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«THE GREAT PATRICIAN OF THE SPEAKING ART»:
CICERO, FROM THE REPUBLIC OF LETTERS
TO THE ENGLISH REPUBLIC

Cicero, often under his affectionate byname of Tully, is an all-pervasive presence in the humanist and educational circles of sixteenth-century England. Marc Fumaroli's remark that the Renaissance should be called the Age of Cicero¹ is just as true for England, at least in the early to mid-sixteenth century, as it is for other parts of Europe, with the caveat that Cicero's reception in England is inflected by national conditions and ideologies as much as it is determined by the common interests of humanism. In this article, I want to consider two Ciceronian moments for what they tell us about early modern appropriations of Cicero. My aim is to illuminate the selective nature of Cicero's reception in the first age of print and its change of emphasis in the mid-seventeenth century attendant on the re-emergence of classical republicanism during the English civil wars and following the regicide of 1649.

As in other parts of Europe, in England Cicero was among the first classical writers to benefit from the new technology of print, with his late works, specifically *De officiis* – the text most often recommended and studied in the classroom – frequently reprinted. The first work to be published, however, was an English translation from the French of *De senectute* and *De amicitia* printed in 1481 by William Caxton, who had moved from the Low Countries to Westminster in 1478. Caxton's reasons for printing these works are couched in modest and homely terms: for men growing old, *De senectute* will offer pleasure, consolation and reverence². He has annexed the book of friendship – necessary to every estate and degree – to that of old age, he says, because it is requisite to have friendship joined to old age³. The popularity of these two works – evidenced by the number of reprints – follows the medieval tradition of

¹ Cf. Fumaroli 1980, 40.

² Cicero 1481, [2r].

³ Cicero 1481, [73r].

admiring them for their prefiguring of Christian wisdom. The Alsatian-born printer Wynkyn de Worde, who worked with Caxton in London, continued the publication of Cicero, printing in 1534 the first edition of *De officiis* in a translation by Robert Whittinton, a grammarian and early poet laureate. The edition contains extensive paratextual matter, including a brief biography of Cicero, which I will return to later, and Whittinton's «exhortacion», in Latin and English, in which he extols Cicero as «prince of oratours, father of latyne tonge and fountayne of eloquence»⁴. At the same time, Whittinton celebrates Cicero's moral philosophy: he was the first «of latyne men [who] dyd mervalously burnisse that parte of philosophie that is called morall with newe and facundious eloquence»⁵. Playing on «wealth» in its private and public meanings, Whittinton refers to the context of *De officiis*, recording that Cicero's withdrawal from public affairs led to its composition not only «for the welthe of his sonne [...] but also for the commen welthe of the romanes». His inclination – as with subsequent commentators – is transhistorical, lauding the work as intentioned for «the posterite of other commen welthes whiles this worlde endureth»⁶. There is no suggestion that the Roman *res publica* might be constitutionally remote from concepts of the commonwealth in England.

Evidently, printers and translators recognised the appeal of Cicero's works to a wide readership from the learned to the enquiring. It must have been for the former readership that the King's printer, Richard Poyanson, published the *Philippics* in Latin in 1521 without annotations, prefatory matter or aids to the reader (the only edition of these orations to be printed in early modern England). The cleric, Thomas Newton, in the dedication to his translation of *Paradoxa Stoicorum* to which he annexed *Somnium Scipionis*, described his work as a «Scholasticall Exercise», hoping that the approval of the dedicatee, one of the Queen's privy counsellors, would afford the work «a freer passage into the hands of the many»⁷. On the other hand, *A Panoplie of Epistles*, an anthology collected and translated by Abraham Flemming and published in 1576 with the alternative title «a looking glasse for the unlearned», is aimed towards the general reader who does not know Latin. Containing simple lessons ex-

⁴ Cicero 1534, a4r.

⁵ Cicero 1534, a4r.

⁶ Cicero 1534, a5r.

⁷ Cicero 1659, dedication to Walter Myldmay.

tracted from *Epistulae ad familiares*, Cicero is the first author in Fleming's anthology⁸. One of the most published secular works of the period was Nicholas Grimaldi's edition of *De officiis* (1556), the next translation of this work after that of Robert Whittinton⁹. In his dedication to the Bishop of Ely, Grimaldi exalts the moral philosophy of the work: apart from the Scriptures, nothing can indicate «the pathway to all virtue» more than *De officiis*. Grimaldi's edition went through multiple reprintings and, as a bilingual text, catered both for students studying the treatise in Latin and for readers unskilled in Latin. Indeed, in claiming in the dedication that his translation is directed at «our unlatined people», Grimaldi is explicit about his intended readership, though whether the English are supposed «unlatined» in general or whether Grimaldi is referring to a specific sector is not altogether clear. His subsequent comment that a book «used but of a few» will, as a result of his translation, become common to many suggests the former.

