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Cicero, Cicero's poetry, Latin literature, Rhetoric, Seneca the Elder, Virgil, Petrarch, Erasmus of Rotterdam, Voltaire, Classical Studies

ABSTRACT (English)

The stereotypical image of Marcus Tullius Cicero as the best orator and the worst poetaster in the history of literature was born as far back as in Antiquity. It swiftly spread with the development of instituted schooling and became an integral part of the portrayal of Graeco-Roman culture, passed down from generation to generation within Western civilization. In the present paper we shall outline the characteristics of the stereotype of Cicero the Poet along with its influence on Classical Studies and humanistic culture writ large. Special focus will be put on extracting the very roots of this stereotype. Furthermore, it will be shown that the particular case of Cicero the Poet ought to be reconsidered in the context of a wider process we have been witnessing in recent times: the disintegration of traditional models which, paradoxically, offers many appealing opportunities for Classical Studies to better understand the past and to develop in new, groundbreaking directions.

ABSTRACT (German)

Das stereotype Bild von Marcus Tullius Cicero als dem größten Meister der Rhetorik und dem schlechtesten Poetaster in der Geschichte der Literatur entstand bereits in der Antike. Es verbreitete sich schnell durch die Vermittlung der Schulen und wurde zu einem festen Bestandteil der griechisch-römischen Kultur, der in der abendländischen Tradition von Generation zu Generation weitergegeben wurde. In diesem Beitrag werden

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die Grundzüge des Stereotyps von Cicero dem Dichter vorgestellt sowie dessen Einfluss auf die Klassische Philologie, die Geisteswissenschaften und die humanistische Kultur im Allgemeinen. Ein besonderer Schwerpunkt wird darauf gelegt, zu den eigentlichen Wurzeln dieses Stereotyps vorzudringen. Darüber hinaus wird gezeigt, dass der besondere Fall von Cicero dem Dichter im Kontext eines breiteren Prozesses neu überlegt werden sollte, den wir in jüngster Zeit miterleben: den zunehmenden Zerfall der traditionellen Modelle, der, paradoxerweise, viele ansprechenden Möglichkeiten für die Entwicklung der Klassischen Philologie bietet, um unser Wissen über die Vergangenheit zu bereichern und neue bahnbrechende Forschungsperspektiven zu eröffnen.

Cicero's Lame Pegasus. Humanists and Classicists on the Poetic Experiments of the Master of Rhetoric[1]

Katarzyna Marciniak (Warsaw)

In a letter of November 7, 707 *ab Urbe condita* Marcus Tullius Cicero asks Marcus Terentius Varro for an opinion about his most recent literary work. Cicero is also in need of advice on how he should proceed with the work in question. He feels torn between the desire to have it published "in the name of the Truth" and the conviction that the manuscript ought to be burnt as soon as possible, as it could seriously endanger his political career, which is built around traditional Roman values. Varro makes Cicero wait all month long. He needs time to thoroughly acquaint himself with the work. Finally he writes back to the Arpinate. He has no doubts and his review is short: "It is a masterpiece." However, Varro shares his friend's concerns. Namely, he states that this masterpiece indeed is mortally dangerous for Cicero as a politician because it will shake the foundations of the Roman State. Nevertheless, he expresses the opinion that the decision not to publish such a marvellous piece of literature would be a huge loss. Varro admires the work's form and, above all, its conclusion: the terrifying description of a plague that appears incoherent and somewhat improvised at first reading, though its meaning sinks in very soon and the reader is awestruck with the force of exactly such a finale.

After further consultations with Titus Pomponius Atticus, a solution to Cicero's dilemma is found: to publish under a pseudonym. The Arpinate

1 The issues presented in this paper contain the research results of my 'Habilitation' thesis *Pro Cicerone poeta. Poezja Marka Tulliusza Cycerona na przestrzeni stuleci* (=Marciniak [2008c]) and of the project *La ricezione della poesia di Marco Tullio Cicerone in Italia ed il suo influsso sulla scuola ciceroniana polacca*, carried out with the support of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of Poland (No. of the project: N N103 286239) at the Faculty of *Artes Liberales*, University of Warsaw. Their full presentation in the Italian language will take place in my monograph *Cicerone poeta tra l'Italia e la Polonia. La fortuna di uno stereotipo attraverso i secoli* (=Marciniak [in prep.]). I wish to acknowledge my gratitude also to the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and the *Artes Liberales* Institute Foundation, and to the authorities and my colleagues at the Dipartimento di Filologia Classica e Italianistica, Università di Bologna, where I carried out a research stay within the framework of the project. My deepest thanks goes to my 'Doktorvater' Prof. Jerzy Axer.

shall pretend that he is attending to the posthumous edition of a prematurely deceased artist's work. It will not be difficult to guess what pseudonym the friends invent. *Titus Lucretius Carus*. And the work in question is of course the poem *De rerum natura* – one of the masterpieces not only of ancient literature, but of the timeless heritage of world civilization, as well. Thus, the above summary of the correspondence between Cicero and Varro might justly trigger tempestuous reactions among those researching Roman culture. For indeed, this correspondence seems to be a work of philological *science-fiction*. And it truly is one. The letters come from an epistolographical short story by Tiziano Colombi – a representative of the 1970s generation of young Italian writers. His short story, entitled *Il segreto di Cicerone* [Cicero's Secret] – and we have discerned by now, what kind of a secret is intimated – was published in 1993,[2] with an afterword by the famous Italian Ancient historian and classical philologist Luciano Canfora, who presented therein the broad historical context of the aura of mystery that envelops Saint Jerome's words on Cicero's 'emendation' of Lucretius' poem – words which had given Colombi the impulse to create his short narrative (Chron. 171,1–3):

> *Titus Lucretius poeta nascitur: qui postea amatorio poculo in furorem versus, cum aliquot libros per intervalla insaniae conscripsisset, quos postea Cicero emendavit, propria se manu interfecit anno aetatis XLIIII.*[3]
>
> "The poet Titus Lucretius is born. Subsequently driven to madness by a love-philter, after having written several books in the intervals of lucidity that his madness allowed him, which books were later revised by Cicero, he died by his own hand at the age of 43."[4]

Discussing the issue, Canfora observes that the explanation of this mysterious mention proposed by Colombi seems at first sight paradoxical («all'apparenza paradossale»),[5] even in comparison with other controversial and commonly refuted hypotheses that have emerged in Classical Studies to date, like the attribution of *De rerum natura* to Atticus.[6] Marcus Tullius as the

