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Joanna Kenty, *Cicero's Political Personae*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020, X, 274 pp., ISBN 978-1-108-83946-4, £75.00.

Another important book on Cicero has recently come to light[1]. Building on the work of her predecessors (May's *Trials of Character* and Gildenhard's *Creative Eloquence*[2], among others), Joanna Kenty (= K.) explores the ways in which Cicero promoted his public persona, or, in this case, "personae". What the author calls "Cicero's political personae" is a "wide range of oratorical roles he routinely adopted to achieve political ends". In short, her objective is to "explore how and why he plays those roles in particular orations" (p. 3). Cicero's oratory is thus the primary focus of the book. K. nonetheless supplements her argument with copious references to his correspondence and occasionally notes how his contemporaries (Clodius, Antony, etc.) developed their respective political programmes. The opening "Preface" and "Acknowledgments" are followed by an "Introduction" that presents the *status quaestionis*, research objectives, methodology, and offers a brief outline (pp. 1–25). The main body of the book consists of eight chapters discussing various personae, a "Conclusion" (pp. 223–227) and a rich and up-to-date bibliography (pp. 228–260). The monograph ends with an always useful *index locorum* and a general index.

In addition to the relevant Ciceronian scholarship, the reader is introduced to Ervin Goffman's notion of "public self" and Stephen Greenblatt's notion of "self-fashioning", two important ideas which provide a theoretical framework for further discussion. K. rightly confines herself to the period from Cicero's return from exile in 57 until his death in 43 (all dates in this review are BCE). This confinement is logical since this period saw Cicero succumbing to the political pressure exerted on him by others, while still having to justify his political stance. Overlooking Cicero's earlier career allows her to pay closer attention to several important but understudied speeches, for instance, the *Pro Balbo* and some of the *Philippics*. The chapters are divided thematically, with each devoted to one of Cicero's personae, while each individual chapter's material is presented in basic chronological order. "While this may be disorienting to readers familiar with Cicero's biography", she explains (pp. 13–14), "disorientation can help to put matters in a new light and open up new ways of perceiving patterns in the corpus, to tell a different story about Cicero's career"[3]. The following remarks (pp. 17–23) clarify K.'s approach to "Cicero's *Personae*". Taking the classification in Cicero's *De Officiis* as her starting point, she distinguishes between various aspects of personae, including social role, identity, character, the "affect" of the speaker[4], and his relationships. These distinctions guide K.'s analysis, which divides Cicero's rhetorical self-fashioning

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[1] Its publication coincides with that of D.H. Berry, *Cicero's Catilinarians*, New York 2020, and R.A. Kaster, *Cicero: Brutus and Orator*, Oxford 2020 (cf. also below, n. 6). I am most grateful to Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak for drawing Joanna Kenty's book to my attention.

[2] J.M. May, *Trials of Character. The Eloquence of Ciceronian Ethos*, Chapel Hill–London 1988; I. Gildenhard, *Creative Eloquence. The Construction of Reality in Cicero's Speeches*, Oxford–New York 2011.

[3] To make the reader better oriented, the author provides constant cross-references to other sections that help them to view the subject in question from a wider perspective.

[4] The idea of affect is derived from the Latin *ad-fectus.* K. understands "affect" as both the speaker's mental state "in reaction to the circumstances" and his capacity to impose the same mental state upon his audience. This idea is clearly inspired by Aristotle's *ethos* and *pathos*. The terminology, however, can be misleading, as there is no mention of the currently fashionable "affect theory". See, e.g., M. Gregg, G.J. Seigworth (eds.), *The Affect Theory Reader*, Durham–London 2010.

in the years 57–43 into eight prominent personae, including “The Orator as Attacker” or “The Champion of the Senate”. The chapters that follow the brief outline “proceed roughly from the most generic personae, useful in a wide variety of rhetorical contexts, to the more specifically late republican political roles adopted by Cicero” (p. 23).