These early editions indicate an interest in Cicero beyond the confines of the schoolroom. Like classroom texts, they are modestly produced, some in cheap octavo format. England did not play much part in the early history of the printed book. As Andrew Pettegree in his work on the European book world has demonstrated, in the sixteenth century an extraordinary proportion of the entire output of European printing was concentrated in fewer than a dozen large centres of production. What Pettegree describes as «a steel spine» ran along Europe's major trade routes from Antwerp and Paris in the north through Cologne, Basle, Strasbourg and Lyon to Venice in the south¹⁰. These cities were the natural focus of projects that required considerable investment. In comparison, the English book world remained small, failing to play a substantial part in the production of books for the international Latin trade. Selections of Cicero's letters and philosophical essays appeared as relatively small publishing projects, often in competition with each other. The complete letters *ad familiares* and the full corpus of Cicero's speeches, for example, would have required major outlays of time and capital, and no printer was prepared to offer such resources. To illustrate the gap between English and continental printing, it is illuminating to compare early English reprints or translations of *De officiis*, such as

⁸ Panoplie 1576.

⁹ Cicero 1990.

¹⁰ Pettegree 2008, 104.

Whittinton's translation printed by De Worde, with their German counterparts. The first German translation, a 1531 folio edition published by Heinrich Steiner in Augsburg, contains over a hundred woodcuts depicting, amongst other subjects, daily life in early-sixteenth-century Germany. Over sixty of the woodcuts were designed specifically for Steiner's edition. The title page is illustrated by a large woodcut of Caesar enthroned, surrounded by eight counsellors, with Cicero shown writing in the background. De Worde's *De officiis* has only a simple florilegium border.

To a great degree, the classical Latin texts published in the sixteenth century were simply unadorned reprints of earlier continental editions¹¹. It was on these, as well as imported editions, that English humanists relied when citing or translating works, rather than producing much original scholarship of their own. In France, all of Cicero's works were regarded as of great value and Denis Lambin's expansively annotated edition, first published in Paris in 1572-1573, was reprinted in London in 1585. Selected texts were also reprinted from Lambin's edition. The French Huguenot refugee printer, Thomas Ventrollier, for example, published the *Epistulae ad familiares* in 1575 and in 1584 *De officiis*, both with Lambin's emendations and annotations. A volume containing *De officiis*, *De senectute* and *Somnium Scipionis* published in 1587, with annotations and commentary by Melanchthon, Erasmus and Latomus, is a reprint of a continental edition in reduced form. Melanchthon's edition of *De oratore*, published in 1573, is the first known edition in England and was the unacknowledged source for the only other sixteenth-century edition, published in Cambridge in 1589. English grammar schools were indebted to continental models and to imported books. One of the most popular textbooks of the period, used in the lower forms of the grammar schools, was Johannes Sturm's selection from Cicero's letters, first published in Strasbourg in 1541 with an elaborate commentary¹². Roger Ascham, tutor to Edward VI and Elizabeth I, greatly admired Sturm; in his influential pedagogical work *The Scholemaster*, first published in 1570, he advocated the use of Sturm's *Epistles* which he had used in teaching his royal pupils. Recommended for use in all the major schools, Sturm's selection provided pupils with their first exposure to Cicero's style which, at a later stage in the prescribed curriculum, they would then emulate in their own compositions.

¹¹ Cf. Binns 1990, 194.

¹² Cf. Green 2016, 198-200.

In contemporary educational treatises, handbooks on rhetoric, and conduct books the focus is on Cicero's eloquence, his wisdom and piety. In *The Scholemaster*, a treatise purposed for the *élite*, as indicated on the title page's reference to «the private brynging up of youth in Gentlemen and Noble mens houses», Ascham addresses Cicero directly. He praises his rhetoric and places him squarely within the tradition of English learning:

Your owne bookes Cicero, be as well read, and your excellent eloquence is as well liked and loved, and as trowlie folowed in England at this day, as it is now, or ever was, sence your own time in any place of Italie¹³.

Using navigational metaphors, Ascham extols Cicero as unsurpassed in his writing of epistles: once he has «set his saile of eloquence, in some broad deep Argument, caried with full tyde and winde, of his witte and learning, all other may rather stand and looke after him, than hope to overtake him»¹⁴. *De oratore* is singled out as the best book that Tully wrote, with the sweeping commendation that this is the case by all men's judgment¹⁵. No one, Ascham claims, except Plato could equal Cicero for his excellent eloquence and in his privileging of the rhetorical arts. For Ascham – as for Grimaldi – Cicero's words are almost on a par with Scripture. Cicero may never have known God, nevertheless, Ascham eulogizes, it pleased him «to lighten you by some shadow»¹⁶. The apparent paradox is explained by the notion that in the virtuous writings of pagan authors there is a foreshadowing of Christian doctrine.