2 For an analysis of Colombi's short story, see Cipriani (2008) esp. 324–327; Putz (2002) 449–452.

3 See also Cic. ad Q. fr. 2,9[10],3. Cf. D'Anna (1998).

4 English transl. taken from Conte (1999 [1994]) 155.

5 Canfora (1993) 38.

6 Canfora (1993) 36; cf. Gerlo (1956) 41–72.

probable author of the 'epicurean Bible' is all the more surprising, in that the disparity between the content of this poem and the Ciceronian works preserved until our times appears abysmal.[7] In contrast to the philologists, however, Colombi is authorized to develop his controversial theory without any well-grounded arguments, and even at variance with commonly accepted interpretations. Indeed, he wields of a kind of *licentia* (*nomen omen*) *poetica*. Nonetheless, the use of this license has been possible only recently, since there is ever less place for the *Studium Latinum* in the educational systems. For two thousand years Colombi's theory could not have counted on a positive reception, not even in the field of literature, as it is based on a favourable opinion of Cicero's poetry. In all the previous epochs, Varro's compliments for the Arpinate's poetic style would have sent readers into peals of laughter, and this would have immediately destroyed the seriousness of the philosophical reflections Colombi weaves into his story. All those epochs were namely under the influence of the stereotype of Cicero the Poet.

Cicero always aroused controversy – both during his days in Rome, as well as later, when he began his second (and much more important) life in the culture arisen from Mediterranean tradition. He gathered cohorts of supporters and opponents who valiantly fought over the evaluation of his achievements. There was, however, one field of the Arpinate's wide-ranging activities that both his friends and foes evaluated in agreement – i.e., with condemnation: his poetry. As already in ancient times the name of Homer had become a synonym of the poet *par excellence*, so in Antiquity did Cicero's name begin to denote the worst 'poetaster' in the history of literature. A stereotype was born and it became an integral, unquestioned part of the portrayal of Graeco-Roman culture, passed down from generation to generation.

In Colombi's short story, however, there are no traces of the stereotype of Cicero the Poet. On the contrary, Varro enthusiastically praises the poetic talent of the Arpinate, and not only as far as 'his' most recent accomplishment, i.e., *De rerum natura*, is concerned, but also in reference to Cicero's other works – thus, his earlier poems as well. Analysis of the correspondence between the two friends reveals that Varro considers these works to be of comparable, that is outstanding style and excellence.[8] Colombi's short

7 Canfora (1993) 39.

8 Colombi's Varro praises *De rerum natura* in the context of other Ciceronian works as follows (13): «Il tuo stile inconfondibile, chiunque lo riconoscerebbe.»

story, analyzed from the perspective of the reception of the stereotype of Cicero the Poet, hence becomes a precious piece of evidence for the transformation of our culture on the threshold of the Third Millennium. It is actually a *signum temporis* that today, when a growing number of institutes of Classical Philology are threatened with closure, the poetic cliché of the Arpinate is losing its importance as well. In our times, another problem is definitely more fascinating – the one Colombi caught so aptly and built his narrative on: the dilemma of a man who professes certain principles openly, but secretly pays homage to different ones.[9]

It is nonetheless worth cultivating memory of the stereotypes that in a certain sense shaped and organized the life of our ancestors. The *memory* – I stress – and not the clichés as such. For in the battles *for* or *against* those stereotypes the participants were conveying important messages about themselves, their beliefs, their dreams, desires, and fears. The passage of time and new cultural experiences have freed us from the limitations that for many centuries had marked the horizon of our civilization, and we welcome the chance to analyze these messages without prejudices. In such a way we develop, we take steps forward, even if only to fall under the influence of new stereotypes we are not yet aware of...

*

Cicero's poetry constitutes a multifaceted, complex problem about which – as David Butterfield rightly observes – "much work remains to be done".[10] In the present paper, having brought into focus the permanence of poetic activity in the Arpinate's life, we shall briefly review the most popular opinions of ancient writers on Ciceronian poetry, ones which nourished the stereotype of Cicero the Poet, in order to highlight its characteristics and its influence on Classical Studies. Subsequently, we shall try to extract the very roots of this stereotype, indicating that they were a vital element of literary vision into the 20th century. The insight into this problematic will then make it possible for us to demonstrate the importance and the implications of the

9 Cf. Canfora (1993) 39: «L'idea di cui il giovane narratore si è invaghito è quella – adatta forse più a tempi di controriformistiche tortuosità che alla repubblica romana – dell'inconfessabile adesione proprio del 'censore' (e Cicerone come tale talvolta si atteggia verso l'epicureismo) alla fede da lui medesimo censurata.»

10 Butterfield (2007).

stereotype of Cicero the Poet for humanistic culture writ large, through the examples of three eminent connoisseurs of Cicero – ones who at the same time also happen to be among the most influential shapers of Western civilization: Petrarch, Erasmus of Rotterdam, and Voltaire.[11] In the course of this analysis, we will see that the particular case of Cicero the Poet ought to be reconsidered, taking into account the wider process we have been witnessing in recent times: the decomposition of the image of Graeco-Roman culture and its canonical evaluation system, as they were known to generations of our forebears. Finally, we shall see the new, fascinating perspectives that, paradoxically, open up to us thanks to this process.

The Stereotype of Cicero the Poet

This will strike many as ironic, as the force of the stereotype of Cicero the Poet has taught us to disregard this issue, but poetry is a field of the Arpinate's interests which he was devoted to throughout his life: indeed, since his very childhood, and so even before he started his activity as an orator and a philosopher. Cicero was composing poems already as a very young boy – παῖς, as Plutarch informs us (Cic. 2,3); from Ciceronian correspondence we learn that he wrote verses at least until 50 BC (Att. 7,2,1); and his last dialogues demonstrate that he was occupying himself with poetic translation from Greek literature as late as 43 BC – the year of his death.

Moreover, the *corpus poeticum Ciceronianum* – even the scanty part that is at our disposal today – is surprisingly varied and thus shows Cicero's versatility in many different genres, as well as his readiness for poetic experiments: besides his *iuvenilia* in the Alexandrian spirit (*Pontius Glaucus*, [*H*]*alcyones*, †*Thalia maesta*†, *Nilus*, *Uxorius*, *Limon*), we know about the epic-national poems in honour of Marius and Caesar (*Marius*, *De expeditione Britannica*), and ... Cicero himself, who was a pioneer (and, as it seems, the only practitioner, as well) of autobiographical epics in the Roman literature (*De consulatu suo*, *De temporibus suis*).[12] We need to add to this his poetic translations from Greek

11 On Petrarch as a protohumanist see for example Nichols (2002 [2000]) ix; on Voltaire as a representative of modern humanism see for example Wiggershaus (1988 [1986]) 309.