Cicero is famous for his wit and the ruthless verbal assaults that he launched on his political opponents. The first chapter of K.’s book, “The Orator as Attacker” (pp. 26–52), argues that the Roman invective, though it conformed to socially accepted norms, ought to be balanced lest the orator end up being seen as either a clown or a rioter (*rabula*). Cicero was always careful not to fall into either extreme. His strategy commonly involved attempting to make his attacks appear to have been provoked by his adversaries, for example by Clodius or Piso. Cicero’s attacks on his enemies after his recall from exile were aimed at rehabilitating his damaged public image, displaying his strength, or simply retaliating. K. makes an especially interesting and illuminating suggestion about Cicero’s decision to humiliate Piso in the senate, instead of starting legal proceedings against him. She argues that this was not only because the latter course of action would be inappropriate for a senior statesman, but also due to the unpredictability of the Roman legal system[5]. Cicero notably took greater liberties towards the end of his career, for instance in his character assassination of Antony, when the stakes were high and his political influence was at its peak. While Cicero was determined to seek retribution against his enemies, he was also mindful of the favours he had received from others. The next role discussed by K., “The Orator as a Friend” (pp. 53–81), was, according to Cicero himself, “his default persona”. Cicero was able to enhance both his own *auctoritas* and that of his allies by expressing gratitude towards his allies and heaping lavish praise upon them. His admiration was typically feigned, the flattery being enforced by an unspoken rule of reciprocity. This is attested to by the example of the speech in defence of P. Sestius, whom Cicero did not otherwise hold in high regard. Pompey and Caesar presented something of a challenge for this persona of Cicero. As K. noted in the previous chapter, they had been “glossed over” by Cicero the attacker. Thus, Cicero chose, within what the author calls “economy of praise”, to forget about Pompey’s initial indifference to his misfortune. It was perhaps a harder task for Cicero to justify his political inconsistency with respect to Caesar. Having previously opposed most of Caesar’s policies, Cicero made an about-face in the speech *De provinciis consularibus*, in which he defended the extension of Caesar’s governance over the Gallic provinces. In that speech, Cicero highlights his own innate leniency and conciliatory attitude on the one hand, while on the other he praises Caesar as a commander, whose leadership is beneficial to the state. In his later orations, the *Pro C. Rabirio Postumo*, *Pro Marcello*, and *Pro rege Deiotaro*, Cicero made use of “praise as pressure”. That is, he extolled Caesar’s civic qualities in an effort to influence his behaviour. Cicero also attempted to exert similar influence on his younger friends and disciples, notably including Dolabella and Hirtius. Yet, he was rarely successful in these efforts.

The following two chapters deal respectively with Cicero’s self-pity and self-condescension. In the former, “The Orator as a Martyr” (pp. 82–102), Cicero’s willingness to make concessions is juxtaposed with Cato’s uncompromising self-sacrifice. Consider the speech *De domo sua*, in which Cicero speaks openly about his miseries in order to arouse pity[6]. Compare this to the *Pro Sestio*, in which he sets himself up as a role model for the younger generations, thus becoming a martyr who announces his political manifesto. It was not until the *Philippics* that Cicero was more inclined to

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[5] For a similar interpretation, see S. Treggiari, *Ancestral Virtues and Vices: Cicero on Nature, Nurture and Presentation*, in: D. Braund, C. Gill (eds.), *Myth, History, and Culture in Republican Rome. Studies in Honour of T.P. Wiseman*, Exeter 2003, pp. 139–164 (at 142): “Usually [...] rival politicians seem to have resorted merely to counter-charges and not to have taken legal action”.