In the early modern transmission of Cicero we can then follow two intersecting paths. Cicero's moral philosophy, with its emphasis on the values of the *vita activa*, was central to the code of civic humanism that directed the education and training of the social and governing *élite*. It informs *An Advancement of Learning* (1605), as Francis Bacon positions his argument against advocates of the contemplative life and describes how philosophy had encouraged a love of virtue, equity and peace. Cicero was also supremely important as the exponent of rhetoric and eloquence in the classrooms of the burgeoning grammar schools. The first comprehensive rhetorical treatise in English, *The Art of Rhetorique* (1553),

¹³ Ascham 1570, 62r-62v.

¹⁴ Ascham 1570, 63r.

¹⁵ Ascham 1570, 63v.

¹⁶ Ascham 1570, 62r.

by Thomas Wilson begins by borrowing Cicero's exposition in *De inventione* of the civilizing effects of eloquence. Following Cicero's myth of evolution, Wilson persuades the reader that wise men first used the power of eloquence to bring men together out of the wilderness and establish laws. Until orators persuaded men to band together to form civil society, they were like animals unrestrained by law or discipline. Reason and eloquence transform men, a point illustrated in the bottom sections of the treatise's title page where there are semi-human figures who have not acquired the civilizing and controlling power of rhetoric. It is in the statutes of the grammar school, in text books and in rhetorical treatises, that we find Cicero held up as an authority. The famous and disparaging comment about Shakespeare by his sometime rival Ben Jonson that he possessed «small latin and less Greek» was the starting point of T.W. Baldwin's monumental study of the Tudor grammar schools, their masters and the curricula in order to ascertain how much Latin and Greek Shakespeare would have been taught at his grammar school in Stratford-upon-Avon¹⁷. Baldwin's research tells us a great deal about the place of Cicero in the education of the early modern English schoolboy, while also indicating how much it had in common in terms of texts and method with schooling in Europe. The curriculum of Eton College, the most influential school of the period, offers a detailed account of a school routine beginning at six o'clock with prayers and ending with bedtime at eight o'clock and more prayers. An hourly routine recorded across the school shows that Cicero is being studied in different classrooms. Thus, at nine o'clock the lower forms study Cicero's *Epistles* in Sturm's edition containing approved excerpts and an elaborate moral commentary. At the same time, the master of the fifth form reads from *De amicitia*, while in the sixth and seventh forms the boys are listening to readings from *De officiis*¹⁸. The *Epistles* served as compositional models, as the published curriculum of St Paul's School make clear. In the Fifth Class «the Reading of Cicero's Select Epistles» is recommended on the grounds that they «are not to be excell'd as to Practicability and Advantage, in acquiring a rich and copious style of language»¹⁹. The organization of the curriculum was designed to bring a degree of uniformity in grammar school teaching greatly influenced by continental models. The grammar schools were

¹⁷ Baldwin 1944.

¹⁸ Baldwin 1944, 1, 353-358.

¹⁹ Baldwin 1944, 1, 125.

international in so far as their founders belonged to the European republic of letters. John Colet, friend of Erasmus, founded St Paul's School, where William Lily, who had studied in Rome and Venice and who produced the first Latin grammar in use for centuries, became Headmaster.

In their work on the historiography of education *From Humanism to the Humanities*, Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton point to two competing schools of rhetorical teaching in fifteenth-century Italy, articulated by Lorenzo Guidetti and Buonaccorso Massari respectively, and reflected in their different responses to teaching Cicero. Guidetti advocated an ahistorical approach, declaring that his primary interest was «to learn what style, what constructions, what “flowers” and what “sobriety” we should employ in writing letters»²⁰. Such stylistic details were far more useful than historical details of Cicero's Rome which, according to Guidetti, «hardly anyone knew about – even when they happened» and «seem the province of a pedantic and trivial mind rather than of one which diligently seeks important forms of knowledge»²¹. In reply, Massari argued that the study of history was essential: Cicero's letters were permeated with the events of the bloody civil strife that he lived through, meaning that the Letters could not be fully understood by readers who lacked knowledge of the history of the Republic and its institutions²².