12 The title forms and the chronology of Cicero's poetry exceed the scope of the present paper (for further reading on this subject see for example the bibliography in Marciniak [2008c] 369–418).

poetry, including the famous *Aratea*,[13] and occasional epigrams of a satirical, political and maybe even erotic character.[14] Generally, a certain value is given to the translations, as if the genius of the Greek poets had managed to 'infect' even such a poetaster as Cicero.[15] The positive opinions on his *original* poetry, however, are extremely rare and their sincerity raises reasonable doubts. The poems of the Arpinate are mostly praised by the protagonists of his dialogues who, on top of everything, come from the circles of his family like Quintus or friends like Atticus and Balbus (Cic. leg. 1,1,2–3; nat. deor. 2,41,104). Also the above mentioned Plutarch praises them (Cic. 2,4), but who would confide with a Greek about the value of the Roman poetry?[16] Later on, the rare, isolated cases of affection expressed towards Ciceronian verses are considered to be manifestations of a harmless 'eccentricity', as we will soon see in the example of Voltaire.

Insofar as criticism is concerned, it shall be noticed that, after the attacks during Cicero's lifetime (cf. Cic. ad Q. fr. 2,15[16],5; Pis. 29,72; Phil. 2,8,20; off. 1,22,77), the stereotype of Cicero as a miserable poet was already well established by the first century AD (Sen. de ira 3,37,5).[17] The object of assaults included both the form of the poems – like the 'terrible' *homoioteleuta* (Quint. inst. 9,4,41) – and the presumably boastful content of Ciceronian autobiographical epics (Ps.-Sall. inv. 3,5–4,7;[18] Quint. inst. 11,1,24[19]), which

13 For the bibliography on Cicero's translations see my dissertation Marciniak (2008b), supervised by Prof. Jerzy Axer. For the most recent updates see for example also Powell (2007) 1132–1137, esp. 1133–1134, and bibliography 1136–1137; and especially Glucker (2012) and Siebengartner (2012); Courtney (2013); Fiorucci (2013); Gee (2013a).

14 For the question of the 'real' authorship and of other particular issues regarding the given poems discussed by a host of eminent scholars working on Cicero's poetry see the detailed bibliography in Marciniak (2008a) and (2008c) 369–418. Among the most important studies, fundamental are Grollmus (1887); Ewbank (1933); Büchner (1939), further developed by von Albrecht (1973); Ferrarino (1942); Malcovati (1943); Traglia (1950); Brush (1971); Soubiran (1972). See also Castorina (1953); Courtney (1993) 149–178; Horsfall (1993). For the most recent studies see Gee (2013b).

15 One of the first attempts to overcome such interpretation was the groundbreaking study by Traina (1974 [1970]). The scholar drew the readers' attention to the role of *humanitas* in Cicero's decisions as a translator of Greek poetry. For more bibliographical hints see Marciniak (2008a).

16 Cf. the interesting remarks of Setaioli (2007). See also Todd (1945) 68 n. 149, and Shackleton Bailey (1983) 239.

17 Cf. Degl'Innocenti Pierini (2003) 12.

18 Cf. Canfora (1984).

19 Quintilian probably based this statement on Ps.-Sallust's invective, cf. Harrer (1928) 90.

fit perfectly into another widespread stereotype connected with the Arpinate: his supposed desire for fame. In addition, Tacitus mocked Cicero as a poet with bad luck because his verses had *not* been forgotten (Tac. dial. 21,6), and Martialis defined them brutally as unpoetic poetry, written with the assistance of neither the Muses nor Apollo – *carmina* [...] *Musis et Apolline nullo* (Mart. 2,89,3–4[20]). Finally, Juvenal deftly summed up the verdicts on Cicero's verses in a phrase that became proverbial: *ridenda poemata* (Iuv. 10,124) – 'poems to be laughed at'.[21]

Later, with the development of instituted schooling, things could only go from bad to worse. Cicero, the basis of education, became a nightmare for pupils, who were forced to learn by heart the golden rules of his prose style. We can thus easily imagine what a joy it was for whole generations of tormented students to feel their superiority over the (in)famous rhymed verse *o fortunatam natam me consule Romam!* What a pleasure was found in the chance to criticize, with impunity, the line *cedant arma togae, concedat laurea laudi*! What an enormous comfort was taken from the realization that there was at least one field in which 'Saint Tullius',[22] the most talented stylist of Rome, had lost the battle with the language... There is a beautiful German word to describe such feelings: *die Schadenfreude*.

Taking into account the force, the ancient background, and the longevity of the stereotype of Cicero the Poet, it was only natural that it sank roots in Classical Studies. Even better, it exerted influence on textual criticism – once the noblest branch of the Classics, often taken for the *corona philologica*. This aspect of the reception of the stereotype of Cicero the Poet could be presented via the example of the Dutch classicist Johannes Adolph Karl van Heusde (1812–1878) and his conjecture on the fragment of *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, in which 'Julius Capitolinus' writes about Gordian I's *aemulatio* of Cicero's poems as follows (SHA Gord. 3,2):

> [...] *adulescens cum esset Gordianus, de quo sermo est, poemata scripsit, quae omnia extant, et quidem cuncta illa quae Cicero, id est Marium et Aratum et Alcyonas et Uxorium et Nilum. Quae quidem ad hoc scripsit, ut Ciceronis poemata nimis antiqua viderentur.*

20 Cf. Spaeth (1930/31) 511.

21 See n. 37.

22 That is how the Arpinate is called by the great Ciceronian scholar Ann Vasaly (1999) 645. On the scholarly and school reception of Cicero the Poet cf. also Kubiak (1990) 198.

> "When the Gordian of whom we are speaking was a young man, he wrote poetry, all of which has been preserved. As a matter of fact, all the subjects were those which Cicero also treated, that is, *Marius*, *Aratus*, *Alcyonae*, *Uxorius* and *Nilus*. And he wrote these in order that Cicero's poems might seem out of date."[23]

Heusde questions, among others, the title of Cicero's poem [*H*]*alcyones*, which was probably dedicated to the metamorphosis of Alcyone and her husband Ceyx into kingfishers,[24] and denies the poem the right to exist in this fragment and in consequence to serve as a base of Gordian's *aemulatio*. He proposes the following reading: "[...] *quae Cicero hexametris ex Arato hallucinatus est* [...]."[25] Such a conjecture, *non minus improbabilis qu*[*a*]*m audax*,[26] is for us, however, very important as a proof of the vitality of the stereotype of Cicero the Poet in the field of Classical Philology: in a certain sense, it once seemed a better solution to impute the Arpinate with hallucinations than to 'grant' him the ability to inspire later authors with his poetry...

