹ *De re pub.* II, 40; II, 9; Bk. IV, frags.

⁴² *Brutus* 205.

⁴³ *Ad Att.* II, 6, 1; *Ad Q. Fr.* II, 4, 2.

⁴⁴ Macrobius, *Sat.* III, 12, 1.

⁴⁵ A. Mentz, *De L. Aelio Stilone* (1900).

⁴⁶ III, 62. P. Dietrich, *De Ciceronis ratione etymologica* (1911), derives most of the etymologies in the *de n.d.* from Stilo; Cicero wanted to avoid an open attack on Varro? (Varro in fact avoided the worst excesses and could profess ignorance: J. Collart, *Varron Grammaire Latin* (1954), 251.) Mere

imitations of Greek derivations, like *Dis-Dives* based on πλούτων-πλούτος belong to the pre-Varronian period; and *Vesta-Hestia* also appears in *De leg.* 29, for which book we know Stilo was used.

⁴⁷ cf. Varro, *L.L.* VIII, 141.

⁴⁸ *De off.* I, 23.

⁴⁹ *De sen.* 45; 56.

⁵⁰ VII, I, 1–4. Note 'non reprehendendum igitur in illis qui in scrutando verbo litteram adiciunt aut demunt, quo facilius quid sub ea voce subsit videri possit'.

⁵¹ *De legibus* II, 59; III, 49.

⁵² *ib.* II, 37.

he has appealed to on occasion in his speeches. And there does not seem to be evidence of much addition to the list before his death. The old stand-bys, even the same passages in them, crop up again and again in the works of his last period. It is here that Cicero's inferiority to Varro is most marked; for the most cursory glance through the *De Lingua Latina* shows that a variety of documentary sources, old *commentarii* of one sort or another, are here being used. Cicero's sole new discovery after the *De legibus* seems to be the old *commentarii* that threw light on the vexed question of Naevius' death, and these he may have known only through Varro. Nor, we may add, does Cicero's knowledge of Roman historians increase much either; Libo is the only new one mentioned.⁵³ All this may be partly due to the fact that much of his work was done in the country, which would have made the consultation of archives difficult for the most eager scholar, and sometimes even away from Tusculum, where the libraries of friends like Lucullus' son were available to him as well as his own. Apart from the books that he found it worth while to ask Atticus to send on to him, there must have been many others for which he did not want to bother his friend. At lonely Astura in 45, it is plain that he has no Apollodorus in the house, though he has Atticus' *Liber Annalis* with him; but not much else in the way of history, to judge by his inability to find out what the philosophical embassy of 155 B.C. was doing in Rome.⁵⁴ But it is from more cultivated Tusculum that he writes with enquiries about the dialogue to be set in Olympia in 146 B.C.; the research, involving old *senatus consulta*, has clearly to be done in Rome.⁵⁵ And, also at Tusculum, it appears that Cicero can't get hold of a Vennonius.⁵⁶

But if Cicero's antiquarian equipment was mediocre, the use that he made of it was far from unintelligent. I believe that the interesting discussion of early burial habits in *De legibus* II, 22, 55 ff., is mostly Cicero's own work. The comparison of Greek and Roman traditions is something dear to his heart; and the section on Athenian burial customs, with the use of Demetrius of Phalerum, is a clear pointer to Cicero himself, who had a particular admiration for that scholar-statesman and certainly used him extensively in this very work. The purely Roman section employs only the sources that Cicero regularly turned to; and he is perhaps more likely to be showing off his own learning than to be lifting without acknowledgement and more or less word for word—for there is not much *exornatio* in question—a long and not very relevant passage from Varro or another.

An old pontifical decision illustrates the impiety of burying strange corpses in the grave of a *gens*. A dubious etymology (*denicales—de nece*), and an attempt to prove from the fact that the *dies denicales* are regarded as *feriae* that the *maiores* wished the dead to be thought 'in deorum numero esse', are the weakest part of the passage. On the other hand the argument to show that inhumation was the earliest form of burial in Rome is very sensible: the grave of Numa is a dubious tradition ('conditum accepimus') but the survival of the habit among the patrician Cornelii is a fact ('scimus') about which we are told fascinating details. There is a reference to Ennius. There is also a cautious and reasonable appeal to etymology: *humatus* may have a general sense these days, but originally denoted inhumation. And the *ius pontificale* confirms this, for a turf still has to be thrown onto the burnt bones. This last fact is mentioned by Varro, which may or may not suggest that he provided Cicero with information. Next there is another reference to a pontifical decision. The laws, we are then told, give little information on graves; but the XII Tables forbid burial inside the city (the wording of the passage further supporting the contention about inhumation). An inadequate explanation of the prohibition—fear of fire—is followed by discussion of the exceptions to the rule. Burial in a public place is also unlawful; illustrated by a pontifical decision of 233 B.C. Finally we come to the regulations for funerals as laid down in the XII Tables and explained by the commentators. In the absence of Varro's antiquarian works, these chapters are the most sustained republican attempt at the method surviving, and on the whole they give us a high opinion of its standards.