In essence, in these respective ideas of classical scholarship, we have the perennial debate between formalism and historicism. In sixteenth-century English commentaries and allusions, there is very little evidence that Cicero's life and times were seen as particularly pertinent. Thomas Newton, for example, in the dedication to his translation of *Paradoxa Stoicorum* refers simply to Cicero as «a man long since dead»²³. Again and again, Cicero is detached from his political career and the value of studying him is located in his eloquence and moral philosophy. In *A ritch Storehouse or Treasurie for Nobilitye and Gentlemen*, published in 1570, a translation of Sturm's *Nobilitas literata*, the preface places Cicero's work on a par with Christian writers, equating eloquence and virtue:

we may conclude that a wise man ought to spend his life in holy writers: and an eloquent man ought to be daily conversant in Tullies works. For as

²⁰ Grafton 1986, 58.

²¹ Grafton 1986, 59.

²² Cf. Grafton 1986, 58-59.

²³ Cicero 1569, dedication to Walter Myldmay.

religion maketh holie the society of men, so doth eloquence make it pleasant: and both joynd together cause it to be helthful²⁴.

The pagan Cicero's eloquence, like his moral philosophy, is thus commended as an enhancement of Christian life.

English translations of Cicero's works contain little detail of his life in the paratextual material. Whittinton in his edition of *De officiis* does include a short life of Cicero amongst his prefatory material, extolling his eloquence and moral philosophy. While his role in countering the conspiracy of Catiline is celebrated, a few concluding sentences condense Plutarch's account of his opposition to Antony, reducing it to an entirely domestic matter:

Because Tully put to dethe Publius Lentulus which maryed Julia a noble woman and of the family of the emperours and mother to Marcus Anthonius Tully ranne in to the mortal hate of the sayd Anthonye for Anthonius never did rest untill he sawe the heed and the hande of Tully fixed upon a pole. And so that noble man worthy everlastinge name and fame departed fro this worlde by a shamfull dethe if any thinge shamfull may chaunce unto good men²⁵.

There is no mention of Cicero's last oratorical stands in the Senate or of his fierce and personalized attack in the *Philippics* on Mark Antony for his appropriation of power following the assassination of Caesar.

Cicero the defender of the freedom of the Republic under threat from Caesar and Mark Antony is, then, a more shadowy figure. Plutarch's *Lives*, from which Shakespeare in his Roman plays was to draw, was published in English in 1579, translated by Thomas North from the French, providing the «unlatined» reader with the first detailed life²⁶. Cicero's role in the political crises of the late Roman republic would also become more generally, if partially, known, through the stage. Yasunari Takada has examined Cicero's part in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and opened up interesting questions about the depiction of Cicero as sceptic, illustrated in the short dialogue between Cicero and Casca about the interpretation of natural events as omens²⁷. Examining the four references to Cicero in the play, Takada observes that Cicero is «a composite of fragmentary de-

²⁴ Sturm 1570, 14r.

²⁵ Cicero 1534, B6r.

²⁶ Plutarch 1575, 912-937.

²⁷ Takada 1997. The exchange between Cicero and Casca in *Julius Caesar* takes place at 1, 3, 1-40.

scriptions and characterizations»²⁸. It is notable, though, how little Cicero has to do with the assassination, which is historically accurate, or with its political aftermath, which is not. When the conspirators gather, Cassius, endorsed by Casca, proposes that Cicero should be sounded out; Brutus demurs on the grounds that Cicero «will never follow anything / that other men begin»²⁹, and, without further debate, Cicero is excluded from the conspiracy. Such a gloss on Cicero's exclusion undercuts his moral authority and deviates from Plutarch's *Life*. In North's translation we are told that «although he was one of Brutus greetest frendes and that it grieved him to see thinges in that state they were brought unto and albeit also he wished for the times past, as other men did», the conspirators were afraid that he lacked «hardiness»³⁰. Focusing on the oratory of Brutus and Mark Antony, the play is silent when it comes to the part played by Cicero who – again, according to Plutarch – «moved the Senate to decree (following the example of the Athenians) a general oblivion of things done against Caesar»³¹. In her study of Cicero in drama from the ancient world to the modern stage, Gesine Manuwald comments on the seeming paradox that one of the greatest orators in history has hardly any lines in the play³². Arguably, the under-development of the part reflects on the culturally dominant image of Cicero as icon of civic virtue that the play does little to disturb. He is kept out of the fray of Roman politics. It is improbable that Shakespeare knew the second *Philippic* in which Cicero refutes Antony's allegation that Brutus «holding the bloody dagger, called out "Cicero"» as evidence that Cicero was in on the plot³³. The representation of Cicero and his comparative silence in the play can be attributed, however, not only to Shakespeare's selective use of source material but to the pressures of censorship. In Elizabethan England, resistance theory, condoning the killing of a tyrant, had to be handled with great circumspection. Elizabeth I had been excommunicated in 1570, legitimating in Catholic eyes her deposition. To have presented Cicero – invested as he was with so much cultural capital – using his oratorical powers to advocate regicide would have been a serious transgression.