Furthermore, many scholars denied Cicero the very name of poet, baptizing him as a 'verse maker'. What is particularly interesting, such a practice was typical not only for the anti-Ciceronians. A certain distance to Cicero's poetry was also maintained by his fervent admirers, like Kazimierz Morawski, *nota bene* Theodor Mommsen's student, a classical scholar, a candidate for the Presidency of the Republic of Poland in the interwar period, and one of the founding fathers of the Polish pro-Ciceronian school. In his 1911 monograph on the Arpinate, in the chapter with the much promising title *Cycero jako poeta* (Cicero as a Poet),[27] Morawski declared without mercy that "Cicero had not been a poet"[28] – rather, he had only hopped eagerly about on his somewhat lame Pegasus and tormented the Muses with offerings they could not be pleased with.[29] In addition, still half a century later,

23 Translation taken from Magie (2000 [1924]) 383.

24 For the recent study on this myth see for example the very interesting paper by Rudd (2008).

25 Cf. van Heusde (1836) 35–40, esp. 38; for his remarks on [*H*]*alcyones* see 26–28. One must admit that such a conjecture is at the same time rather critical towards *Aratea* (fruit of hallucinations). For the discussion with van Heusde's theses see Grollmus (1887) 8.

26 That is how Grollmus (1887) 8 comments on van Heusde's conjecture.

27 Cf. Morawski (1911) 260–269.

28 Morawski (1911) 263. The great scholar showed, however, some empathy towards Cicero's youthful poems, see 260.

29 Cf. Morawski (1911) 264 and 269.

G.B. Townend decided to title his excellent paper on Cicero's poetry simply *The Poems*, because the connection 'Cicero the Poet' seemed "somehow paradoxical" to him ...[30] And even Antonio Traglia, one of the most eminent experts on Ciceronian poems, felt himself obliged to explain the title of his brilliant monograph, *La lingua di Cicerone poeta* (The Language of Cicero the Poet [1950]), in the following way (in the very preface!):

> «Sia detto una volta per sempre che, quando parliamo di Cicerone poeta, noi adoperiamo un termine che non implica affatto una valutazione estetica della sua produzione in versi. Esso allude solo a Cicerone come autore di opere metriche e, in opposizione a prosatore, equivale sostanzialmente a scrittore in versi.»[31]
>
> "It shall be said once and for all that, when talking about the poet Cicero, we are using a term that does not imply at all an aesthetic evaluation of his production in verse. This term hints only at Cicero as an author of metrical compositions and, in contrast to a prosaist, it corresponds, substantially, to a writer in verse."

The attractiveness of Cicero as a victim of bullying and the presumed poor quality of his poems (which, by the way, we know mostly only by titles, basing our evaluation on the 'second-hand' sources) do not explain, however, the force of the stereotype that penetrated even the scholarly milieu. All this encourages to check whether it could be possible to get to the deep roots of the cliché in question.

Poetry versus Prose

From among all the ironic comments on Ciceronian verses read in a wider context, the most famous one, i.e., Juvenal's proverbial phrase *ridenda poemata* in his *Tenth Satire* (Iuv. 10,124) – 'poems to be laughed at' – is also the one that startles the most. The satirist therein states that he prefers, much to our surprise, Cicero's scoffed at poems, and the line *o fortunatam natam*... in par-

30 Cf. Townend (1965) 109 (although two contributors to this volume used the pattern: *Cicero the Philosopher* – Douglas [1965], *Cicero the Man* – Balsdon [1965]). It is worth mentioning in this context, as an exception to the rule, the courageous statement by Spaeth (1930/31) 512, that Cicero "probably does not deserve a place on the heights of Parnassus; but he is well worthy of a habitation on the slopes".

31 Traglia (1950) 5 n. 1.

ticular, to the *Second Philippic*. As we proceed with the reading of Juvenal's *Satire*, this startling preference becomes fully understandable: Juvenal wants all the best for the Arpinate. Had he written such poor speeches as he did poems, his name would have never been put onto the list of the proscribed. Such a confrontation of Cicero the Poet with Cicero the Orator is one of the most famous *topoi* in Classical Antiquity – the source we were searching for and the breeding ground for the stereotype because of Cicero's already canonic image as the master of Latin prose. We owe its most popular wording to Seneca the Elder, who transmitted the view that a man may excel in only one field (Sen. contr. 3, praef. 8):

> *Magna quoque ingenia* [...] *quando plus quam in uno eminuerunt opere? Ciceronem eloquentia sua in carminibus destituit; Vergilium illa felicitas ingenii in oratione soluta reliquit; orationes Sallustii in honorem historiarum leguntur; eloquentissimi viri Platonis oratio, quae pro Socrate scripta est, nec patrono nec reo digna est.*
>
> "When has even great genius [...] ever shown itself in more than one field? Cicero lost his eloquence when he wrote poetry; the felicity of Virgil's touch deserted him in prose; Sallust's speeches are read only as a compliment to the author of the *Histories*; the speech of the eloquent Plato written on behalf of Socrates is worthy neither of defender nor defendant."[32]

The 'Senecan'[33] dichotomy, and especially the separation of poetry from rhetoric, spread at lightning speed thanks to Cicero's predominant position in schools of rhetoric and infused Graeco-Latin culture.[34] In consequence, the Arpinate as an Orator *par excellence* was sentenced to eternal confrontation with his poetic "I".[35] As a part of ancient heritage this dichotomy also put roots in the Humanities. Giovanni Pascoli, the Italian classicist and a poet himself (a *poeta neolatinus*, as well), at the end of the 19th century wrote:

> «E Cicerone non era poeta: egli scambiava, sbaglio frequente in tutti i tempi e frequentissimo nei nostri, comune a tutti i popoli ma comu-

32 Translation taken from Winterbottom (1974) 383. For Juvenal's attitude to Cicero's poetry and rhetoric see above all Winkler (1988) with further bibliography.

33 Let us be permitted to label it thus, though Seneca the Elder reports the words in question as an opinion of Cassius Severus.

34 Cf. Traglia (1962) 9.

35 Cf. Schol. Bob. Cic. Sest. 123,101 Hild, and Planc. 74,144 Hild.

> nissimo nei popoli latini [...], la retorica con la poesia; arti, se pure arte si può chiamare la poesia, che hanno certi strumenti uguali, ma dissimigliantissimo il fine, poichè l'una vuol convincere e persuadere di cose e a cose cui l'anima si suppone contraria e repugnante, l'altra non vuole se non scoprire all'anima ciò che ella ha in sè e non sa di avere.»[36]
>
> "And Cicero was not a poet: he confused, a common mistake in all the times and the most common in ours, typical of all the peoples, but above all of the Latin people [...], rhetoric with poetry; the arts, if the poetry might be called an art at all, that have some instruments identical, but a completely different aim, as the one wants to convince and induce to things, against which the spirit is opposed and rebellious, the other wants nothing else but to make the spirit see what it has in itself, being unaware of having it."

