

BOOK REVIEW

The Cambridge Companion to Cicero. Edited by CATHERINE STEEL. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013. Pp. xvi + 422. Paperback, \$34.99. ISBN 9780521729802.

A prolific writer, Cicero himself wrote approximately seventy-five percent of the Latin literature surviving from his lifetime (106–43 BCE). Cicero's writings spanned five decades, from his youthful *De inventione* of the 80s BCE to final letters written shortly before his proscription in 43 BCE, and numerous genres ranging from philosophy to poetry. Given the quantity and complexity of Cicero's writings as well as the diversity of their readership over more than two millennia, any single volume that seeks to provide students with an accessible companion to Cicero's work and its reception will be faced with numerous challenges. Difficult choices will have to be made within the constraints of the companion genre. The volume under review is up to the task.

The first challenge is how to deal with the potentially immense scope of the volume's topic. Although the title announces a companion to Cicero, the subject of this book, as the introduction makes clear, is "the textual Cicero," that is, the "Cicero" (or "Ciceros") that reveals himself (or reveal themselves) across his diverse literary oeuvre. Assessments of Cicero the man or Cicero as a political actor during the final years of the Republic are beyond the scope of this volume. Such an omission is probably prudent; after all, students interested in these latter themes can turn to several of the seemingly endless supply of biographies of Cicero produced in recent years.¹ What we have lacked until now, and what this volume seeks to provide, is an introduction to the literary Cicero and his reception.

A second challenge is one this book shares with other volumes in the Cambridge Companion series: how to organize individual chapters so that they com-

¹ See, e.g., Manfred Fuhrmann, *Cicero and the Roman Republic*, trans. by W. E. Yuill (Blackwell, 1992); Thomas Wiedemann, *Cicero and the End of the Roman Republic* (Bristol, 1994); Anthony Everitt, *Cicero: The Life and Times of Rome's Greatest Politician* (Random House, 2002); and Kathryn Tempest, *Cicero: Politics and Persuasion in Ancient Rome* (Continuum, 2011).

plement one another and provide between themselves relatively complete coverage of the author? In this instance, the editor has chosen a thematic approach with individual contributions arranged under the following three headings: “The Greco-Roman Intellectual”; “The Roman Politician”; and “Receptions of Cicero.” Contributions within these three sections are further subdivided by theme, e.g. “Cicero’s Rhetorical Theory,” “Cicero’s Style,” “Cicero’s Poetry,” “Cicero and Roman Identity.”

The decision to pursue a thematic approach necessarily subordinates individual Ciceronian works to general topics; nevertheless, despite some inevitable overlap, the chapters generally complement one another with respect to the particular Ciceronian works analyzed. One should note, however, that there is some (perhaps necessary) fluidity between the boundaries of the first two sections. For instance, James Zetzel’s discussion of Cicero’s *De Republica*, included under “The Roman Politician,” could have just as easily been placed under “The Greco-Roman Intellectual.” Likewise, Cicero’s decision to write philosophy, examined under the latter heading, is related to his self-identification as a Roman politician and to his conception of service to the commonwealth; indeed, as Malcolm Schofield points out in his chapter, Cicero views philosophy as “service to the commonwealth pursued in another mode” (74).

A third challenge is also common to the companion genre: should individual contributions seek to set the direction for future scholarship or remain content to summarize the current state of scholarship? Go for the former, and the collection may lack cohesiveness; choose the latter, and the product may be bland summary. Like many other contributions to the series, the *Cambridge Companion to Cicero* contains a mixture of these approaches; however, for the most part, it avoids their concomitant pitfalls. Lynn Fotheringham’s contribution on “Twentieth/Twenty-First-Century Cicero(s)” aims to “make some initial observations and suggestions” about Cicero’s presence in contemporary popular culture, an area where much work remains to be done (350); Emma Gee’s treatment of “Cicero’s Poetry” attempts to shift the way we assess the value of Cicero’s verse by showing how it influenced Lucretius and Virgil. On the other hand, contributions by Malcolm Schofield, Jill Harries, and James Zetzel provide valuable and engaging overviews of Cicero’s later cycle of philosophical works, Roman law in Cicero’s writings, and Cicero’s political philosophy, respectively. The much-debated role of the *contio* in Roman politics is usefully discussed by Ann Vasaly and Andrew Bell in their treatments of Cicero’s oratory. Whether trendsetting or summarizing, however, contributions to this volume as a rule are attractively and engagingly written.

In line with recent contributions to this series, reception receives a major emphasis. Six of the nineteen chapters combine to trace the reception of Cicero's writings from the imperial period to the twenty-first century. From one perspective, this is too little space to do justice to a *Nachleben* as lengthy and full as Cicero's. But within the context of the aims of the volume as a whole, the allotment appears to be fitting and to have produced a balanced approach to Cicero. One byproduct of this search for balance, however, is that some of the contributors in the area of reception have had to do some heavy lifting. The late Sabine MacCormack, to whom the volume is dedicated, had the especially unenviable assignment of covering the widespread reception of Cicero in Late Antiquity, a task she performed admirably. The result is a succinct summary of a topic that before now, to my knowledge, had not been covered by any one modern account.

In short, Catherine Steel and the contributors she has assembled—including many of the leading Anglophone Ciceronian scholars—should be commended for producing an attractive and valuable volume. Readers looking for an introduction to the literary Cicero and his reception will find the *Cambridge Companion to Cicero* to be a useful guide.

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