Similarly, but more briefly, *Tusculan Disputations* I, 27 collects evidence 'e pontificio iure et e caerimoniis sepulcrorum', and from Ennius and popular tradition, to show that the *maiores*, like the Greeks, believed 'esse in morte sensum'. This is part of a longer discussion about belief in the soul and the after-life. Rambaud points out how often Cicero, as

⁵³ *Ad Att.* XIII, 30, 2; 32, 3.

⁵⁴ *ib.* XII, 23, 2.

⁵⁵ See n. 53, and *Ad Att.* XIII, 33, 3; 6, 4; 4, 1.

⁵⁶ *ib.* XIII, 12, 2.

here, approaches a philosophic question historically, basing himself for the most part closely on texts and taking care over chronology.⁵⁷ For such an approach there were plenty of Greek sources; apart from such finished scholars as Dicaearchus there were doxographies and diadochies to assist in the task. Here indeed Cicero makes a very interesting comparison of Greek and Roman intellectual development; and Cato is well adduced both for his evidence of early songs and his own contempt for poetry.

The digression on Pythagoreanism in early Rome at the start of Book IV is another piece of antiquarian argument—much shorter, Cicero says, than he might have made it. The modest and personal turns of phrase again suggest it is his own work: ‘consideranti mihi studia doctrinae multa sane occurrunt’, and so on. The sources are mainly those we know Cicero knew: the XII Tables, Cato again. Appius Claudius Caecus’ work might be only known through the letter of Panaetius. Again almost all the arguments are perfectly valid. Particularly neat is the appeal to the belief, recognized as itself erroneous, that Numa had been a Pythagorean. However, Cicero’s patriotism might seem dangerously in evidence: ‘multa etiam sunt in nostris institutis ducta ab aliis; quae praetereo ne ea, quae repperisse ipsi putamur, aliunde didicisse videamur.’

Finally, a couple of late dialogues, the *De natura deorum* and the *De divinatione*. In contrast to the works we have been discussing these show extensive quotations from the historians about early times. These are still all the older ones—Caelius in particular.⁵⁸ But Cicero only adduces these stories to reject them as fabulous. In the *De natura deorum* Cicero is clearly also using a philosophically minded antiquarian, with whose Stoic etymologies he is having such fun; hence perhaps the various obscure cults mentioned. The rest of the antiquarianism is perhaps not beyond Cicero’s own capacity; again it is clear that this is the technique to which he turns when he wants to find out about the remote past. On the one hand one notes the pretty proof from vestigial survivals that auspices had once been more extensively used (unless this comes from the augural work that Zingler posited as a source⁵⁹); on the other hand one notices that Cicero has apparently not himself read the prophecies of Marcius or the Marcii, though Festus’ source had.

These investigations into the beliefs and institutions of the remote past could not satisfy Cicero’s other hunger, that for information about the great individuals of Roman history. This he could to some extent feed by making the reconstructions that form the dramatic settings of his dialogues. Of late scholars have seemed almost united in praising Cicero’s accuracy here, and in pointing out his intention to re-voke the social and intellectual milieu of certain great men at critical moments in their, and Rome’s, history;⁶⁰ the *De oratore* is the most explicit in insisting that it really is trying to give a realistic picture of the two chief characters.⁶¹ The only dialogue about which there is still serious dispute is that set furthest in the past, the *De senectute*, which Münzer attacked so fiercely; the most recent discussion, Kammer’s dissertation, still holds that there are many unreliable details and much general idealization. I cannot argue the case fully here, but while admitting some *suppressio veri* about Cato’s relations with Ennius and the elder Scipio, I think it can be shown that almost all the details and anecdotes, whether ultimately true or false, were at least

⁵⁷ op. cit. 90.