[6] Cicero’s self-fashioning as a martyr in his *post reditum* speeches has been recently discussed by T. Boll, *Ciceros Rede cum senatui gratias egit. Ein Kommentar*, Berlin–Boston 2019, pp. 48, 61 and passim (see index, s.v. “Märtyrer”), which must have appeared too late to be included in K.’s book.

pledge his life, even if only nominally, to the cause. Even then, however, he still seemed to think his self-sacrifice worthwhile only if it would achieve the desired result[7]. Eventually, as we all know, he did not have the final say on this matter, which is why Cato's martyrdom has always been more appealing. The Chapter "The Orator without Authority" (pp. 103–128) analyses those orations in which Cicero had to face men of exceptional power, especially Pompey and Caesar. Cicero often adopted, in these speeches, a pose of either deference or self-mockery in order to ingratiate himself with the audience. During the trial of Milo in 52, when the forum was surrounded by Pompey's soldiers, Cicero first pretends to be frightened, before attempting to dispel the tension by addressing the sole consul in a playful and even slightly sarcastic manner. Cicero adopted a similar *modus operandi* in the Caesarian orations. He either acted with courtesy or made open jests at his own and Caesar's expense. This left Caesar no choice but to treat his clients with the same clemency with which he treated others, including Cicero himself. At this time Cicero removed himself from public life, notwithstanding the notable exception of his defence of former Pompeians, and thus neither endorsed nor opposed Caesar's dictatorship. This was of course a calculated move and a statement in and of itself, for Cicero was aware that his voice could have had a great impact.

The remaining portion of the book is devoted to a discussion of the various roles Cicero adopted as a statesman, for example that of a political leader or as a spokesman for certain people or groups. Chapter Five, "The Champion of the Senate" (pp. 129–153), presents the orator as a guardian of traditional values, while at the same time setting the stage for the subsequent chapters. Whenever it suited his goals, Cicero would style himself as one devoted to merely executing the senate's will. This style is on display, for example, in his refusal to take sole responsibility for the execution of the Catilinarians. Likewise, he cited his recall from exile and the restoration of his house on the Palatine as evidence of the senate's support for his policies. On the other hand, Cicero depicted his opponents, notably including Piso, Gabinius, and Clodius, as questioning the authority of the senate, and thereby acting like autocrats and forfeiting the membership of this body. This illusion of the "will of the senate" was of course a great oversimplification, but one which Cicero was able to use to his advantage, for instance in his apologism for Caesar's cause in the *De proviciis consularibus*. It should not escape our notice that Cicero maintains this illusion in the *Philippics*, at a time when the majority of the old senators, with whom he identified, were replaced by Caesar's men. For Cicero, the interests of the people and those of the senate overlapped for the most part. Paradoxically, therefore, Cicero could earnestly claim to be popular, even as he acted as the champion of the senate, unlike the likes of Clodius. In the Chapter "The Popular Orator" (pp. 154–176), K. traces Cicero's nuanced deployment of the term *popularis* and explores the ways in which he posed as a popular leader. If Cicero's recall from exile and the restoration of his house on the Palatine could be taken as proof of his senatorial support, then so too could his triumphal return, which he never misses an opportunity to mention, be taken as evidence of popular support. Cicero uses the adjective *popularis* with at least two distinct meanings. This allows him to brand Clodius, Antony, and their followers as not truly popular, while simultaneously attributing the real concern for the Roman people to those who were commonly referred to as *optimates*. Antony, Clodius, and their followers were, according to Cicero, demagogues who only possessed a kind of "fake" popularity called *levitas*. Just as we noted that the invective required a subtle balance between bad taste and urbanity, likewise, Cicero exercised caution and prudence in moderating his claims of popularity. Issues of political affiliation and allegiance are further addressed in Chapter Seven, "The Voice of a Faction" (pp. 177–198), with particular attention given to the complex problem of "political faction / party". We find across Roman republican oratory an arbitrary division between "liberal" and "conservative" policies, which were frequently treated as irreconcilable extremes. This compounded the difficulty of the challenge facing Cicero, in cutting through these

[7] Cf. Cic. *Fam*. VII 3, 6 = 183 SB (to M. Marius, of mid-April 46) with C.E.W. Steel, *Reading Cicero. Genre and Performance in Late Republican Rome*, London 2005, p. 102.

