

Carl Joachim Classen:

Antike Rhetorik im Zeitalter des Humanismus

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Antike Rhetorik im Zeitalter des Humanismus is a collection of eleven essays on the influence of classical, mainly ancient Roman, rhetoric in the Renaissance, written by C. J. Classen, Emeritus Professor of classics of the University of Göttingen. Classen is a prolific scholar who has published in various branches of the *Altertumswissenschaften*, such as ancient philosophy, literature (mostly historiography and Roman satire), and history of scholarship. The volume under review is devoted to his area of special expertise, that is, ancient Roman rhetoric, primarily Cicero and Quintilian, and its influence during the period of Renaissance humanism. It contains Classen's main contributions to the field, originally published individually between 1968 and 2003 in a number of journals and conference proceedings. Some essays have been revised for their publication in this volume. The two oldest pieces (on the reception of Cicero in the countries where the languages descended from Latin are spoken) have been substantially expanded; one of the articles on the *fortuna* of Cicero's orations in Germany was originally published in Latin and has been translated into German; three other articles have been revised in English from the original version.

The core of the book consists of four studies on the reception of Cicero's speeches in different parts of Europe: "Cicerostudien in der Romania im fünfzehnten und sechszehnten Jahrhundert" (pp. 1-71); "Das Studium der Reden Ciceros in Spanien im fünfzehnten und sechszehnten Jahrhundert" (pp. 72-136); and "*Cicero inter Germanos redivivus* I und II" (pp. 189-244). These articles contain extensive surveys of the main aspects of the reception of Cicero's speeches, to wit, the philological study of the speeches (Classen stresses that classicists are wrong in neglecting the contribution of the humanists to the study of ancient texts); the various influences of the study of these Latin texts on the development of the vernacular languages and literatures; and the role of Cicero's speeches in the development of Renaissance political and juridical thought. Obviously none of these subjects could be treated exhaustively in these articles, but Classen has a keen sense for the essence of each topic and offers ample references to primary and secondary literature, thus providing an excellent starting point for further research.

Two articles explore in greater depth the influence of Cicero's speeches on two important humanists in the history of Renaissance rhetoric, namely George of Trebizond or Trapezuntius (1395-1484), the Greek scholar who emigrated to Italy where he became an important teacher ("The Rhetorical Works of George of Trebizond and Their Debt to Cicero", pp. 137-152), and Johannes Sturm (1507-1589), the German educator whose *Gymnasium* in Strasbourg combined secondary and higher education under one roof and became a model for many Lutheran schools throughout Germany ("Die Bedeutung Ciceros für Johannes Sturms pädagogische Theorie und Praxis", pp. 310-331). Classen gives a brief sketch of Trapezuntius and his work, investigating which of Cicero's orations Trapezuntius cited in his manual of rhetoric, *Rhetoricorum libri V* (1434), and how these orations helped to shape Trapezuntius's thought on rhetoric and eloquence. Classen also offers some enlightening observations on Trapezuntius's detailed commentary on Cicero's *Pro Ligario*, comparing it with the earlier commentary by Antonio Loschi

(1368-1441). He briefly discusses the influence of Trapezuntius's work on later humanists, such as the Italian Giorgio Merula and the German Jakob Locher. The article on Sturm centers on Sturm's contribution to the discussion of the best style (which, in the sixteenth century, was essentially a discussion for or against Cicero). In this context, Classen briefly considers a substantial number of Sturm's writings dating from various phases in his very long career: the school commentaries on Cicero's first Philippic oration (1531) and on *De haruspicum responso* (1536), in which Sturm focuses on the stylistic features of Cicero's strategies of persuasion; the treatises *De literarum ludis recte aperiendis* (1538), which contains the first curriculum of the *Gymnasium* in Strasbourg, and *De amissa dicendi ratione* (1538); the notes taken by a student during Sturm's courses on a number of Cicero's speeches, which are included in one of Sturm's editions of Cicero (1553); and finally, the treatise, *De imitatione oratoria* (1574). Classen's succinct observations on these texts show that Sturm may have written extensively on the subject of Cicero's style, but that his views were hardly new: Sturm felt Cicero should be imitated, but not slavishly.

