

CICERO, VARRO, AND M. CLAUDIUS MARCELLUS

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WHY DOES Cicero in the *Brutus* go out of his way to praise M. Claudius Marcellus virtually alone among living orators?¹ For we must admit that Caesar's standing made him exceptional. More than one answer has been given, and with good reason. I would like to argue for yet another motive.

The simplest explanation—too simple—would assume that the *Brutus* was the recording of an actual conversation: on that occasion Brutus asked about Caesar and Marcellus, and Cicero satisfied his request.

Still assuming an overt motive, we might believe that Marcellus was included for the distinction of his oratorical career. He had indeed shared with Cicero the multiple *patrocinium* of Scaurus in 54, and was involved in the courageous but futile attempt to defend Milo *de vi* in 52, but we know of no other major cases, and no fragments of his speeches survive.² His political oratory had been important in gaining him the consulship for the following year, 51, and he played a leading role in rallying the senatorial resistance against Caesar's *absentis ratio* and retention of command until he could renew *imperium* as consul.³ It seems, as we might guess from the fourth Catilinarian, that a consul's presidency of the senate did not inhibit his partisan eloquence. But if Marcellus' eloquence was most renowned in this context, it is understandable that Brutus—or rather Cicero himself, writing in 46 B.C.—chose not to praise Marcellus' senatorial oratory.

It was natural that with his political principles Cicero would wish to honour one of the few sincere and consistent defenders of the *res publica* against Caesar's autocracy, and it might be seen as a discreet balance to the praises of Caesar's *eloquentia* that Brutus should also invite eulogy of Marcellus. This would be in keeping with Gelzer's interpretation of *Brutus* as serving a political purpose: certainly 251 echoes earlier allusions (21, 157) to the loss of political freedom.⁴

More immediate, even urgent with the return of Caesar himself in 46, was Cicero's growing concern to secure Marcellus' restoration to Italy.

¹*Brutus* 248–250; cf. Quint. 10.1.38, *de omnibus aetatis suae, qui quidem tum vivebant, exceptis Caesare et Marcello silentium egerit*. G. V. Sumner, *Orators in Cicero's Brutus: Prosopography and Chronology* (Toronto 1972) 154, n. 4, questions whether Caesar and Marcellus are introduced here as representatives of a chronological *aetas*.

²See Malcovati, *Oratorum Romanorum Fragmenta* (Pavia 1953) 457–458.

³See Dio 40.51 for his election to the consulship *διὰ τὴν τῶν λόγων δύναμιν*, and, for his initiative as consul against Caesar, Livy *Epit.* 108; Caelius in Cic. *Fam.* 8.2.1, 5.3, 8.5 and 6. For full references Münzer, *RE* 3, Claudius (229), 2760–2764.

⁴"Cicero's *Brutus* als politische Kundgebung", *Philologus* 93 (1938) 128–131.

Since Pharsalus Marcellus had withdrawn to the free city of Mytilene on Lesbos and was passing his years in scholarly retirement.⁵ Cicero's letters to Marcellus at this time (*Fam.* 4.7–9, and after Caesar's pardon, 4.10) suggest that not only Caesar but also Marcellus had to be persuaded that his return to Italy was desirable. In fact long after Cicero's effusive speech of thanks to Caesar, the *pro Marcello*, delivered before Caesar left Rome in the second intercalary month of 46, Marcellus still lingered in the Aegean, and we know from Servius Sulpicius' report of his murder in the Piraeus in May 45⁶ that Marcellus, although awaited, never reached Italy.

There were other reasons based on the network of social and literary relationships within Cicero's circle. Hendrickson long ago showed⁷ that Brutus' words of praise in *Brut.* 250 were an allusion to the *de Virtute*, the "epistula quam ad te Brutus misit ex Asia" (*Brut.* 11) and Peter White⁸ has recently reminded us of the honorific implications of naming a friend in any literary work: this applies equally to Cicero's and Brutus' naming of Marcellus.

