

Alexander Arweiler:

*Cicero Rhetor. Die Partitiones oratoriae und das Konzept des gelehrten Politikers*

(Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte, 68)

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Cicero's *Partitiones Oratoriae* is a curious and, currently, a rather neglected work. It takes the form of a series of questions and answers between Cicero and his son Marcus which ostensibly provide a systematic exposition of the whole of oratory, but in practice concentrate upon the development of arguments, that is, invention. The work feels at a cursory glance much more reminiscent of the simplicity and conventionality of *On Invention*, despite the considerable development of method since that earlier work, than the elaborate experiments in form which are characteristic of some of Cicero's other mature works on rhetoric. Since there is no reference to the work in any of his correspondence, the only evidence for its dating is the birth of the younger Cicero, with the subsidiary inference that composition is likely to have happened at a time when the pupil was capable of receiving instruction. The earliest dating offered is for the mid-50s; the latest, 44 B.C. Given these circumstances it is perhaps not surprising that the work has not, as yet, benefited from the general resurgence of interest in Cicero's works.

Alexander Arweiler's *Cicero Rhetor. Die Partitiones oratoriae und das Konzept des gelehrten Politikers*, his Habilitation thesis, offers a systematic survey of the contents of the *Partitiones Oratoriae* combined with an exploration of its place within the development of rhetorical theory in the last century B.C. and in relation to the rest of Cicero's oeuvre. Arweiler begins ("Humanistische Leser der *Partitiones oratoriae*", pp. 6-12) with a brief survey of the *Partitiones Oratoriae*'s most enthusiastic readers, sixteenth-century humanists. An avowed aim of the book (cf. p. 13) is developing an understanding of this work which acknowledges what these earlier interpreters valued in it. This aim is pursued in three parts. The first concentrates on the integration of didactic purpose with aesthetic expression in the *Partitiones Oratoriae*; the second offers a detailed, chapter by chapter reading of the work; and the final part considers the wider context of Cicero's understanding of rhetoric and his use of writing in the creation of his own public and political persona.

The first part ("Ein kunstvolles Lehrbuch", pp. 17-84) is the most innovative and challenging. Arweiler explores the generic framework of the rhetorical handbook as the basis for understanding the character of the *Partitiones Oratoriae*. He subjects the implications of the work's addressee to scrutiny (1.2: "Vater und Sohn, pp. 21-23), rejecting the traditional interpretation that the choice of Cicero's son as addressee indicates that the work is at an introductory level. Rather, by choosing to dedicate the work to his son, Cicero is, on the one hand, aligning himself with the strong tradition in Roman literature which does so, and, on the other, able to exploit the possibilities of the dialogue form for instruction. In this respect, therefore, the *Partitiones Oratoriae* demonstrates the same concern as Cicero's other mature works on rhetoric with developing the form of the written work on rhetorical theory well beyond the straightforward didactic exposition. (Given these observations on the role of Cicero's son, it is odd that Arweiler postpones a discussion of the date of the *Partitiones Oratoriae* until the end of part 2

(2.11) and that he concludes by supporting a pre-civil war dating.) Arweiler then turns to the language of the *Partitiones Oratoriae* (1.4: “Sprachliche und stilistische Merkmale”, pp. 38-47) before demonstrating that, in many respects, this is not a characteristically didactic work (1.5: “Die Verbindung sachlicher und ästhetischer Aspekte”, pp. 47-60): it does not contain polemic against rival and often unnamed teachers; it does not cite authorities; and it does not use examples. Arweiler places it rather in the context of the widespread concern in the late Republic to systematise knowledge; the *Partitiones Oratoriae* is Cicero’s attempt at a comprehensive and ordered review of rhetoric. Arweiler then turns briefly to the links with the epitome as a literary form (1.6.6: “Die part. als Epitome”, pp. 78-81) – suggesting that the *Partitiones Oratoriae* can be seen as an epitome of the *De Oratore* – before concluding this part of the book with some brief remarks (1.7: “Zwischenbilanz: Ciceros Selbstentwurf als universeller Literat”, pp. 81-84) on the way that Cicero makes writing, and learning, central to his view of what it means to be a politician. These final observations look towards the third part of the book, and like that third part they do not give the impression of being fully integrated with the rest of the work.