A similar distinction rooted in this dichotomy, with the stress on the opposition of poetry vs. prose, was presented to students as late as the middle of the 20th century by one of the most famous theoreticians of literature, Benedetto Croce:

> «È stato notato che i greci e i romani osservavano rigorosamente la separazione della poesia e della prosa nelle persone degli scrittori, e che nè di Sofocle o Euripide, nè di Virgilio o Lucrezio o Properzio, restano prose, e di Cicerone, sommo prosatore e letterato, che tentò di scrivere in versi, passarono in proverbio i *ridenda poëmata*, i versi ridicoli.»[37]
>
> "It has been observed that the Greeks and the Romans strictly followed the separation of poetry and prose in the persons of authors, and that no prosaic works are left either by Sophocles or Euripides, nor by Virgil or Lucretius or Propertius, and that the poems by Cicero, the best prosaist and writer who attempted to compose verses, have become proverbial *ridenda poemata*, poems to be laughed at."

It has been many decades since the views arisen from the study of ancient authorities lost their privileged position in the present educational systems,

36 Pascoli (1980 [1897]) 2405.

37 Croce (1949) 57. Cf. Traglia (1950) 271. For further reading see also Giancotti (1995) and Ledentu (2013) [solum indicem vidi].

and the stereotype of Cicero the Poet has fallen nearly totally into oblivion. However, even today the opinion prevails that the poet and the prosaist belong to two different worlds. This is attested even in the popular circulation of culture, as shown, e.g., by Internet-courses like *Poetry for Novelists*[38] or by the anthologies of poems, treated as *curiosa*, by famous prose writers – especially the collections of the poems they wrote as youths, as this corresponds to another *communis opinio*: that nearly each of us goes through a 'poetic phase' as a young person and examination of this phase may reveal much about one's later temperament.[39]

Petrarch in Defiance of Stereotyped Thinking

Definitely more interesting revelations may be drawn, however, from analysis of the reception of the stereotype of Cicero the Poet. For such analysis shows, again unexpectedly, that the most eminent personalities in the history of humankind long ago were ready to overcome the Senecan dichotomy, exerting on this occasion a strong influence on Western culture. No doubt one such personality was Petrarch. He managed to see in the rigid authorities of ancient times people who were dear to him. Such an attitude made it possible for Petrarch to enter into dialogue with the past and to exceed the limitations of old patterns, marking out in consequence new ways of development for the human mind. As far as the stereotype of Cicero the Poet is concerned, at first sight Petrarch's approach does not seem to bear any trace of originality in respect to his predecessors, as he simply followed the Senecan dichotomy. Petrarch did not consider the Arpinate a poet,[40] but the master of prose, and in the field of poetry he chose to follow the unquestioned example of Virgil, widely known as a poor prosaist.[41] At second sight,

38 Cf. Cohen (2008).

39 Townend (1965) 109 writes of the poetry of distinguished Romans as of "an elegant and harmless entertainment" (in reference to Plin. epist. 5,3,5–6). Cf. also Vial (2013) [solum indicem vidi]. For modern authors cf. for example Emmons (n.d.); Moss (n.d.).

40 Cf. Petr. rer. mem. 1,15,4; fam. 4,15. But cf. the final part of this paper – a reference to Petr. fam. 24,12.

41 Cicero and Virgil had been Petrarch's masters since his childhood, cf. the conclusion of the famous incident of burning Petrarch's library, in Petr. Sen. 1,16; the expression «questi son gli occhi della lingua nostra», in Petr. Tr. fam. 3,21; the famous anecdote of the meeting of Cicero and young Virgil, in Petr. fam. 24,4. Cf. also Pianko (1949); and the very interesting abstract by Bishop (2009); see also Hortis (1878); de Nolhac (1892)

however, we realize that Petrarch dared much more than to reject an old cliché. Petrarch's ambition (not to say audacity) was not to question the famous dichotomy in reference to Cicero and Virgil, but to overcome it in his own person. With his wide-ranging literary activities, both in Latin and in the *lingua volgare*, in prose *and* in verses, he endeavoured to fulfill the canon in a 'hyper-perfect' way, and his success was noticed and praised by his contemporaries; in the letter of Giovanni di Matteo Fei to Petrarch we read:

> *Virgilium illa felicitas ingenii oratione soluta reliquit; Ciceronem eloquentia sua in carminibus destituit; tuo autem divino ingenio tanta* [*in tota* Weiss] *eloquentia et carmine et oratione soluta et sermone vulgari insita est* [...].[42]
>
> "The luck of talent left Virgil in prose; Cicero's eloquence let him down when it came to writing poems; but in your divine genius, there is such a force of eloquence, and in poetry, and in prose, and in the vernacular [...]."

In a similar tone and with a reference to the Senecan dichotomy as well, Petrarch is later praised by Leonardo Bruni:

> «Onde avenne che Vergilio, nel verso excellentissimo, niente in prosa valse o scripse; et Tullio, sommo maestro in dire in prosa, niente valle in versi. Questo medesimo veggiamo delli altri poeti et oratori, l'uno di questi due stili essere stato di sua excellente loda; ma in amendue gli stili niuno di loro, che mi ricordo aver letto. Il Petrarca solo è quello che, per dota singulare, in l'uno et in l'altro stile fu excellente, et opere molte compose in prosa et in versi, le quali non fa bisogno raccontare, perché sono note.»[43]
>
> "Hence it resulted that Virgil, who excelled in verse, meant or wrote nothing in prose; and Tullius, the highest master of declamation in prose, meant nothing in verse. We see the same issue with other poets and orators: there are eminent representatives of one of these two

esp. 176–223; Rüegg (1946); Branca (1990); Schmidt (2000b) and (2000c); Hinds (2004), esp. Hinds' extremely interesting remarks on "the reversal of the expected vector of reception" (166), and on Petrarch's "status as Virgil's post-antique *alter*" (169); Feo (2006); Lee (2012) 46–54; Mazzotta (2012).

42 Quotation after Regoliosi (2004) 160, see also her Italian paraphrase of the whole passus. Cf. also Viti (2007) 90 and 91 n. 19 and his commentary *ad loc.*; Hinds (2004).

43 Quotation after Viti (2007) 91.

> styles, but in both there is no one from among those whom I recall having read. Petrarch alone is the one who excelled, thanks to his particular talent, in both styles, and he composed many works in prose and in verse; it would be superfluous to recount them, as they are well known."

