

BOOK REVIEW

The Reception of Cicero in the Early Roman Empire. The Rhetorical Schoolroom and the Creation of a Cultural Legend. By THOMAS J. KEELINE, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018, Pp. xi + 376. Paperback £ 26.99. ISBN: 978-1-108-42623-7,

The reception of Cicero is a fascinating and, at the same time, very difficult topic. Its fascination is a consequence of its looking into some of the most important cultural frameworks in European history, whereas its difficulty mainly lies in the fact that the presence of Cicero is not always easy to detect and interpret. In light of this, Keeline's work is all the more meritorious in that it reaches its goal and gives us an effective and pleasant portrait of the role of Cicero in Early Imperial Literature.

In the first three chapters the author focuses on the school, which he investigates through three different perspectives. To begin with, he studies the didactic exegesis of the *Pro Milone*, conducted with the help of Quintilian, Asconius and the *Scholia Bobiensia* (Chapter 1). Keeline describes perfectly the activity in a school, following the steps of a practical teaching of Cicero through passages from the *praelectio* until the *peroratio*: the result is surely amazing and I believe that this is one of the best parts of the book.

Then Keeline describes the use of Ciceronian texts in schools of rhetoric (Chapter 2), touching on topics such as the creation of the usual comparison between Cicero and Demosthenes.

In Chapter 3 the author looks at a case study concerning declamation: he reconstructs the different versions about or concerning the death of the Arpinas by examining some declamatory sources (Seneca the Elder, *Suas.* 6 and 7) while also comparing them with others, such as Greek and Roman historians. The analysis is persuasive in the examination of the rhetorical features used to describe Cicero's homicide and in enhancing the role of the "fictive" character of Popillius; by contrast, it does not go into details when it comes to comparing the differences between some sources, for example the fragments of Livy and the Livian *peri-ochae*.

A sort of hinge, Chapter 4 deals with the criticisms addressed to Cicero by some pseudepigraphical texts, in comparison with the so-called "Philippics" written by Appian and Dio Cassius. The reference to works such as pseudo-Sallust's *In M. Tullium Ciceronem inuectiva* with the pseudo-Ciceronian answer *In C. Sallustium Crispum inuectiva*, pseudo-Ciceronian *Oratio pridie quam in exilium iret* and *Epistula ad Octavianum* once again testifies to the high quality of Keeline's analysis, who masterfully reconstructs the rhetorical background of these speeches and letters. The Coda about "The Intertextual Declamatory Aesthetic" (188-195) would have probably merited a more detailed analysis of the concept of forgery, which is barely mentioned. Chapters 5 to 7 are dedicated to the major 1st-century writers who had a profound relationship with the Arpinas: Seneca, Tacitus and Pliny the Younger respectively. All three chapters are very good summaries, although they would have perhaps benefited from some more reflections on the nature of the epistolary genre: see, for instance, H. J. Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament: A Guide to Context and Exegesis*, Waco 2006.

Keeline's work is overall very balanced and relies on excellent competence and uncommon taste in reading the ancient authors from a stylistic perspective. Moreover, Keeline also makes use of non Anglo-saxon studies in a very clever way. As is self-evident, his choices are selective and, in fact, the epilogue, dedicated to references to the late ancient and medieval age, is certainly not as complete and persuasive as other parts; but this was not the aim of the book. On the contrary, Keeline succeeds in following in T. Zielinski's footsteps, thereby offering an image of Cicero that, although dominated by his centrality as a rhetorical model, is not devoid of surprising facets. His book demonstrates the ability of many readers of the imperial age to use Cicero in support of their own theses. The careful reading of the nuances, the examination of the different positions in the dialogues (exemplary is the Tacitean discussion), the enhancement of little-known texts thus permits one to reach a truly effective result: "Cicero is just one piece of a bigger picture – true enough, but he is a very important piece of this picture," sums up Keeline (334), giving us a very important reference text for Ciceronian and reception studies.

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