The second part (“Analysen zu Inhalt und Komposition der *Partitiones oratoriae*”, pp. 85-223) offers a detailed analysis of the *Partitiones Oratoriae* by sections, which serves as a commentary on the text whilst including more lengthy excurses on particular issues. The treatment is not entirely sequential, but the existence of detailed section headings<sup>1</sup> permits navigation without much difficulty; an important consideration, as few will wish to read this part of the book in its entirety at one sitting.

The third and final part of the book (“Ciceros Gelehrsamkeit im politischen Kontext”, pp. 225-314) has rather the feel of an afterthought, inasmuch as it offers a series of general observations on Cicero’s incorporation of learning into his political life, without any particular emphasis on the role of the *Partitiones Oratoriae*. Arweiler’s discussion in this section is sensitive – despite some rather over-literal reading of some of the speeches in 3.6.5 (“Von der Brauchbarkeit der Studien”, pp. 297-301) – and alert to what is distinctive about Cicero’s career. It can usefully now be read in dialogue with Elaine Fantham’s *The Roman World of Cicero’s De Oratore* (Oxford University Press, 2004) and Jon Dugan’s *Making a New Man. Ciceronian Self-Fashioning in the Rhetorical Works* (Oxford University Press, 2005), which share Arweiler’s interest in the intersection between writing, political practice, political theory, and Cicero’s own ambitions. But the reader whose main concern is the *Partitiones Oratoriae* and its status as a work on rhetoric will wish to concentrate rather on the first two parts of the book.

In the first two parts, Arweiler offers a valuable account of the *Partitiones Oratoriae*, whose importance does not lie simply in its focus on a deeply neglected text. There are certainly points about his interpretation that one could dispute. I found the initial claim (1.1) that the *Partitiones Oratoriae* is a typical ‘Villa dialogue’ (p. 17) unconvincing, if one compares it with the rich and complex characterisation of, for example, the *De Oratore* or the *De Republica*. Arweiler is oddly reluctant to allow philosophy into his view of late Republican intellectual life, underplaying Cicero’s synthesis of rhetoric with philosophy in the *Partitiones Oratoriae*. And the treatment of the work’s dating seems cursory, given Arweiler’s general concern with under-

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<sup>1</sup> 2.1: “Das Inhaltverzeichnis der Schrift in part. 3f.” (pp. 85-89); 2.2: “Der Aufbau der part.” (pp. 89-90); 2.3: “Die Aufgaben des Redners (part. 5-26)” (pp. 91-113); 2.4: “Die Teile der Rede” (pp. 113-139); 2.5: “Die status-Lehre als allgemeine Grundlegung der Fragestellungen” (pp. 139-140); 2.6: “Allgemeine und konkrete Fragestellungen in den part.” (pp. 141-151); 2.7 “Die genera causarum in den part.” (pp. 152-175); 2.8: “Affekte und *amplificatio* in den part.” (pp. 175-190); 2.9: “Der Tugendkatalog in part. 76-80” (pp. 190-197); 2.10: “Die Güterlehre” (pp. 198-209); 2.11: “Exkurs zur Datierung der part.” (pp. 210-214); 2.12: “Theorie und Praxis” (pp. 215-223).

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standing Cicero's rhetorical compositions as works in dialogue with his public persona. But Arweiler's great contribution is to make the work interesting, and to show *why* it is worth serious critical attention. He should succeed in convincing modern rhetoricians to emulate their sixteenth-century counterparts and get excited about the *Partitiones Oratoriae*.

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