²⁸ Takada 1997, 203.

²⁹ Shakespeare 2016, 2, 1, 150-151.

³⁰ Plutarch 1575, 933.

³¹ Plutarch 1575, 933.

³² Manuwald 2018, 42-43.

³³ Cf. also Canfora 2007, 317-321.

A decade after Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* was performed, Cicero's political oratory is heard resoundingly on the stage in Ben Jonson's *Catiline his Conspiracy* (1611). Jonson borrows extensively from *In Catilinam*, often quoting verbatim. A good example is the scene presenting the meeting of the Senate in the Temple of Jupiter following Catiline's abortive attempt to murder Cicero. In one resonant speech after another, Cicero attacks his adversary, exposing both the stratagems of the conspirators and – in discovering it through his network of spies – his own *Realpolitik*:

I have those eyes and ears shall ever keep guard
And spiral on thee, as they have ever done
And thou not feel it³⁴.

Rome must be purged; Catiline's ejection with his troops can only bring health to the city:

The ports are open, Forth!
The camp abroad wants thee, their chief, too long,
Lead with thee all thy troops out. Purge the city.
Draw dry that noisome and pernicious sink
Which, left behind thee, would infect the world³⁵.

As a «pernicious plague» Catiline is to be banished and, as «thieves of Italy», he and his confederates will be punished by Jupiter with perpetual plague. Jonson gives Catiline a rejoinder, mocking Cicero's oratory and defending his own patrician order against Cicero, the inmate:

If an oration or high language, fathers,
Could make me guilty, here is one hath done it.
He's strove to emulate this morning's thunder
With his prodigious rhetoric. But I hope
This Senate is more grave than to give credit
Rashly to all he vomits 'gainst a man
Of your own order, a patrician,
And one whose ancestors have more deserved
Of Rome than this man's eloquence could utter,
Turned the best way, as still it is the worst³⁶.

³⁴ Jonson 2012, 4, 2, 173-176.

³⁵ Jonson 2012, 4, 2, 243-247. Cf. Cicero 1977, 10-11.

³⁶ Jonson 2012, 4, 2, 403-412.

This speech throws into relief one of the tensions realized in the play between Cicero as *novus homo* and the patrician order which for some in Jonson's audience would correspond to the privileged English nobility.

The play is not a simple victory for republican politics. Cicero is lauded as «the only father of his country»³⁷ and «Great parent» of his country³⁸ but, as Inga-Stina Ewbank, the play's most recent editor, has pointed out, there is much in the play that speaks out against a noble victory³⁹. Cicero wins because a high class whore betrays the conspiracy, because her lover is a spy and double dealer and because Catiline's followers behave stupidly when he has been banished from Rome⁴⁰. Following a similar line of interpretation it has been argued that Jonson's reading of late republican Rome in Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae* is tinged with Tacitean insights⁴¹.

Catiline was not a success on the stage, a fact which Jonson defiantly records in the play's paratextual material when it was published following performance. On the title page, Jonson quotes in Latin from Horace, *Epistles* 2, 186-188: «The rabble does not enjoy these. And in truth all the pleasure of the knights, too, has now passed from the ear to the vain delights of the fickle ear». In the first dedication to his noble patron, the Earl of Pembroke, he refers again to his indiscriminating audience who prefer jigs to «a legitimate poem». The second address «To the Reader in Ordinary» is more specific about the objections to the play: members of the audience «disliked the orations of Cicero» because they had «read some pieces of it at school and understood them not». What, if anything, can we deduce from the general dislike of *Catiline* about the early-seventeenth-century reception of Cicero? Audiences apparently did not derive pleasure from hearing an accomplished actor, almost certainly the lead actor of the day, Richard Burbage, declaim at length Cicero's political orations. The experience was reminiscent of the school experience where a degree of unwillingness accompanied the study of Cicero. Perhaps the enormous popularity of Cicero in the previous century had begun to wane or the more polemical orations lacked the appeal of frequently reprinted moral philosophy. It seems reasonable to conclude that the play's lack of appeal in the early seventeenth century was related to

³⁷ Jonson 2012, 5, 3, 228.

³⁸ Jonson 2012, 5, 5, 192.

³⁹ Jonson 2012, 16.

⁴⁰ Jonson 2012, 14-17.

⁴¹ Worden 1999.

taste and current political preoccupations. *Catiline* was to gain popularity in the more polemical culture of the civil war years and the Republic⁴².

