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Cicero's Literary Aesthetics (D.) Chalkomatas *Ciceros Dichtungstheorie. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der antiken Literaturästhetik.* (Klassische Philologie 3.) Pp. 399. Berlin: Frank & Timme Verlag, 2007. Paper, €39.80. ISBN: 978-3-86596-069-6.

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CICERO'S LITERARY AESTHETICS

CHALKOMATAS (D.) *Ciceros Dichtungstheorie. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der antiken Literaturästhetik.* (Klassische Philologie 3.) Pp. 399. Berlin: Frank & Timme Verlag, 2007. Paper, €39.80. ISBN: 978-3-86596-069-6.
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In this book, which is the revised version of his German doctoral thesis (University of Gießen, 2005), C. sets out to analyse Cicero's poetics and to distinguish the poetics from the rhetorical theory. This is an ambitious and laudable attempt: if one could identify and describe Cicero's views on poetics and literary aesthetics on the basis of evidence spread across his literary works, this would enrich the image of the writer Cicero and might make possible a fairer assessment of his poetry.

According to the Introduction (esp. pp. 11; 44–5), the aim of C.'s study is to reconstruct and discuss Cicero's views on literary aesthetics and to show that his poetic theory is a coherent whole and was a novel and influential model. In this context a look at neglected aspects such as literary genres or stylistic theory is promised, with the contexts of cultural history, philosophy and literary aesthetics taken into account. While, in C.'s view, Cicero's thoughts on poetics have often been regarded as part of a normative rhetorical poetry, C. intends to present them as a self-contained poetic theory, distinct from his views on rhetoric.

²W.A. Merrill, 'Cicero's Knowledge of Lucretius' Poem', *University of California Publications in Classical Philology* 2 No. 2 (1909), 35–42; 42.

The book opens with an introduction (pp. 11–45) that surveys previous research, introduces key terms and concepts, gives an overview of this study's structure and aims (pp. 40–3) and comments on its methodology (pp. 44–5).

Against this background, the first chapter, 'Gattungstheorie und Gattungspoetik' (pp. 47–155), provides the theoretical background for Cicero's views on genre poetics; it presents the notion of poetics based on literary genres in historical and theoretical terms (pp. 48–76) as well as the relevant literary genres, focussing on the 'elevated' ones (pp. 77–153). Hence the chapter's first half leads into a discussion of Cicero's views on literary genres with the help of semiotics and the interpretation of sample passages from Cicero's works; important categories are forms of speaking ('Sprachgebärden') and appropriateness. Following on from this, the second half of the chapter deals with Cicero's views on and use of particular literary genres, with an emphasis on epic and tragedy.

The second chapter, 'Stiltheorie' (pp. 157–207), addresses Cicero's stylistic principles. It argues against the view that Cicero regarded the theory of the three styles as normative. Instead, this section sets out to look at Cicero's views from the perspective of literary history. The author finds that variety was more important to Cicero. There is discussion of the important categories of *suauietas* (concerning diction), *grauitas* (concerning syntax) and *illustris oratio* (clear presentation) as well as of Latinity (correct use of the Latin language) and ornate style (ornamentation of literary speech), with special sections on tropes and figures and on the use of metaphors.

The third chapter, 'Mimesis und Phantasie' (pp. 209–42), is devoted to an analysis of the relationship between mimesis and creativity: the traditional idea of mimesis is put into perspective and the notion of imagination introduced. In Cicero's view, according to C., a work of art can only be perfect if it is not merely an accurate representation of reality, but rather uses reality as a basis for creative representation and imagination, so that reality is portrayed in an idealised way. Cicero is seen by C. as the first ancient writer to develop the concept of creativity as an active faculty of recognition, working with pictures in the mind that can be grasped by the senses.

The fourth chapter, 'Der Dichter' (pp. 243–81), gives a literary-theoretical assessment of the figure of the poet in terms of production and reception aesthetics. Cicero's theory is said to integrate a number of contemporary views on rhetoric as well as on literary and cultural aesthetics. The roles of '*poeta doctus*' and '*poeta ingeniosus*' as well as the functions of *docere*, *delectare* and *mouere* are discussed. According to C., Cicero intends the ideal poet to have a comprehensive education and to be a visionary. The ultimate goal is a true *poeta ingeniosus*, a person endowed with natural gifts who can express major aesthetic moments.

The discussion in the four main chapters is rounded off by a summary that presents the results of the entire study, 'Ergebnisse: Rekapitulation der Hauptthesen' (pp. 283–7). It is followed by two appendices (pp. 289–340), one on the major literary terms used by Cicero and another on the tropes and figures found in Cicero's poetic fragments. At the end there is an extensive, multi-lingual bibliography including editions and secondary literature (pp. 341–75) and an *index locorum* (pp. 376–99).

As the summary indicates, C. presents his own reading of Cicero's poetic theory by means of general theoretical considerations and the analysis of sample passages from a variety of mainly Ciceronian texts, and he is not afraid of contradicting established views and trying novel approaches. In principle this is a promising way to make progress.

However, upon closer inspection it turns out that the quoted texts, when their wording and context are analysed in detail, frequently do not support the suggested readings, on which further conclusions depend (e.g. pp. 24–5; 138–9; 219–20; 273–5), or that evidence justifying these interpretations is not given to a sufficient extent (e.g. pp. 193; 219). For instance, C. devotes an extended section to the interpretation of the famous letter to Lucceius, in which Cicero asks the addressee to produce a historical work about his consulship (*Fam.* 5.12; pp. 86–96): C. argues that the conventional association of the underlying views with tragic historiography was only partly correct since the events of this period in Cicero's life did not constitute tragic subject matter as they were not coherent and did not have a tragic ending; instead, a varied and exciting description was intended (pp. 91–3). He believes that this letter and Cicero's excuses for it were driven by an 'anxiety of influence', since Cicero knew that the planned historiographical project would transgress generic boundaries (p. 90).

The book has some superfluous material (e.g. analysis of Cicero's quotations from tragedy and epic: pp. 59–66; 173–7), and there are contradictions between individual interpretations and the overall conclusion: while it is claimed in the analysis of *De or.* 1.69–70 (on the ability of orators and poets to write about topics they have studied) that rhetoric and poetry are similar as regards their didactic function (p. 269), the summary highlights differences between the two in Cicero's view as rhetoric is said to be seen as the art of persuasion relying on rational argument, while poetry intends to entertain and move the senses with vivid descriptions rather than to convince (p. 283).

Although the book seems helpfully structured by introductions and summaries for each chapter (in addition to the overall introduction and conclusion), readers may be puzzled at the end as to what C. actually regards as Cicero's poetic theory; the summary (pp. 283–7) focusses on individual concepts, but it does not outline the issue in its entirety as promised in the Introduction (p. 11). A high frequency of theoretical and technical terms (not always with clear definitions), a writing style with redundancies, and a number of clumsy sentences (and with some typographical errors) do not contribute to conveying a clear picture of the precise nature of C.'s views.

With this study, C. has shown that an investigation into Cicero's poetic theory is worthwhile, and this will, one hopes, stimulate further discussion on Cicero as a poet and literary theorist. The interpretations suggested by C. will have to be approached with caution due to methodological weaknesses even if the material collected is likely to provide a useful starting point for further research.

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