⁵⁸ There is still no sign that any of the so-called Sullan annalists is being employed. The presence of Castor and Pollux at the battle of Lake Regillus (II, 6) has been thought to indicate a late annalist; but a Postumius probably refers to this feature of his ancestor’s victory on a coin of about 90 B.C. (Sydenham no. 612) and in fact it seems that Dionysius VI, 13 added the story to his account from a non-annalistic source. The story of P. Vatinius’ vision of the Dioscuri after Pydna is not in Livy and may be non-annalistic; it involves action that would be recorded in *senatus consulta* (II, 6 and III, 11); or Cicero might know it from family tradition—he describes the hero as ‘avus huius adulescentis’. Finally, the detailed account of the elder Ti. Gracchus’ augural mistake (II, 10–11), which is said to come from oral tradition, may really

be taken from the *libri augurales* or a writer on augury; the technical lore is rather detailed for an annalist.

⁵⁹ op. cit. (n. 3), also tracing its use in the *De div.* and tentatively identifying it with Ap. Claudius Pulcher. But much of what is ascribed to it surely comes from Cicero’s own knowledge; we can have little doubt that he knew Caelius.

⁶⁰ The most recent discussion, by M. Ruch, *Le Préambule dans les œuvres philosophiques de Cicéron* (1958), 379 ff. is unfortunately confused and sometimes inaccurate. H. Strasburger, ‘Der “Scipionenkreiss”’, *Hermes* (1966), 60, and A. E. Astin, *Scipio Aemilianus* (1967) Appendix VI, accuse Cicero of artificially expanding the Scipionic circle, but not of factual misstatement.

⁶¹ See esp. G. Zoll, *Cicero Platonis Aemulus* (1962), 75.

found by Cicero in Cato's own works.⁶² And the sort of care that Cicero was ready to take is shown above all in the well-known series of letters to Atticus in which he tries to establish, for a dialogue that he never wrote, which prominent Romans were in Greece in 146 B.C. and in what capacities.⁶³ The Ciceronian dialogues as a whole have been much discussed; but there are still two or three points which I think it may be worth making.

How eager we are, says Cicero, to learn even unimportant details about great men! But the details which he himself gives are not details of bodily, or even usually of mental idiosyncracies; he goes further than his model Plato in suppressing these. In spite of his regret for the paintings which Verres carried off from Syracuse and which included portraits of men of the past,⁶⁴ and in spite of recognizing the possibility that funeral *imagines* could teach one what great men had looked like,⁶⁵ Cicero, one would suppose, regarded such matters as the province of mere *curiosi*. Here he is in the high serious tradition of ancient historiography proper (contrast his speeches, where there are plenty of satirically employed physical details). Some forms of biography, on the other hand, could accommodate physical details; and for Rome in Cicero's day both Varro and Atticus produced illustrated biographical works, the former the *Hebdomades* or *De imaginibus*, the latter the *Imagines*. Perhaps we should remember the new heights that portrait sculpture was reaching in these years. To the developing Roman tradition of true biography, then, Cicero is tangential; Nepos, who carried it on, is still, interestingly, worried about being accounted frivolous.⁶⁶

Cicero's historical seriousness, it is generally recognized, is greater than that of most other authors of dialogues.⁶⁷ But perhaps we should stress this point even more heavily. The tradition of the dialogue emphatically did not encourage rigorous historical standards. Cicero's admired Plato, whom he more than once follows for general plan and subject, is notoriously cavalier over fact and chronology. There is little evidence that later philosophers were stricter; many indeed assumed fantastic license—including Heracleides Ponticus, to whom Cicero appeals for the practice of setting dialogues in the past. Even such scholars as Aristotle (whom Cicero copied in various particulars such as the use of proems) or Eratosthenes made no attempt to be historically accurate. There is no evidence that Dicaearchus was more careful, though it is a possibility. In Rome Cicero had few predecessors—probably none for setting dialogues in the past. What of those set in the present? True, the chronological inaccuracy of Curio's dialogue attacking Caesar is put down by Cicero to Curio's own peculiar shortness of memory, and he would never have expected factual accuracy in satire.⁶⁸ But even after Cicero's example had been set, Varro in the *De re rustica* can collect together most implausibly a bevy of persons with punning names—though perhaps the lighter nature of his subject is relevant. It would nonetheless seem that the difference between Cicero and his Greek exemplars should not be seen in terms of Roman reverence for fact and the past; it was a personal thing.⁶⁹