All of these motives in varying degrees explain Cicero's desire to mention Marcellus in this dialogue. But why specifically at §248? Readers will notice that Marcellus, like Caesar, is praised for his fastidious use of language. Brutus sees in him a possible successor to Cicero (*habiturus es similem tui*) and commends his dedicated study of rhetorical theory (*didicit*, see Douglas' note *ad loc.*) and rigorous exercise, his choice diction (*lectis verbis*), rich figures of thought (*crebris sententiis*), and dignity and splendour of delivery.⁹ Caesar on a larger scale is celebrated as the finest contemporary Latinist; *illum omnium fere oratorum Latine loqui eloquentissime* (252), and the praise introduces a long tribute to his *de ratione Latine loquendi*,¹⁰ and a general digression on usage, *consuetudo*, before Cicero returns to oratory in 261, with Caesar's splendour of delivery in

⁵Cf. *Brutus* 250: *consoletur se cum conscientia optima mentis, tum etiam usurpatione et renovatione doctrinae*; and *Sen. Helv.* 9.4: *neque umquam cupidior bonarum artium quam illo tempore*. During his exile he studied with the Peripatetic Cratippus (cf. *Brut.* 250: *nunc a . . . Cratippo instructum*) who left Mytilene, perhaps with Marcellus, and was teaching in Athens by at latest 45 B.C. (*Cic. Fam.* 16.21.5; cf. *Plut. Cic.* 24). Brutus himself attended Cratippus' lectures after he left Italy in 44 B.C.

⁶*Fam.* 4.12. Compare *Att.* 13.10 (Shackleton Bailey, *Cicero's Letters to Atticus* 5.318) reporting both Marcellus' death and Brutus' distress at the news.

⁷"Brutus, De Virtute," *AJP* 60 (1939) 401–413.

⁸"The Presentation and Dedication of the *Silvae* and Epigrams," *JRS* 64 (1974) 41–61; see especially 51–52 for the art of honourable mention.

⁹This is confirmed by the simplicity and perfect composition of his surviving letter to Cicero, *Fam.* 4.11.

¹⁰This is Cicero's vernacularisation of *de Analogia* (so called, *Suet. Jul.* 56; *Quint.* 1.7.34). See Hendrickson, *CP* 1 (1906) 97–120, and Douglas, *Cicero's Brutus* 185, commenting on 253.16.

voice, gesture, and bearing. The two orators may have excelled in similar ways. But Caesar was a student of linguistic theory. What about Marcellus?

At this point I turn to Varro and his contemporary literary activities. Cicero's letters to Varro start in 47 (*Fam.* 9.1) and show mutual encouragement in academic and non-controversial writing.¹¹ When Cicero was composing the *Brutus* in the spring of 46 B.C. he already knew that Varro was engaged on a work in his honour: a letter to Atticus in June 45 reports that Varro had promised him the dedication of the *de Lingua Latina* some two years previously. Indeed by 45 Cicero is expressing impatience, and his embarrassed attempts to return the honour by mention or representation of Varro in the *Academica* occupy a series of letters to Atticus in June 45.¹²

As for the *de Lingua Latina*, while books 2 to 4 on etymology had been separately dedicated to Varro's former Quaestor, Septimius, he indicates in 7.109 and elsewhere that Cicero was the dedicatee both of book 1 and of the later extant books 5 to 10. Book 5 specifies its theme as the source of Latin nouns in *consuetudine*.¹³ Now *consuetudo*, usage, is opposed by Roman theorists to *ratio/analogia*, regularisation in language, and the two principles are dominant elements in Varro's argument throughout the triad of books 8 to 10.¹⁴ Indeed in book 9, which presents the arguments of the purists for regularisation, we find the same terms of dispute as in *Brutus* 259–261, discriminating between bad *consuetudo*, to be rejected, and good *consuetudo* which is compatible with regularity.¹⁵

Is this a mere coincidence of common sense? I think not. Cicero's distinction between good and bad *consuetudo* here differs from his earlier

¹¹For Varro's literary achievements before 45 B.C. see *Academica* 1.9. On his relationship with Cicero, see Kumaniecki, "Cicerone e Varrone, Storia di una Conoscenza," *Athenaeum* 40 (1962) 221–243.

¹²*Att.* 13.12 (Shackleton Bailey 5.320): *biennium praeteriit cum interim ille adsiduo cursu cubitum nullum processerit*. For Cicero's impatience, see the letter accompanying the dedication of *Academica*, *Fam.* 9.8; for his embarrassment over the dedication see *Att.* 13.12–16 (Shackleton Bailey 5.320–323) and 18, 19, and 21a (Shackleton Bailey 5.325–327).

¹³Cf. 5.1: *In his ad te scribam, a quibus rebus vocabula imposita sunt in lingua Latina et ea quae sunt in consuetudine apud (populum et ea quae inveniuntur apud) poetas*. (The text is Kent's Loeb with A. Spengel's supplement.)