Not everybody, however, was thrilled with Petrarch's achievements. Niccolò de' Niccoli made use of the very same dichotomy and the stereotype of Cicero the Poet to mock the Italian author: namely, Niccoli stated with irony that he preferred one speech (in the sense of a work of prose) by Petrarch to all the letters by Virgil and one poem by Petrarch to all the poems by ... Cicero.[44]

Such attacks were, nonetheless, a measure of Petrarch's success. For indeed he managed to reconcile the need of individual expression with the endeavour to reach the ideals of the past, which resulted in reviving them in attractive forms and in bringing a new horizon to his followers, some of whom, however, in an erroneously understood desire to find themselves the closest possible to the said ideals, in reality made a step backward and fell into the trap of blind *imitatio* of Cicero's prose style, which Petrarch had admired so much.[45] Such an approach to the heritage of the Arpinate could have hindered not only the development of language, but also – and with definitely more dire consequences – the liberty of the mind. Soon the Ciceronian controversy broke out, and all across Europe a fierce battle for souls was waged.[46]

Cicero the Poet in the Ciceronian Controversy

Here again, the contribution of the stereotype of Cicero the Poet should be emphasized, as, paradoxically, it played not only an important, but also a very positive role in overcoming this crisis. Cicero's ill fame as the biggest

44 Cf. Zieliński (1967 [1929]) 177 and 340; Viti (2007) 79 and 85.

45 Petrarch's philological discoveries of many important texts by Cicero contributed significantly to enlarging the *corpus* of Ciceronian prose which was the base of *imitatio*. Furthermore, it is worth noting that Petrarch divided Cicero's fortune as an object of blind imitation. However, in the case of the Italian author it was his poetry that became the ideal to be attained by the *petrarchisti*.

46 For the religious aspects of the Ciceronianism see for example the study by Sabbadini (1885) 51–52, and, recently, the edition by DellaNeva (2007) xxiv.

poetaster of all times created a scratch on the perfect monument of the eminent orator and stylist of the Latin language. This scratch was exploited, among others, by Erasmus of Rotterdam in his famous dialogue *Ciceronianus* (1528). When Nosoponus, madly in love with his Master, declared that Cicero should be followed strictly, "[i]n every point as far as he goes and wholly",[47] Bulephorus referred to the poems of the Arpinate, recalling the mythological patrons of literature – the god Apollo and the Muses – to show that it would be absurd to imitate Cicero blindly:

> Bu. *Age, si totus erit exprimendus, num illius exemplo* Musis et Apolline nullo *scribemus versus*?
> Nos. *Carmen excipio*.[48]

> "Bu. – If he is to be copied exactly, shall we write verses after his example, *without the aid of Apollo and the Muses*?
> No. – I make exception of verse."[49]

Erasmus' readers must have immediately noticed that in the words of Bulephorus reverberated the echo of Martial's famous verse, in which the satirist had mocked Cicero's poetry (see above, Mart. 2,89,3–4). In consequence, Bulephorus/Erasmus strengthened his critical opinion, as he demonstrated it had not been taken out of the blue, but was based on the authority of a renowned ancient poet. What is more, the evocation of Martial's opinion, along with the goddesses of literature, made the subsequent praise of Nosoponus that "even the Muses themselves [would] never speak better than Cicero"[50] sound at once imprudent and unconvincing. Moreover, Bulephorus thereafter exploited his antagonist's complete defenselessness against the stereotype of Cicero the Poet by proceeding with the attack, while Nosoponus could do nothing but accept the critique:

> Bu. *Atqui talem proferunt ex amasio nostro Cicerone:* O fortunatam natam me consule Romam.

47 Translation taken from Scott (1910) II 41.

48 Text from the edition Erasmi Roterodami *Dialogus Ciceronianus: sive de optimo genere dicendi*, Lugduni Batavorum: Ex officina Jannis Maire, 1643, 48 (accessed via books.google, 06.09.2012).

49 Translation taken from Scott (1910) II 44.

50 Translation taken from Scott (1910) II 44.

> Nos. *Iam semel carmen excepi.*[51]
>
> "Bu. – But such is quoted from our beloved Cicero: *O fortunatam natam me Consule Romam.*
> No. – I have already once made exception of his poetry."[52]

Bulephorus plan was perfidious. By means of the references to the stereotype acknowledged even by pro-Ciceronian 'extremists' he put in question the rule that was at the base of the whole Ciceronian movement – *Cicero totus exprimendus.*[53] The future defeat of this movement caused by a welter of factors (the stereotype of Cicero the Poet only triggered some polemics) reestablished the liberty of speech and mind which after all, in the rational Age of Light, was used for an unexpected defense of the Arpinate's poetry.

Voltaire's Delight over Cicero the Poet

One of the most eminent representatives of the Enlightenment, Voltaire – considered the *arbiter* between Antiquity and modern times ([*der*] *Schiedsrichter zwischen der Antike und der modernen Zeit*)[54] – was a great admirer of Cicero, "his greatest devotee", as Elizabeth Rawson rightly observed.[55] What seems particularly odd, however, is that his admiration for the Arpinate also included delight over Cicero's poems.[56] Voltaire voiced this on many occasions, and without being afraid of challenging the centuries-long stereo-

51 For the edition vd. n. 48, here quotation from p. 52.

52 Translation taken from Scott (1910) II 45.

53 For the polemics with Erasmus see for example the two orations by Jules-César Scaliger *Oratio pro M. Tullio Cicerone contra Des. Erasmum* (1531) and *Adversus Des. Erasmi Roterod. dialogum Ciceronianum oratio secunda* (1537), ed. by Magnien (1999), here esp. 107–108.

54 Cf. Sakmann (1905) 569 and Day (1965) 31.

55 Rawson (1983 [1975]) 304. On Voltaire's reception of Cicero see above all the dissertation by Gartenschläger (1968); the above mentioned contributions by Sakmann (1905) and by Day (1965), the outstanding introduction by LeClerc (1992) to his edition of Voltaire's tragedy *Rome sauvée, ou Catilina.* See also the fundamental monograph by Zieliński (1967 [1929]) (see n. 44) 245–250 and 360; remarks in the study by Heikel (1913) 73–74 n. 1; in the paper by Ferrarino (1942) 19; Gawlick (1963).

56 Cf. for example Voltaire's *Dictionnaire philosophique. Verse et poésie* (ed. Thiessé [1831]); *Essai sur la poésie épique*, ch. III: *Virgile* 40 (ed. Williams [1996]); *Leningrad Notebooks* II f. 120r (ed. Besterman [1968]) and his preface to the tragedy *Rome sauvée, ou Catilina* (ed. LeClerc [1992]); cf. Gartenschläger (1968) 81–82.

type.[57] As far as the (in)famous *o fortunatam natam*... is concerned – the line that serves as an epitome of Cicero's poetic sins[58] – Voltaire was prone to consider it inauthentic. In his opinion, the verse had been forged by somebody obsessed with the widely known (i.e. 'Senecan') prejudice, who wanted to prove that a man could excel only in one field of activity.[59] Moreover, Voltaire praises Cicero the Poet so highly that he declares him almost equal to Lucretius,[60] which in the French Philosophe's epoch – the epoch of the still living stereotype – was probably not less startling to his audience than Colombi's 'conspiracy theory' of today.