And this personal desire for accuracy seems to be revealed in an extreme anxiety to justify even those departures from historical truth without which the dialogue form is not

⁶² See U. Kammer, *Untersuchungen zu Ciceros Bild von Cato Censorius* (Diss. Frankfurt 1964). Compare *De sen.* 11 with *De or.* 11, 273 where Cato is certainly being used (see *ib.* 281); but also 55 and other passages on Fabius with *De re pub.* III, 38 'ex ipso Catone audiebam'; 7, two consulars whom it would be pointless to mention if Cato had not done so. Cicero also uses material he has checked before (children who died before their fathers) and other well-trying stuff. True, he does not follow Cato as quoted by Livy, xxxiv, 42, 3 on the shocking act of L. Flamininus. But here Cato's partisan version was perhaps too scandalous to be true, and Cicero may think he has a better source and be willing to let a mellowed Cato follow it.

See F. Padberg, *Cicero und Cato Censorius* (Diss. Münster 1933) and R. Gnauk, *Die Bedeutung des Marius und Cato Maior für Cicero* (Diss. Leipzig 1935), 70 ff. Recent editors of the work, P. Wuilleumier (1961), esp. 17–19, and H. Herter (1966) take a cautious middle line.

⁶³ *Ad Att.* XIII, 30, 2; 32, 3; 33, 3; 6, 4; 4, 1; 5, 1. E. Badian, 'Cicero and the Commission of

146', *Hommages à Marcel Renard* (1969), 1, 54, makes the point that in research Cicero and Atticus were 'logical and scholarly to an extent which moderns only too often deny to the ancients'.

⁶⁴ *Verrines* II, iv, 123 'quae delectabant... commemoratione hominum et cognitione formarum'.

⁶⁵ *De re pub.* VI, 10: Aemilianus can recognize his grandfather from his *imago*.

⁶⁶ Rambaud, *op. cit.* 19.

⁶⁷ R. Hirzel, *Der Dialog* (1895) 1, 475; G. Zoll, M. Ruch, *opp. citt.* (*contra*, of course, U. Kammer, *op. cit.*); R. E. Jones, 'Cicero's Accuracy of Characterisation in his Dialogues', *AJP* LX (1939), 307, only finds that views formed late in life are attributed to persons in their youth, and that Brutus in *Brutus* has had his Atticism and Caesarism toned down. For this last point, cf. also A. E. Douglas, *Brutus* (ed. 1966), xviii.

⁶⁸ Varro's *Logistorici* were probably in dialogue form. They all centre on a contemporary figure.

⁶⁹ Cicero also insists on verisimilitude, e.g. dividing a long conversation into several days, unlike Plato.

possible at all. If in the *De oratore* Cicero is still appealing to Plato's Socrates as a precedent for the erection of a historical memorial in dialogue, in the *De re publica* he is, by a reference to the difference between the historic and the Platonic Socrates, issuing a hardly necessary warning that Scipio's views too will largely be those of the author.⁷⁰ For more recent times there are the long-drawn out worries in the letters about putting expositions of philosophy into the mouths of Catulus and Lucullus; ⁷¹ in the end he gives the attempt up, and sets the *Academica* among learned contemporaries of his own—but in writing to Varro still sounds apologetic: you will be surprised to find here a conversation we never had, 'sed nosti morem dialogorum'.