¹⁴See Collard "Analogie et Anomalie," Ch. IV in *Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique* IX: *Varron* (Geneva 1962).

¹⁵Compare Varro *L.L.* 9.18: *quare qui ad consuetudinem nos vocant, si ad rectam, sequemur; in eo quoque est analogia. si ad eam invitant quae sit depravata, nihilo magis sequemur, nisi cum erit necesse*, with the language of Caesar's verdict (*Brutus* 259): *nec utendum pravissima consuetudinis regula*, and of Cicero's compromising conclusion (261): *Caesar autem rationem adhibens consuetudinem vitiosam et corruptam pura et incorrupta consuetudine emendat*.

allusions in *de Oratore*¹⁶ and suggests an attempt to assess Caesar's purism in grammarians' terms. In *Orator*, the immediate sequel to *Brutus*, Cicero makes extensive use of Varronian material¹⁷ in the section on *compositio* which deals with this issue. The problem is to reconcile words chosen for euphony or rhythmic merit with *consuetudo* (149), and while the respect shown for usage is certainly consistent with Cicero's own earlier views, the forms quoted and the illustrative arguments, unless Cicero himself compiled them, must have been supplied by Varro for this purpose. We can presume then that in 46 Cicero and Varro talked or wrote to each other about this problem of purism and usage, well before Cicero was able to see the *de Lingua Latina* in its presentation form.

Varro also wrote another work on Latinity at about this time, the *de Sermone Latino ad Marcellum*.¹⁸ About fifteen attested fragments survive and Collart suggests a date for the work about 46 B.C. Wilmanns had argued on the basis of the fragment discussing accentuation, that it must have been composed about the time of Cicero's letter to Atticus¹⁹ demanding a copy of Tyrannio's book on accents. We know that Varro copied Tyrannio's system of accentuation, but it does not seem necessary to assume that Varro's use of the book was later than Cicero's enquiry. The identified fragments of the *de Sermone Latino* cover some technicalities of accent and metre, but are chiefly concerned with questions of vocabulary and usage,²⁰ and it is reasonable to assume that it was a by-product of the *de Lingua Latina*, a work which Varro could have begun in 46 or at latest 45 B.C. If this date is granted, then we can identify the addressee, as Dahlmann saw,²¹ with the exiled M. Claudius Marcellus,

¹⁶*De orat.* 3.151–152 and 170. In these passages and the discussion of *compositio* from 170 f., *consuetudo* is almost axiomatic, and is associated with what is naturally acceptable to the ears of the audience.

¹⁷See *M. Tullii Ciceronis Orator*, ed. Jahn-Kroll (Berlin 1913) Introduction, 13 and n. 1, and notes on 153 and 155, quoting Varro fr. 53 Goetz-Schoell: *consuetudini et suavitati aurium summam esse tribuendam*. The edition gives Varronian parallels for several of the changes of form quoted by Cicero.

¹⁸For the *de Sermone Latino* see Funaioli, *Grammaticae Romanae Fragmenta* 33–48, pp. 199–205, and discussion in Collart, *Varron, Grammairien Latin* (Strasbourg 1954) 28–30. Both acknowledge the pioneer work of A. Wilmanns, *de M. Terenti Varronis libris Grammaticis* (Berlin 1864). In *R. E.* Supplbd. 6, 1215–1218, the fullest discussion of this work, Dahlmann emphasises its central concern with *Latinitas* and the deliberate choice of language through a compromise of *ratio* and *consuetudo*.

¹⁹The letter, *Att.* 12.6, attributed by previous editors to April/May 46 because of a similar allusion to Tyrannio in *Att.* 12.2, has since been redated by Shackleton Bailey on other grounds to May 45. (See Shackleton Bailey 5.306, and p. 352.) For Varro's adoption of Tyrannio's accent-theory see Usener, *Kleine Schriften* 2.304.

²⁰Compare the role of *consuetudo* in fr. 43 Funaioli: *mutuo ut Varro de sermone Latino libro V loquitur in consuetudine est; mutue vero ut docte sic puta* (n) t.