But Voltaire does not confine himself to praising and defending Cicero the Poet. As the best form of defense happens to be attack, in the preface (ed. 1752) to his tragedy *Rome sauvée, ou Catilina* (1749), the Philosophe directs a barrage of fire at the English dramatist Ben Jonson (the author of, *nomen omen*, the stage play *Poetaster*), who was 'guilty' of having composed, in

57 Cf. Gartenschläger (1968) 81: „Mit dem Lob des Dichters Cicero steht Voltaire in dem 2000 Jahre währenden Nachleben des großen Römers nahezu allein. Selbst die begeistertsten Ciceronianer der Renaissance waren in diesem Punkt dem Verdikt der Antike gefolgt. Voltaire äußert dieses Lob nicht nur hier, wo es zum Teil durch die panegyrische Absicht der Vorrede zu **Rome sauvée** bedingt sein könnte, sondern auch an einer Reihe von andern Stellen in seinem Werk, so daß man an seinem Interesse an dieser Seite des ciceronischen Nachlasses nicht zweifeln kann". [the title in bold by R.G.].

58 Cf. Brush (1971) 59–60. See also Allen (1956).

59 Cf. Voltaire, *Préface* to the *Rome sauvée*, 144–145 (ed. LeClerc [1992]). It is interesting to observe that similar hypotheses on the inauthenticity of this verse are also present in the modern Classical Philology – some scholars assume that Cicero did not compose the line *o fortunatam natam*... in the form that is preserved to our times; the guilt for the 'unfortunate' sound effects and the meaning of the verse is usually attributed to Pseudo-Sallust. For the bibliographical references and a cross-section of the polemics see above all the detailed study on the line by Allen (1956). The discussions around this issue make us aware of a very interesting paradox in the reception of the stereotype of Cicero the Poet: on one hand the Arpinate is considered the worst poetaster in the history of literature, on the other, though, the attempts to absolve him from the 'guilt' of the composition of *o fortunatam natam*... seem to suggest that some of his critics do not believe in his total failure. Voltaire, by the way, was eventually ready to accept all that Cicero had written as it was: «[...] c'est de tous les poètes romains celui que j'aime le mieux avec ses défauts.» (Best. D11858, ed. 1973; Gartenschläger [1968] 82 quotes the letter in his dissertation after the edition of 1953–1965: Best. 11020 LV,11).

60 Cf. Voltaire, *Préface* to the *Rome sauvée*, 142 (ed. LeClerc [1992]); *Dictionnaire philosophique. Verse et poésie* (ed. Thiessé [1831]); the letter to Fyot de La Marche (Best. D11858, ed. 1973). Cf. also Ferrarino (1942) 19 and Gartenschläger (1968) 82–83.

the tragedy *Catiline His Conspiracy* (1611),[61] some words of Cicero against Catiline in prose. Such a procedure is in Voltaire's eyes a clear manifestation of the barbarism of Jonson's times, and especially of the Englishmen who would 'dare everything' («Les Anglais, qui hasardent tout, sans même savoir qu'ils hasardent…») – including to remove Cicero from poetic contexts because of his ill fame as a poet.[62]

On the other hand, Voltaire's readiness to 'rhyme' the words of the Arpinate was so controversial that even at the beginning of the 19th century the Polish translator of his tragedy, Paweł Czajkowski, Professor at the Academy in Kraków, asked all the lovers of poetry for indulgence of this 'eccentricity' of the eminent thinker.[63] The classical education, of which the stereotype of Cicero the Poet was an integral part, brought consequences that even in the 20th century Voltaire scholars found it difficult to accept this original predilection of the Philosophe: "[...] it is impossible to believe that Voltaire was serious in his estimate of Cicero's verse [...]" – wrote for example Theodore Besterman, the eminent editor of his works.[64] The explanation (or at least such an attempt) of Voltaire's admiration for Ciceronian poems constitutes a theme for a separate study. But in short, it should be noticed that not without meaning in this case is the poetic ambition of the French Philosophe alone and his 'identification' with the Arpinate ...[65]

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61 On Jonson's interpretation of Cicero see Dutton (1978).

62 Voltaire, *Préface* to the *Rome sauvée*, 147–148 (ed. LeClerc [1992]).

63 Cf. Czajkowski (1818) x. On the role of this translation in Polish culture see Axer (2003).

64 The scholar's note to Best. D11858, ed. 1973. Cf. LeClerc, in the introduction to his edition of Voltaire's tragedy *Rome sauvée, ou Catilina* (1992) 48 n. 70; Gartenschläger (1968) 83 n. 106 (Best. D11858, n. 1, ed. 1973; Gartenschläger quotes the letter after the edition of 1953–1965: Best. 11020 LV,11). See also Heikel (1913) 73 n. 1 – the scholar does not hide his scepticism in regard to Voltaire's praises for Ciceronian poems: "[...] *quamquam virum ingeniosissimum, si subtilius rem examinavisset, aliquanto parcius arbitror laudes fuisse profusurum*"; Day (1965) 36: "This estimate of Cicero's poetic talent cannot be taken very seriously today, but for Voltaire it was no mere *boutade*. It was the by-product of exaggerated all-round admiration." Cf. also LeClerc (1992) 48–49: "Although Theodore Besterman found it difficult to believe, Voltaire's appreciation of Cicero's poetic talents, as expressed in the 'Préface' to *Rome sauvée* and as recorded in his notebooks, was authentic."

65 Also the explanation of the nature of Voltaire's accusations against Jonson constitutes a complicated issue. Jonson was not so 'cruel' for Cicero the Poet as it may seem from Voltaire's words; the bone of contention is one special part of Jonson's tragedy; see Marciniak (2008c) 347–360 and (in prep.).

The Settlements with the Stereotype of Cicero the Poet

Over the centuries many artists of the Word, like Petrarch, Erasmus, and Voltaire, recalled in the present paper, measured themselves, each and every one of them in his own way – *nota bene* at turning points of the civilization rooted in the Graeco-Roman tradition – with stereotyped thinking. As they were marking new ways of development for humankind, they were rendering the ancient masters like Cicero alive, important, and interesting again and again for new audiences. Paradoxically, however, the price for each such new rebirth, or better: a *Nachleben*, as German classicists used to call it, proved high. The possibility to enter into dialogue with a master from ancient times brought also the possibility of later rejecting this master as an authority and – in the future – of forgetting him completely. That is how, among others, the *Cicerodämmerung*, the 'Twilight of the Arpinate', began. Voltaire probably sensed this paradox and he was trying to prevent it from materializing, as he called out to one of his contemporaries: «*aimez Cicéron de tout votre coeur / love Cicero with your whole heart*» (Best. 2486, ed. 1975).[66] The twilight continued, however, to set in irrevocably and Voltaire's rejection of the stereotype of Cicero the Poet was one of its many symptoms.