Finally, I would stress the extreme variety of source which Cicero draws on for his picture of the late second century, when most of these dialogues are set; oral tradition and family material, as the letters to Atticus checking up on examples of children dying before their father show; ⁷² official documents, like the *senatus consulta* for 146 looked up by one of Atticus' staff; ⁷³ the writings of any character appearing, especially those of Cato; the poets, especially Ennius and possibly Lucilius—these were treated with due caution, as the discussion in the *Brutus* of Ennius' reference to the eloquence of Cethegus shows: ⁷⁴ the man was a contemporary, but dead when Ennius wrote, so flattery was out of the question; and Cicero was well aware of the difference between history and historical poetry, as the proem to the *De legibus* and other passages show. Further, Cicero has an eye for the incidental historical information in a philosophical source—Clitomachus' dedication of his work to his countrymen, the Carthaginians enslaved in 146,⁷⁵ or an anecdote about Scipio Aemilianus recounted by Panaetius.⁷⁶ He can use a monument, like Atilius Calatinus' elogium, mentioned in the *De senectute*. And of course he does not neglect the historians who wrote in and of his beloved second century. Polybius is undoubtedly one; the description of Masinissa's powers in old age in *De senectute* 34 is repeated in a very similar form from Polybius by Plutarch; the reference in the *De amicitia* to Scipio's generous treatment of his mother and sisters might well depend on Polybius xxxi, 26–8; and he is quoted in *De officiis* III, 113. The letters, too, show Cicero reading or wanting to read Polybius, Vennonius, and the somewhat mysterious epitomes by Brutus of Fannius and Caelius.⁷⁷ It is incidentally interesting that there is no record of Cicero using the continuation of Polybius (down to perhaps 80 B.C.) made by Posidonius, a man of great reputation and one with whom Cicero was in literary contact.⁷⁸ Some of the surviving fragments have been highly thought of by modern scholars,⁷⁹ but however vivid, they seem to suggest vagueness and even serious inaccuracy as to Roman institutions and policy. It is worth noting that Quintilian thought that it was Timagenes, in the later first century B.C., who to some extent revived the art of history after a bad period.⁸⁰ At any rate, Cicero, who must surely have known Posidonius' work, perhaps felt that it gave a second-hand and inaccurate account of a period for which there were first-hand sources.

We should now be able to see why it is that the *Brutus* is, among other things, Cicero's most sustained, sensitive and successful historical achievement. Here he could combine both his interest in cultural history, including his interest in comparing Greek and Roman developments, with his interest in distinguished individuals; for once basing himself on documentary knowledge of a scope probably unrivalled in his day. Speeches and memoirs that hardly anyone else has read are referred to time and again. The dialogue form, perhaps unprecedented for such a historical survey,⁸¹ greatly enriches the brief⁸² and somewhat abrupt style, enlivened by anecdote, though not alas by quotation, which is held to be the established style for such subjects as the history of literature. And a recent suggestion would

⁷⁰ *De orat.* III, 16 and 60; *De re pub.* I, 10, 6.

⁷¹ *Ad Att.* XIII, 12, 3; 16, 1; cf. *Ad fam.* IX, 8, 1.

⁷² *ib.* XII, 20, 2; 22, 2; 24, 2.

⁷³ *ib.* XIII, 33, 3.

⁷⁴ *Brutus* 57.

⁷⁵ *Tusc. Disp.* III, 54.

⁷⁶ *De off.* I, 90.

⁷⁷ *Ad Att.* XIII, 30, 2; XII, 3, 1; XII, 5, 3; XIII, 8, 1.

⁷⁸ Pace H. Henze, *op. cit.* (n. 2), who thought Posidonius inspired Cicero's whole idea of historiography—Polybian pragmatism plus the medium style.

⁷⁹ *FGrH* II C 156; H. Strasburger, 'Poseidonios on problems of the Roman Empire', *JRS* LV (1965), 40; K. Reinhardt, P-W, Poseidonios, esp. col. 824. Cicero may have used Posidonius' history for information about the Chaldaeans in *De div.* I.

⁸⁰ *Inst. Or.* x, 1, 75.

⁸¹ A. E. Douglas, *op. cit.* xxiii.

⁸² G. Puccioni, 'Il "Brutus" Ciceroniano come fonte biografico e storico-letterario', *Atti del I Congresso Internazionale di Studi Ciceroniani* I (1959), 245.

mean that Cicero's achievement was more independent than is usually thought. If the post-Gracchan figures are arranged by date of birth rather than by date of magistrature, as A. E. Douglas holds, then Cicero cannot, as Rambaud and others have supposed, be relying heavily on Atticus' *Liber Annalis* for his framework (Atticus only gave, regularly, consuls and censors, and he dated A.U.C., which Cicero does not show any sign of doing).⁸³ In 14-16 Cicero certainly does seem to set in the future, not the present, the work that is gratefully to employ Atticus' book; and in paragraph 74 it is only a digression on the chronology of the early poets that is ascribed to Atticus' influence. As Rambaud well points out, Cicero's interest in establishing relative ages to show groups of friends and *aequales*, or master-pupil relations, goes back to the *De oratore*, long before Atticus' work was thought of; it springs no doubt partly from histories of Greek philosophy and partly from Cicero's feeling for the Roman tradition. In the *Brutus* above all we see how chronology and prosopography can come alive as cultural history.