²¹Dahlmann (above, n. 18) 1215 (for Cos. 50 B.C. read Cos. 51). Funaioli and Collart speak of the addressee as unknown. Unless we are arguing for a date after 30 B.C. there

“ein literarisch und rhetorisch recht interessierte Mann.” Even if there is insufficient evidence to follow Wilmanns in attributing to this work the significant Varronian discussion of the evolution of *latinus sermo* on a fourfold basis of *natura*, *analogia*, *consuetudo*, and *auctoritas*,²² there are many issues common to Varro’s lost work and Cicero’s argument in *Brutus* 252 f.

For when Cicero credits Marcellus with *lecta verba*, he is deliberately praising him in terms which he applies to no other orator in the *Brutus* or elsewhere. *Lectus* is in a sense a Ciceronian catchword. Thus he recommends *lecta verba* specifically in the context of *Latine loqui* at *de Oratore* 3.39: *sed usitatis [verbis] ita poterit uti, lectissimis ut utatur*; the phrase represents an ideal of *elocutio* in four other passages of *de Oratore* and *Orator*.²³ As Cicero chose to interpret it, *Latinitas* extended beyond correct forms and usage to the taste in diction implied by *lectus* and the related noun *elegantia*.²⁴ Indeed when Cicero and Caesar praised the diction of Terence, Caesar called him *puri sermonis amator* (recalling Terence’s own boast of *pura oratio*, *Haut.* 46) but Cicero honoured him for *lectus sermo*.²⁵ The contrast reflects an element of polemic between Cicero and Caesar or other critics, in that Cicero believed he was affirming a higher concept of *Latinitas* than that of the grammatical purists.

I suggest that Marcellus with his *lecta verba* and love of *doctrina* and *bonae artes* may be featured precisely at this point in *Brutus* because Cicero saw him as a supporter in the scholarly disputes over the relative

is no motive to associate the work with Marcellus, heir of Augustus; similarly there is no evidence that C. Claudius Marcellus, Cos. 50, or his namesake the consul of 49 were either interested in literature or known to Varro.

²²See Charisius 50 (Barwick) on the origin and subsequent regularisation of *latinus sermo*, the topic discussed in *Brutus* 258 f. It is Diomedes (*Ars Grammatica* 2) who attributes to Varro the fourfold analysis of *Latinitas*; cf. *Grammatici Latini* (Keil) 1.439: *latinitas est incorrupte loquendi observatio . . . constat autem ut adserit Varro his quattuor, natura analogia consuetudine auctoritate . . . consuetudo non ratione analogiae sed viribus par est, ideo solum recepta quod multorum consensione convaluit, ita tamen ut illi artis ratio non accedat sed indulgeat. Nam ea e medio loquendi usu placita adsumere consuevit*. Wilmanns had ascribed these arguments to the *de Sermone Latino* (fr. 41) but Goetz-Schoell (fr. 115) and Funaioli (fr. 268) prefer the *de Grammatica*, or the *de Literatura*.

²³*De Orat.* 1.154: *verbis aliis quam maxime possem lectis*; 3.150: *illa laus oratoris ut . . . verbis lectis atque illustribus utatur*; *Orator* 170: *probae res, lecta verba*; and *Orator* 227: *pulchre et oratorie dicere . . . nihil nisi optimis sententiis verbisque lectissimis dicere*. Apart from *Rhet. Her.* 4.36, this usage is confined to Cicero. See *TLL* 7, 1133 31 f. and 66 f.

²⁴On *elegantia* see Douglas Introd. xliii, and Dihle, “Analogie und Attizismus,” *Hermes* 85 (1957) esp. 184–191. On p. 181 note, in the same terms as *de Orat.* 3.39 above, “es handelt sich Varronisch gesprochen immer um die *bona consuetudo* . . . um die *Latinitas* als ein *virtus dicendi*, und nicht um Formen oder Wörter die nur der Vulgärgebrauch legitimiert.”

²⁵Both passages are quoted by Suetonius *de Poetis* 110 (Rostagni). On Cicero’s disagreement with Caesar see Hendrickson (above, note 10).

claims of usage and regularity to decide the language of Latin eloquence.

In short, Cicero had reasons of friendship and political loyalty to mention Marcellus with honour in the *Brutus*: at the same time Varro was composing for Marcellus a parergon of his *de Lingua Latina*, and Cicero may well have known this. It is likely that Marcellus' elegance of diction and his private studies of rhetoric furnished both the occasion for Varro's dedication and an opportunity for Cicero to introduce Marcellus, balancing Caesar, in a context emphasising their common concern for the quality of literary Latin, rather than their conflicting political careers.

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