divides and convincing the audience that he and his allies were the true *populus*, whilst Clodius' supporters were little more than mercenaries and packs of slaves. K. refers to this style of argument as "partisan rhetoric". It is perhaps most evident in Cicero's speeches in defence of P. Sestius and T. Annius Milo, both of whom organised armed gangs to oppose Clodius. Partisan rhetoric was also employed in the political contestation that followed the Ides of March. The idea of Rome being split into competing "political factions", each of which claiming Caesar's political inheritance, turns out to be largely a rhetorical trope utilised by Cicero in an effort to idealise the *optimates* and discredit the false *populares*. In her last Chapter ("A Great Men's Spokesman", pp. 198–222), the author takes a closer look at Cicero's awkward position with the dynasts, the so-called First Triumvirate, and how this awkward position was reflected in his oratory. She argues that, unlike the young ambitious tribunes and aspiring statesmen, Cicero preferred to pose as the triumvirs' partner rather than their mouthpiece. Consider the period after his return from exile, when Cicero's reputation was once again under threat as a consequence of the Conference at Luca. His public justification for his subjection to the dynasts was that he cooperates with Caesar and Pompey out of concern for the common good. Yet, privately, he was embarrassed to admit that he had no alternative[8]. Attaching oneself to a great man was an efficient way to advance one's career at Rome, as is attested to by the careers of C. Scribonius Curio and Antony. Such "political capital" could even be exploited after a dynast's death, as we see with the so-called Clodius' avengers, who included Q. Pompeius Rufus, T. Munatius Plancus Bursa, and Sallust. For Cicero himself, as mentioned, it was not appropriate either to openly oppose or support Caesar.

In her closing remarks ("Conclusion", pp. 223–227), K. reminds us that it was crucial for the orator to balance carefully between various roles he played, as there was always the risk of falling into the extremes. This process, moreover, did not take place in a vacuum. Cicero's choice of a suitable political persona depended largely on external circumstances, determined by the need to consider how to engage people on specific occasions. He could, for instance, act as if he was forced into a verbal exchange by an opponent, or he could speak on someone's behalf ostensibly to return a favour. The author observes that the rhetorical strategies analysed in her book were rarely successful in a larger political context. However, thanks to his adaptability to a range of different conditions, Cicero was able to maintain his influence for a long period of time. While it seems somewhat disappointing that he never seriously challenged Pompey or Caesar, as he did Catiline and Antony, this was apparently because he was resigned to the fact of "certain threats to the republic as an inevitability". Although (deliberative) oratory lost its political significance after Cicero's death, his modes of self-fashioning and partisan rhetoric were imitated by later orators, and his narrative techniques have been a source of constant inspiration to this day.

Overall, I found very few faults with the book, and so this review has been largely confined to presenting an overview of its content[9]. *Cicero's Political Personae* is not only a well-informed and deeply researched study, but also a highly entertaining read for everyone acquainted with Cicero. By "linking philology and persuasive process criticism with history" (p. 14), K. walks us through the nuances of Roman republican oratory and politics. Her stimulating discussion of Cicero's

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[8] It is worth noting K.'s claim on p. 202 against this background: "while it is clear in hindsight that Caesar and Pompey were extraordinary and important figures, they likely seemed less extraordinary to their contemporaries before the civil war; others, including Cato, Clodius, and Cicero, led more or less analogous networks of influence". This seems to me to be a slight overstatement in need of some qualification.

[9] There are also exceptionally few typographical errors. I have noticed some repetition (p. 7, n. 22: "of the powers of the powers" quoting J. Dugan, *Making a New Man: Ciceronian Self-Fashioning in the Rhetorical Works*, Oxford–New York 2005, p. 13 where no such error occurs; p. 63, n. 47: "to be to be"), an asyndeton ("I will not obey my hatred I will not be a slave to anger" translating Cic. *Prov. Cons*. 2), and an erroneous quotation mark on p. 44 ("dishonest and honest alike").

varying self-portrayals across his varying oratorical roles sometimes draws explicit parallels with modern society, exhorting the reader to notice similarities with the contemporary PR industry. I strongly recommend this book to students of Cicero and the late Roman republic, as well as to anyone interested in the shaping of the public self.

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