As to his other material, it is true that for the perhaps not wholly serious discussion of very early politicians Cicero is using a late annalist: the suggestion that M. Valerius, dictator at the time of the first Secession (Menenius, hero of the older version, is not mentioned), and L. Valerius Potitus, who calmed the plebs at the time of the second, must have had powers of persuasion certainly implies use or memory of such a source (Macer again?). So probably does the account of M'. Curius' opposition to Appius Caecus (cf. Livy x, 11). But Cicero very soon switches to typically antiquarian material for Ti. Coruncanius ('quod ex pontificum commentariis longe plurimum ingenio valuisse videatur') and also no doubt for M. Popillius Laenas, whose surname is explained by a curious etymologizing anecdote. After a few figures whose general reputation alone is attested, we come to M. Cornelius Cethegus, for whom Ennius is appealed to; so is Naevius for the general style of the period, while there is a brief mention of the antiquarian controversy, in which Varro took part, about the date of Naevius' death.

And as soon as possible Cicero gets on to preserved speeches and other literary works. It is indeed fairly clear, what it was already possible to suspect from the *De oratore* and *De legibus*, that one of his chief reasons for reading the older annalists was a wish to fill out his picture of the author's style and personality, which interested him more than the matter of the book. In particular, the *Brutus* shows interest in the style and spirit of Macer's annals. But neither Valerius Antias nor Claudius Quadrigarius had, as far as we can tell, either a public *cursus* and personal *auctoritas* or a literary reputation to attract Cicero. It may well be that he never read them.

Lastly, a speculative word on that irresistible subject, the history that Cicero never got round to writing. It is still sometimes argued that Livy was in almost all respects the historian of Rome that Cicero wished to be: a supreme stylist, a moralist and lover of the Roman tradition, and an honest if not a learned scholar. Even Livy's inexperience in war might recall Cicero. Rambaud has protested against this view;⁸⁴ he claims that Cicero's scepticism was deeply rooted, and refuses to believe he would have followed the annalistic pattern and included miracles and prodigies. But this does not do full justice to the complexities of the situation. True, had Cicero written *de Remo et Romulo*, as Quintus demands in the *De legibus*, he might well—like some of the annalists—have rationalized more wholeheartedly than Livy does (in the *De re publica* he accepts Romulus' divine parentage as a *fabula* and slides over later wonders). And, though Livy professes to be writing to show 'quae vita, qui mores fuerint',⁸⁵ we may suspect that Cicero would have understood this more precisely and introduced more material on social and cultural history, as, in their crude way, the early annalists seem to have done. Perhaps he, who loved legal formulae for their

⁸³ A. E. Douglas, 'Oratorum Aetates', *AYP* LXXXVII (1966), 290, and references there. It is perhaps unnecessary to say that there is no reason to follow Fraccaro's suggestion that Cicero took his second-century names in the order in which they occurred in the historian Fannius. L. Alfonsi, 'Nepote fonte di Cicerone?', *Rh. Mus.* XLIII (1950), 59, suggests Nepos, not Atticus, as source for the σύγκρισις of Coriolanus and Themistocles (41-3),

as the wording of Cicero suggests that the reference to Themistocles was not *apud te* (sc. Atticum).

⁸⁴ op. cit. 121. The view he attacks has been restated, mainly but not solely on grounds of style, by A. D. Leeman, 'Le genre et le style historique à Rome', *REL* xxxiii (1955), 183, and 'Are we fair to Livy?', *Helikon* 1 (1961), 28.

⁸⁵ Livy, *praef.* 9.

smell of antiquity, would have given us a rather more serious account of early laws and in particular the decemviral legislation; perhaps, as a lover of the early poets, he would not have refused like the disdainful Augustan to quote the *carmen* of Livius Andronicus. It is possible, too, that it would have been in a history of early Rome that he intended, as Plutarch says, πολλὰ συμμῖξαι τῶν Ἑλληνικῶν⁸⁶ and could thus have set the development of Rome in a wider context than Livy was able to do.⁸⁷ (On the other hand the *archaeologia* in the *De re publica* is not the only passage of Cicero to show that while he always has an eye on Greece, he is quite uninterested in Etruscan and Italic influence on Rome—another sign of inferiority to Varro, and interesting in one who was not a *Romano di Roma*, and who admired the author of the pro-Italian *Origines*).