Historians of early modern England have observed that by the late sixteenth century, in political thought the authority of Cicero had been eclipsed by that of Tacitus whose *Annales*⁴³, translated by Richard Greneway, were published in 1598⁴⁴. The ideal of a common good shaped by Ciceronian concepts of virtue, duty and office gave way to the notion that in a dangerous and corrupt world a virtuous pursuit of politics could lead to self-destruction. Markku Peltonen cites a sermon in 1624 when the preacher claimed that Tacitus had become the politicians' «Bible» and that there were «more Commentators upon him than upon Saint Paul»⁴⁵, and comments that Tacitus was employed to demonstrate that the «Ciceronian ideal was lofty yet forlorn and that although the consolidation of Octavian's authority had been grounded on the exploitation of deceit, dissimulation and trickery, it had, nevertheless been the only real choice in the corrupt world»⁴⁶. The counsel embedded in *De officiis*, in which a leader is dedicated to the good of his country, is eclipsed by an emphasis on political expediency on one hand, and scepticism on the other.

Yet, only a few decades later, with the emergence of classical republicanism in the years leading up to the English civil war and in the aftermath of the regicide, Cicero's polemical voice is to be heard, most markedly in the *Philippics*. The publication history of *Philippics* is revealing. The orations would have been available to Whittinton in the edition published in the previous decade, although his compressed biography of Cicero conveys no sense that he knew of them. After 1524 the only editions until the nineteenth century would have been imported. In the case of England, some doubt must be cast on the assertion that the *Philippics* «became one of the most popular of Cicero's works in the Renaissance»⁴⁷. Cicero's defence of constitutional republicanism was certainly not as commonly known as those works concerned with the virtues of the good man and citizen and harnessed to the humanist educational programme.

⁴² Cf. Wiseman 1998, 46-47.

⁴³ Tacitus 1598. In the dedication to the Earl of Essex, Greneway commended Tacitus: «In judgement there is none sounder, for instruction of life, for al times, to those which oft read him judiciously, nothing yeelding to the best Philosophers».

⁴⁴ Cf. Burke 1969; Burke 1991; Levy 1987; Peltonen 1995; Armitage 2009, 7-10.

⁴⁵ Bargrave 1624, 32; Peltonen 1995, 125.

⁴⁶ Peltonen 1995, 125.

⁴⁷ Skinner 2002, 10.

The second *Philippic* – the most famous in antiquity, never delivered, but circulated amongst Cicero’s friends – was published in 1656. It appears in a volume of Cicero’s speeches, a reprint of a text published thirty years earlier in Leiden⁴⁸. The timing of the reprint is illuminating. Published during the years of the English Republic, the anti-monarchical rhetoric pronounced in the second *Philippic*’s defence of Caesar’s assassination would have had contemporary resonance.

When we consider the tenor of the *Philippics*, it is perhaps not surprising that for much of the early modern period they were not part of Cicero’s legacy. In his comparison of Demosthenes and Cicero, Plutarch observes that Cicero «oftentimes fell from pleasaunt tawntes, into plain scurrilitie»⁴⁹. Scurrility is intermittently on display in the second *Philippic* as Cicero vilifies Mark Antony, accusing him of being a catamite, associating with pimps and actors, of effeminacy, tyranny, drunkenness, gluttony and debauchery. In his abode brothels take the place of bedrooms and taprooms of dining rooms. The tone is close to the invective of late Elizabethan satire modelled on Juvenal and Horace, and jars with the culturally ingrained recognition of Ciceronian eloquence as manifestation of virtue.

Further, in their staunch defence of the mixed republican constitution and the liberties of the Republic from the incursions of dictatorship, the *Philippics* condone regicide. In the second *Philippic*, Cicero posits that had he been one of the regicides he would «have removed not a king only, but kingship»⁵⁰. He offers a paean to the regicides which concludes with a striking paradox:

the men of today were the first to attack with swords one not aiming at kingly power, but who was a king. That deed is not only in itself illustrious and godlike, but also set before us for our imitation, all the more because they achieved such a glory as seems scarce to be bounded by heaven itself. For although in the very consciousness of a splendid deed there was sufficient reward, yet by a mortal immortality should not, I think, be despised⁵¹.

⁴⁸ Cicero 1656, 150-212. This edition was a reprint of *Orationum Selectarum Liber: Editus in usum Scholarum Hollandiae & West-Frisiae: ex decreto illustriss D.D. Ordinum*, printed in Leiden in 1626.

⁴⁹ Plutarch 1575, 938.

⁵⁰ Cicero 1926, 2, 36.

⁵¹ Cicero 1926, 2, 114.

He invests the regicides as mortals with godlike immortality.

