

Cicero: Redner, Staatsmann, Philosoph. By WILFRIED STROH. Wissen. Munich: C.H. Beck, 2008. Pp. 128. Cloth, €7.90. ISBN 978-3-406-56240-2.

W. Stroh (hereafter S.) ranks among the most renowned Cicero scholars of the last few decades. Along with C.J. Classen and M. Fuhrmann, he helped propel the research of Ciceronian rhetoric into the limelight of German philology. His 1975 *Taxis und Taktik* remains an invaluable starting point for the study of structural design and rhetorical strategy in Cicero's speeches. Stroh's latest book is a brief introduction to the life and works of Cicero. The narrative follows an essentially chronological sequence, divided into seven chapters: Der Aufstieg (106–64 BCE), Triumph und Sturz (63–57), Cicero rehabilitiert und entmachtet (57–54), Cicero wird politischer Philosoph (55–49), Cicero unter Caesar (49–44), *Rhetorica et Philosophica* (46–44), Der letzte Kampf (44–43). All this in 122 pages, plus a concise overview of (mostly German and mostly older) secondary literature, a timetable of major events and of Cicero's writings, and an index of persons.

S. draws almost exclusively from Cicero's *oeuvre*, generally avoiding debates found in the secondary literature (though he incorporates opinions from his own scholarly labors in true Ciceronian fashion: *nec deprehendetur manifesto quid a nobis de industria fiat* [*Orator*, 219]). The choice to forego references when quoting Cicero is frustrating at times, but usually only when S. brings out a lesser known tidbit on which a reader might be keen to follow up. The range of quotations itself demonstrates that S. is among the few individuals today who have digested all of Cicero's writings—no mean task, considering that the corpus represents nearly 90% of extant Republican texts.

Lucid style accompanies a knack for storytelling. S. subtly encourages his audience to follow Cicero's life with the same zeal as he himself has throughout his professional career. He gracefully weds the orator's means of persuasion, *docere* and *delectare* (on *movere* see below). The central thesis is that Cicero used rhetoric to serve Rome on the model of Plato's ideal politician (pp. 12 and 122). Cicero's "Lebensplan" cultivated this Platonic ideal (essentially the well-known "Philosophenkönig"). This thesis provides S. with a lens through which to view Cicero. The various political and ethical quagmires he faced, documented in the public writings and private(?) letters, represent a broad attempt to reconcile his political fortunes with that ever elusive ideal.

Readers may not subscribe to S.'s basic take on Cicero. But they will surely benefit from the wealth of details that S. includes along the

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way and that are invaluable to any introduction. He elucidates a broad array of rhetorical and cultural terms (*homo novus*, *tirocinium fori*, *declamatio*, *in utramque partem*, *iuris peritus*, *status/staseis*, *proscriptio*, *repetundae*), although beginners will miss an explanation of *libertus/patronus* when S. remarks that a proscribed man's slaves became Sulla's personal freedmen (p. 19). We get a brief outline of criminal procedure (p. 26) and of the traditional handbook divisions of forensic speeches (p. 28). But in order to counter overly schematic definitions of oratorical composition, S. also analyzes the structure of Cicero's *repetundae* defense speeches, which do not necessarily follow this hypothetical scheme. S. is at his best (as readers of *Taxis und Taktik* would expect), for example, when examining the layout, arguments and staging of the *Pro Fronteio* (pp. 29–30).

In general, larger issues and themes are ably handled even when they arise at distinct points within Cicero's life. Thus S. introduces the issues surrounding the "Atticism" debate when discussing the *Pro Plancio* of 54 (p. 52), with a cross-reference to the later discussion of the *Orator* and *Brutus* of 46 (p. 83—which also contains a cross-reference back to the *Pro Plancio*).

S. also frequently comments on the quality of Cicero's works and makes observations about their reception. Some readers may find the rendering of such verdicts unfashionable, but it has the merit of creating interest in these texts and of suggesting starting points within the huge corpus. These evaluations also admirably fulfill another important obligation: they remind us that no introduction or piece of scholarship can serve as a substitute for Cicero's works themselves. S.'s qualitative judgments are implicitly a constant yet never overbearing exhortation to read the original texts.

The emphasis on Cicero's philosophically guided "Lebensplan" creates some distortions of matter and interpretation. The analysis of the "Werktrias" of the late 50's is fuller than other sections, since S. views these dialogues not only as a literary attempt to transpose Platonic writings into a Roman context, but as the biographical embodiment of Cicero's most cherished principles (roughly: *De Oratore* = his rhetorical aspirations; *De Re Publica* = his political aspirations; *De Legibus* = his desire to continue to provide order to the Roman state). In this section, as in the later focus on the rhetorical texts of 46 and on the philosophical encyclopedia of 45/44, S.'s interpretations tend to be conventional, acknowledging but not entirely attuned to the literary and epistemological complexities of the dialogue genre. Thus, for example, S. emphasizes the fundamental importance of Academic Skepticism, yet says little about what we are to make of

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Cicero's presence as a literary protagonist: should we think of this figure as Cicero (the authorial voice) or as "Cicero" (a character with no greater authority than any other)?

All in all, this book can certainly be employed as background reading for a German *Vorlesung* or *Proseminar*. Should a translation appear—the quality and terseness recommend one—the book would appeal to American undergraduates in a lecture course covering Cicero or rhetoric, or in a more advanced seminar on Cicero. It is stylistically engaging, with occasional *sal et facetiae*, and even some dramatic panache, and no comparably informative English introduction of its brevity exists. Unlike much recent Anglophone scholarship (Dugan, Fox, Habinek, Steel), S.'s biographical approach devotes little space to "Cicero the self-fashioner" or the points at which so many different, even contradictory, "Ciceros" seem to have been projected. Yet avoiding these newer avenues of inquiry may make for a more palatable introduction.

S. concludes by focusing on the period immediately surrounding the *Philippics*, narrating it as a five-part drama (tragedy?) of Cicero's last stand and demise; here S. seeks to engage our sense of pathos (the third persuasive technique: *movere*). The final chapter offers an *Ehrenrettung* of Cicero's political career (and therefore of his entire life) against a long strand of thought which has regarded him as little more than a rhetorically brilliant yet unrealistic political hack. S. sees instead a tragic hero, representing that other strand of modern interpretation, the noble failure to save the Roman Republic from the rise of the Roman Empire. Cicero's life thus serves the reader as a justification of both Ciceronian and Republican ideals. This is the ineluctable tug-of-war that any modern observer confronts when balancing Cicero's aspirations against the realities of his biography: the conflict between wanting to see in Cicero a *Philosophenkönig* and only being able to make out a broken king.

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