But Cicero was no revolutionary, and it is not likely that he would have been bold enough to throw over the general framework of early history, which he would have had to treat in fuller and therefore what he knew to be less reliable detail than he had done in the *De re publica*. We cannot even be certain, from that work, that he would have eschewed the later annalists and confined himself to the *exornatio* of Fabius or Piso, though one hopes he would not have gone on copying out Antias, as Livy did, in spite of realizing he was a liar. But, though Cicero was not master of the complete antiquarian learning of his time, there can be no doubt that he knew how difficult many of its findings were to reconcile with the annalistic tradition. The reasons why Cicero did not in the end write his history have been much discussed; the comfort he found in philosophy, and the usefulness he believed its dissemination in Latin to have, are part of the explanation. But he himself spoke of the amount of labour a historical work involved, and the need 'et cura vacare et negotio', half-promising to make the attempt in old age; indeed, late in 44, he seems to have been thinking of starting.⁸⁸ It may be that, for a history *de Remo et Romulo*, he had a dim vision of the problem confronting him; that, in the state of annalistic history on the one hand, and antiquarian research on the other, an intelligent man reared on the best Greek historical traditions, but unwilling to devote his whole life to research, could simply not approach a connected history of early Rome. It was only possible to do one of two things; either to drop scholarly standards and follow either the naïve and out-of-date early annalists, or the largely frivolous later ones, as Livy and clearly Tubero before him did; or else to give up all attempt at moral and political teaching, and at literary form, to concentrate on points of detail, as the *Annales* of Fenestella, whom Seneca reckoned among the *philologi*, must have done. But Cicero was too much and too little of a scholar to do either.⁸⁹

A history of his own time would not have created these problems; it would have involved others.⁹⁰ But it was of course the history he was best equipped to write, and Atticus at least knew it. We have in fact a specimen of his powers in dealing with the recent past. None of the dialogues sets its scene more clearly, nor refers to a more serious crisis in the state, than the *De oratore*. At the start of Book III a digression, leaping ahead chronologically, recounts the last political intervention, and the subsequent death, of L. Crassus the great orator. The digression, brief as it is, seems to fulfil the demands of the genre, historical writing in the hands of a *summus orator*, that Antonius discussed in Book II (51–64).⁹¹

If there is no need here for a *regionum descriptio*, it is notably precise about the *ordo temporum*; if there is not room for a full account of the causes and results of Crassus' last

⁸⁶ Plutarch, *Cic.* 41: Διανοούμενος δ' ὡς λέγεται τὴν πατριῶν ἱστορίαν γραφῆ περιλαβεῖν καὶ πολλὰ συμμῖξαι τῶν Ἑλληνικῶν καὶ ὅλως τοὺς συνηγμένους λόγους αὐτῷ καὶ μύθους ἑνταῦθα τρέψαι. The well-known fragment of Nepos on the pity it was that Cicero did not write history does not reveal with what period he was to deal (*H.R.F.*, *de ill. vir.* frag. 18).

⁸⁷ At least till he starts using Polybius. It is also improbable that Cicero would have used the conception of destiny as Livy does, though that of biological growth was dear to him.

⁸⁸ *Ad Att.* xvi, 13, 2. Fromm, *op. cit.*, is perverse to deny he ever took the idea seriously; the fact he excused himself in the *De legibus* (I, 5–8) shows this.

⁸⁹ This conclusion is very different from that of Rambaud, *op. cit.* 122, who holds that Livy's work

represents the victory of the archaeological and annalistic forces of Cicero's day, embodied especially by Antias and Tubero and inspired by Varro. Apart from the fact that few will wish to follow the old view placing Antias' date so low, this ignores the near-divorce between annalistic and antiquarian writing that grew up from the late second century.

⁹⁰ *De leg.* 1, 8; cf. *Ad Att.* xiv, 14, 15, 16, 13.