Another contribution of major interest is the recent article "Neue Elemente in einer alten Disziplin. Zu Melanchthons *De Rhetorica libri tres*" (pp. 254-309; first published in 2003, in the proceedings of the conference "Germania Latina, Latinitas Teutonica"¹). In this detailed study, Classen brings to light how the *praeceptor Germaniae* tried to adapt classical theory to the needs of his time. In this context, he rightly emphasizes that Melanchthon was the first rhetorician since Saint Augustine to illustrate his theoretical discussions with examples from the Bible; Melanchthon also included citations from the Church Fathers. More importantly, Classen stresses that Melanchthon saw his own treatise as a practical guide for the modern orator, and supplementary to the classical manuals of rhetoric. Like so many other humanists, Melanchthon criticized the late scholastic *trivium*, because it focused on dialectic to the exclusion of rhetoric. The introduction of the *genus didacticum* or *didaskalikon* was Melanchthon's own remedy for this unbalance. In a detailed and very thorough analysis Classen sets out to explain how Melanchthon got the idea of admitting a substantial part of dialectic into rhetoric. In the course of this analysis, Classen gives an enlightening survey of the place of *docere* in the trivial arts from antiquity onward, and discusses briefly the history of the art of preaching (pp. 270-284).

The remaining four articles in the collection are instructive and worthwhile, but in my view they do not represent an essential contribution to its substance. The most interesting of these pieces is the essay "Quintilian and the Revival of Learning in Italy" (pp. 153-175), in which Classen gives a useful account of the discovery of the complete text of the *Institutio oratoria* by Poggio Bracciolini in 1416, and discusses the various ways in which it influenced the ideas of the Italian humanists on education and teaching. In this context Classen not only discusses several *rationes studii* or treatises on the best way to educate and teach children (e.g., those by Barzizza and Vergerio), but also Antonio Loschi's commentary on eleven Ciceronian speeches, which contains references to Quintilian. "Cicero und Seneca in der Rhetorik der Renaissance" (pp. 176-188) is the text of a review, published in *Gnomon* 1993, of two books on the Renaissance debate concerning prose style, namely Christian Mouchel, *Cicéron et Sénèque dans la rhétorique de la Renaissance* (Marburg: Hitzroth, 1990), and Juan Maria Nuñez Gonzáles, *El Ciceronianismo en España* (Valladolid: Secretariado de Publicaciones, Universidad, DL, 1993). "Heinrich Bebel" (pp. 245-253) is the original German text of a biographical and bibliographical entry in Colette Nativel (ed.), *Centuriae Latinae. Cent une figures humanistes de la Renaissance aux Lumières offertes à Jacques Chomarat* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1997); if

¹ Eckhard Keßler & Heinrich C. Kuhn (eds.), *Germania latina - Latinitas teutonica. Politik, Wissenschaft, humanistische Kultur vom späten Mittelalter bis in unsere Zeit*, 2 vols, Humanistische Bibliothek Reihe I, Abhandlungen, 54 (München: Fink Verlag, 2003). Electronic version (last update: 2002-11-29): <<http://www.phil-hum-ren.uni-muenchen.de/GermLat/Acta/>>.

Bebel had any importance in the history of Renaissance rhetoric, it is not highlighted in this brief survey of his life and works. The title of “Ludovico Guicciardini’s *Descrittione* and the Tradition of the *Laudes* and *Descriptiones urbium*” (pp. 332-355) speaks for itself. This essay, originally published in 1991, in my view forms a supplement to Classen’s book, *Die Stadt im Spiegel der Descriptiones und Laudes urbium in der antiken und mittelalterlichen Literatur bis zum Ende des zwölften Jahrhunderts* (2nd ed. Hildesheim: Olms, 1986), rather than a contribution to his collected essays on Renaissance rhetoric.

On the whole, the articles included in this volume constitute models of sound scholarship: they are well structured, contain elaborate argumentation, are lavishly documented with references to and critical discussion of primary and secondary literature, and they are written in a traditional, scholarly, but lucid and readable style, whether in German or English. The volume has been carefully edited by the author himself. One small complaint: there is only an index of names. A subject index would have enhanced the value of the book as a research tool.

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