Throughout the orations Cicero appeals to the jeopardized liberty of the Roman people, denouncing monarchical rule. Antony's blocking the *Forum* with an armed guard is rebuked in the fifth *Philippic* as exceeding the tyranny of the Roman kings: «Marcus Antonius alone in this city since the founding of the city had openly with him an armed guard; a thing neither our kings ever did, nor those that after the expulsion of the kings sought to seize kingly power»⁵². In the eighth *Philippic*, he counters a specious plea for peace by Antony's advocates, accusing Calenus of blurring peace and slavery and reminding him that he is mistaken in thinking that there is anything agreeable or stable in kingship⁵³. In contrast, the humanists such as Thomas Elyot, Ascham and Wilson, who purported to love «Tully» for his eloquence, were exponents of an ordered and hierarchical commonwealth. As Elyot makes clear in the opening chapters of *The Governor*, power vested in a single ruler is essential in a well-governed realm. The Romans had been well-governed «during the time that they were under kings» and «never was among them discord or sedition»: sentiments which were deeply at variance with the Cicero's political polemic and defence of constitutional republicanism⁵⁴.

With the civil war, the regicide of 1649 and the establishment of the Republic political discourse as well as the country's political landscape was to change. The anonymously published *A Remonstrance of Many Thousand Citizens and Other Free-Born People of England*, presented to the House of Commons in July 1646, urged parliament to declare the «wickedness» of King Charles «openly before all the world», showing «the intollerable inconveniences of having a Kingly Government»⁵⁵. In 1649, parliament declared that monarchy was abolished, since it had been found by experience that «the office of a King [...] is unnecessary, burdensome, and dangerous to the liberty and safety and the public interest of the people»⁵⁶. John Milton, who, perhaps like Cicero, has a double identity – the great epic poet and creator of *Paradise Lost*, and republican pamphleteer and defender of liberty – spoke of monarchical rule as «bondage», contemptuously dismissing «the gaudy name of majesty» as alien to the preservation of «Libertie». When the restoration of the mon-

⁵² Cicero 1926, 5, 18.

⁵³ Cicero 1926, 8, 12-13.

⁵⁴ Cf. Elyot 1962, 10.

⁵⁵ Overton 1646, 6.

⁵⁶ Gardiner 1906, 385.

archy seemed imminent in 1659, Milton made a vigorous attempt in his pamphlet *The Readie and Easie Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth* to stop the people's voluntary embracement of servitude «to adore and be slaves of a single person»⁵⁷.

Looking back at the English civil wars from an opposing ideological position, the philosopher Thomas Hobbes disapprovingly cites an immersion in, and imitation of, the classics as a root cause of the conflict, leading to regicide:

[f]or who can be a good subject to monarchy, whose principles are taken from the enemies of monarchy, such as were Cicero, Seneca, Cato, and other politicians of Rome, and Aristotle of Athens, who seldom speak of kings but as of wolves and other ravenous beasts⁵⁸.

Albeit critically, Hobbes repositions Cicero, no longer as the voice of civic virtue but as an antagonist to monarchy and defender of constitutional republicanism. It is not an historical coincidence that *The Tragedy of that Famous Roman Orator Marcus Tullius* – the first play in English to put Cicero centre stage as a defender of the Republic and its values – was published in 1651. In 1651, two years after the regicide, events stimulated a sharp change of focus.

The author of *The Tragedy of that Famous Roman Orator Marcus Tullius Cicero* draws on a range of sources, including Lambin's edition, as well as Plutarch and the *Roman Histories* of Appian and Cassius Dio. Cicero's own works are embedded in the text. Imitating *Catiline's* opening with Sulla's Ghost, the play's first speech is that of an oracular ghost, here, that of Julius Caesar. The Ghost addresses Rome, predicting the political chaos to come and the death of Cicero: «Thus, Rome, shalt thou be plagued, and among / thy other evils lose thy sacred tongue, / The great patrician of the speaking art»⁵⁹. Focusing on the last year of Cicero's life, the play depicts Cicero's opposition to Antony, his misreading of the political ambitions of Caesar Octavius, his proscription and the vengeful triumph of Antony and Fulvia as they play football with Cicero's head. Cicero's fears for the fate of the Republic are articulated by the Chorus of senators, with the final Chorus lamenting Rome's decline under the

⁵⁷ Milton 1953, 7, 448. For an examination of Milton's response to the restoration of the monarchy, cf. Chernaik 2018.

⁵⁸ Hobbes 2009, 322.

⁵⁹ Clare 2002, 1, 2, 55-57.

triumvirs: «Survey thy fortunes, stupid city, / Look, look and know / Thyself turned monument of pity, / A map of woe»⁶⁰.

The *Philippics* are central to the play as both symbol and text. Referring to Cicero's non-aristocratic origins and his oratorical invective, Antony declares that he will take revenge for their composition:

As for that Cicero,
My fear, if I had any, should not be
Pitched on so base an object. I will make
That inmate know what 'tis to write my life;
[...] yet shall his unwashed mouth
One day repent that biting impudence⁶¹.