⁹¹ The reference to Plato's Socrates (III, 15) shows that the opportunities for character drawing of the dialogue are in Cicero's mind; but the reference is outside the digression proper and refers to the whole work. The digression may have connections with the *laudatio funebris* (M. Ruch, *op. cit.* (above, n. 60) 192); but this had probably been influenced by historiography.

actions, it is clear enough what these are; and it characterizes and celebrates the great man just as Antonius demands, showing precisely what his eminence was and on what qualities it was based. It reveals Cicero's attitudes plainly (Antonius requires 'de consiliis significari quid scriptor probet') and at the same time can claim to live up to his first law of historiography, 'ne qua suspicio gratiae sit in scribendo, ne qua similitatis'; for Crassus' opponent Philippus is described without heat. Above all the passage is an admirable example of historical narrative: 'fusum atque tractum, et cum lenitate quadam aequabili profluens'. It rises towards the end to poetic imagery, and finishes with an eloquent commemoration of the vanity of human wishes and of the grief that Crassus escaped *mortis opportunitate*. If Antonius had said little of high flights in historiography, *Orator* 207 is to claim that history is close to epideictic oratory, and describes its narrative as written *ornate*.

But loftily eloquent as the digression in the *De oratore* is, it is never vague or imprecise. Cicero dates to the day both Crassus' return to Rome and the meeting of the senate (nay, here he fixes the very time of day). He tells us the exact length and the precise symptoms of Crassus' fatal illness. He tells us where the consul Philippus' provocative attack on the senate was made, and records his notorious remark that as he was unable to work with the senate he would have to seek other advisers.⁹² We then learn who summoned the senate—Livius Drusus—and on just what issue he wanted to divide it. Cicero tells us the gist of Crassus' speech and its effect on its hearers in general and particularly on Philippus; he also describes Crassus' second speech, with the famous refusal to recognize as consul the man who would not recognize him as senator.⁹³ He then moves into *oratio recta* for a brief and dramatic remark that might have been well remembered (we know that Crassus published neither of these orations). The motion for a vote of confidence in the senate which Crassus laid before the house is undoubtedly given verbatim, as the comment made on its language is enough to prove; but Cicero shows he has looked up the *auctoritas senatus*, which allows him to tell us that Crassus was present at its recording, even though he had been seized by a pain in his side while speaking. For the story as a whole Cicero constantly appeals to oral tradition. Though it is possible that there were memoirs dealing with this meeting, it is likely that Cicero is here telling us the truth rather than using a literary convention; he was after all brought up among the friends of Crassus and frequented his house. Nor need we disbelieve that he is recalling a real occasion, when by a vivid stroke he speaks of himself and his young contemporaries visiting the senate house to see the very spot where Crassus had stood.

Care for style, then, has inhibited neither factual precision nor reference to the evidence. In addition, it can hardly be denied that the whole scene in the senate, with the various initiatives and the effect they had on individuals and on the senate as a whole, is much more like life—real political life—than any of the often fine but wholly formalized debates of Livy.⁹⁴

For Livy was in fact not the orator called for in *De oratore* II, 51. He was not the statesman versed in politics, in private and public law and any number of other subjects, as well as the use of language and understanding of the human heart—these last he had. But Cicero in spite of all shortcomings approached rather nearer to his own ideal; and I submit that not only would a history from his pen, written with the aid of Atticus, have been a greater achievement than most of his philosophical works; but that, following his standard and example, we should take care not to be over-indulgent to much ancient historical writing on the grounds that ancient standards were altogether different from our own. Different in some ways they were; it was not necessary that they should be low. Cicero was not in fact either the first or the last thinker to extend the definition of oratory to cover wide understanding of politics and ethics. His language ought not to make us think that he looked exclusively for stylistic qualities in the historians he admired (after all, he had a regard for Polybius). He holds Thucydides up to admiration both for his honesty and his weight of thought⁹⁵ (inseparable of course from his style), while he praises Timaeus,⁹⁶ also Atticus'

⁹² cf. Val. Max. vi, 2, 2.

⁹³ Id. ib.; Quintilian, *Inst. Or.* VIII, 3, 89; XI, I, 37.

⁹⁴ To take an example almost at random, Livy xxii, 60–61, the debate on the question whether to redeem the prisoners in Carthaginian hands, is wholly

vague and schematic, with one set speech by Manlius Torquatus.

⁹⁵ *De orat.* II, 56; *Brutus* 287.

⁹⁶ *De orat.* II, 58, 'longe eruditissimus et rerum copia et sententiarum varietate abundantissimus'.

familiaris, not only for his language but the range of his ideas and the fullness of his detail, with that erudition which we can glimpse through the hostile account of Polybius and see to have been formidably antiquarian and even epigraphic. Such a man, both artist and scholar, is the complete historian of antiquity. None such ever sat down to write the history of early Rome. But for a time not far from his own Tacitus at last played the role with some authority and gave Rome the great historian that Cicero and his friends knew she lacked.

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