What Antony terms «biting impudence» the play presents as oratorical eloquence. In this play, rhetoric is integral to the drama, as the dialogue reworks oratory. In his opening speech, Cicero recalls his proudest moment in the suppression of the Catiline rebellion:

I did defend, while but a youth, the State;
I will not, now I am grown old, forsake it.
I have condemned the swords of Catiline;
I will not now fear his.
Some twenty years ago, I well remember,
I said death could not to a consular
Be immature; how much more truly now
May I pronounce unto an aged man?
Now may I wish for death, yet from my heart
Two things I do desire, and pray for: one,
That I may leave the Roman people free:
The immortal gods cannot bestow upon me
A greater blessedness. The other's this:
That all may meet with a proportioned fate,
As their deserts have been unto the State⁶².

The lines are a close translation of the end of the second *Philippic*: a text which, as we have seen, was not part of canonical Cicero. Addressing the Senate, in speech closely modelled on the fourteenth *Philippic*,

⁶⁰ Clare 2002, 4, 7, 153-156.

⁶¹ Clare 2002, 1, 5, 61-64; 68-69.

⁶² Clare 2002, 1, 2, 18-31.

Cicero honours those who died opposing Antony at the battle of Mutina⁶³. The translation of the *Philippics*, available only through continental texts or Lambin's edition, reveals the author's humanist credentials. In drawing on Cicero's orations and writings, the play endorses Cicero's view of constitutional government against tyranny. Taking into account the machinations of Octavius Caesar, the reality was more complex, but for the author of *The Tragedy of that Famous Roman Orator Marcus Tullius Cicero* his hero is the proponent of liberty and honour set against the threat of Antony.

The play is remarkable in that, in a long line of classical tragedies, it is the first and last to be written under a republican dispensation, allowing an unusual latitude of ideological expression. When compared with generic predecessors – the plays of Shakespeare and Jonson, together with others such as the republican Thomas May's *Tragedy of Cleopatra* – it is evident that the immediacy of the play to the formation of the Republic allows the transmission of a freer and more expansive treatment of republican ideals.

Further identifications with the political moment can be made in its recourse to Ciceronian civic and moral values. Classical republicans appealed to the moral values of the Roman republic and saw the health of the state in terms of *pietas* – a sense of duty and loyalty to one's family, country and gods – and *honestum*, with its double meaning of moral goodness and honourable conduct. The republican poet and satirist, George Wither, for example, in *The modern states-man* (1653), a discourse on government and political theory, celebrates the birth of the English commonwealth for its pulling down of «petty Tyrants»⁶⁴. Having described the beginnings of the Roman commonwealth, Wither devotes a chapter to piety as its foundation:

And first let us behold their Piety, which is not only the chief, but the file-leader, and indeed the ground of all the rest; this is that which bridles the most unruly, and strikes an awe [...] let this be taken away, and with it all fidelity, justice, purity vanish, yea humane society cannot exist without it, as Cicero observes in his first Book *de Nat. Deor*⁶⁵.

⁶³ Clare 2002, 2, 3, 39-102.

⁶⁴ Wither 1653, 47.

⁶⁵ Wither 1653, 67.

The play reflects such politico-moral preoccupations. Caesar's ghost predicts that in the civil conflict and moral inversions following the collapse of the Republic, «piety» will be «treason to the state», a paradox which captures the moral collapse of Rome under the triumvirs. In a soliloquy in which he agrees to the proscription of Cicero, a man whom he had addressed as «father» Octavius reveals a moral bankruptcy⁶⁶. Young Quintus Cicero, Cicero's nephew, dies through his act of piety, his refusal to betray his father and uncle.

The play, I suggest, brings together for almost the first time in early modern England the facets of Cicero which had been subsumed in the Renaissance emphasis on eloquence and moral philosophy. Here he is represented as both «the great patrician of the speaking art» and – untinged by any scepticism – fierce advocate of liberty and the Republic. Erasmus, not an unqualified admirer of Cicero, in his dialogue *Ciceronianus*, had warned against imitating Cicero's style where such a chasm existed between his time and that of his sixteenth-century admirer. «The entire scene of things is changed» argues one of his interlocutors, so «who can speak fittingly unless he is unlike Cicero». «I stand on another stage», he declares, «I see another theater, yes, another world». In such circumstances, he concludes, the eloquence of Cicero will not help him⁶⁷. The author of this mid-seventeenth-century play may, on the other hand, have imagined that he shared Cicero's political stage and, like his tragic hero, may have been intent on employing the persuasive art of drama in the republican cause.

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⁶⁶ Clare 2002, 4, 2, 1-43.

⁶⁷ Erasmus 1908, 61-62.

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