The deconstruction of the traditional vision of Classical Antiquity offers, however, many attractive opportunities. The scratches on the foundation of our culture permit us to notice phenomena that for our ancestors lay beyond the horizon of artistic and academic challenges. A new approach to Cicero the Poet resulted, in the field of literature, in a fascinating short story by Colombi that touched the problem of autocensorship of the authorities. In the field of the Classics, the perspectives are equally fascinating. Of course, this does not mean that we suddenly begin to praise Cicero the Poet, like Voltaire. However, we do stand a chance of throwing a fresh look at his verses and their evaluation. If we decide, for example, to set the stereotype aside and to analyze the critical voices of the Romans from the Arpinate's times anew, we will discover in the poetic activity of Cicero the Epic a serious political potential. For example, the mentions of his poem *Marius* contributed to the creation of a solemn atmosphere in the dialogue *De legibus* (1,1,2). Moreover, in reference to this very poem, an alleged descendant of Marius was trying to win Cicero's favours and his legal aid (Att. 12,49,2).

66 See Gartenschläger (1968) 41 (Gartenschläger quotes the letter after the edition of 1953–1965: Best. 3456 XVII,157), and Day (1965) 34 (on Voltaire's cult of Cicero).

Furthermore, Lucius Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus' suggestion that the exile of the Arpinate was caused by his poetry (Pis. 29,72), may lead us to some important observations hidden below the superficial stratum of irony, if we take into consideration the tension between Marcus Tullius and Pompeius in the context of the line *cedant arma togae* ...[67] – the subject of Piso's attack, and the image of Cicero as a 'Man of Gods', which emerges from his autobiographical epics and which the Romans were not to accept, at least not in his case.[68] What is more, the whole decade after the assaults by Piso – which in itself also proves that the poems of the Arpinate were a still actual theme in the *Forum Romanum*[69] – Cicero defended the line *cedant arma togae* ... from the attacks of Mark Antony in the *Second Philippic* (2,8,20), the very same that Juvenal would later evoke in the context of the line *o fortunatam natam*...

In addition, a careful overview of the sources permits us to state that Cicero the Poet was not subjected only to criticism and mockery. Some poems of the Arpinate, including the youthful ones, were in literary circulation for even several centuries after his death.[70] They were also the object of *aemulatio* by other poets, which might be interpreted as a form of recognition of Cicero's poetic achievements on the part of those artists.[71] Maybe we shall thus not discard the opinion of the Greek Plutarch that Cicero enjoyed fame as the best Orator *and* Poet of the Romans (Cic. 2,4), at a certain stage

67 Cf. also Byrne (1998) and Marciniak (2008c) 150–171.

68 For the studies leading into this direction see for example: Harrer (1928); Spaeth (1930/31); Alfonsi (1967); Hose (1995); and more recently, with references to the relation between Cicero's poetry and politics: Gee (2001); Dugan (2005); Kurczyk (2006); Hall (2009); van der Blom (2010); Gildenhard (2011). It is worth observing that the issues regarding Cicero's poetry have been a subject of more and more intensive studies in the last years, see for example: Chalkomatas (2007); Kubiak (2010); Knox (2011); Jakobi (2013); also in reference to other 'political' poets of Rome, as shown in the very interesting studies by Tatum (2011) and Kruschwitz (2014). See also Gee (2013a) and (2013b).

69 See also Cic. off. 1,22,77.

70 Cf. Ewbank (1933) 29.

71 Leaving the emperor Gordian (SHA *Gord.* 3,2) aside, as he is hardly rated among artists, see for example the *similia* collected by Soubiran in his precious edition of 1972. It should be observed that some of Cicero's verses might have inspired Virgil himself. Moreover, they do not seem worse then their *imitatio*, cf. for example (as far as *Marius*, presumably Cicero's best poem, is concerned) Ferrarino (1942) 20–25. Cf. also Ewbank (1933) 29; Axer (1984).

at least?[72] During his lifetime, Cicero undoubtedly triggered controversies with his poetry, though it seems they might have been caused by the political and self-laudatory context of Ciceronian epics. Later on, though, when the conflicts of Republican times had become history and poetic standards had undergone a change with the entrance onto the Roman literary scene of the Augustan poets, this criticism appears to have hit the aesthetic side of Ciceronian verses.[73]

However, it is worth stressing at this point, in reference to the critical sources mentioned in the present paper, that Quintilian, who condemns the line *o fortunatam natam*... precisely for aesthetic reasons, criticizes for the very same reasons a fragment of Cicero's letter in prose (*res mihi invisae visae sunt, Brute* [Quint. inst. 9,4,41]). Furthermore, a wider context of the remarks on Cicero the Poet by Tacitus and Martialis show that they were not delivered exclusively against Ciceronian verses. Tacitus also mocks the poetic activity by Caesar and Brutus, and where Martialis is concerned, the power of the stereotype of the Arpinate had made him a 'collateral victim' of the attacks on a satirist's acquaintance. But that's not all. As we well recall, Cicero is not the only targeted author in the famous passage of Seneca the Elder, which had become a reference point for all the subsequent mentions of the dichotomy between poetry and rhetoric. On the contrary – he is in 'elite' company.[74] Next to Virgil, who is laughed at because of his works in prose, its members are: Sallust, because of his speeches, and Plato for his apology of Socrates. And even Petrarch, though he did not concede the Arpinate the true gift of poetry, admitted in his letter to Homer in person (Petr. fam. 24,12) that Cicero and Virgil, in a certain sense, had become victims of their own ingenious talents, which had sentenced them to the endless comparison between their achievements.

72 Cf. a well-balanced opinion, basing on Plutarch's words, by Kumaniecki (1977) 409–410.

73 So, e.g., Harrer (1928) 88 and Kumaniecki (1977) 409–410.

74 Similarly, Cicero is in a company 'under fire' in the aforementioned dialogue *De ira* (3,37,5) by Seneca the Younger, where the Arpinate, mocked as a poet, is, however, in a better situation than his 'colleagues', because he is criticized for his 'minor' activity, while the others are assaulted for their main work (Ennius for poetry and Hortensius for speeches).

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The stereotype of Cicero the Poet is a part of our culture. Today nearly forgotten, it manifests itself at the least expected occasions – as for example in the first volume of Robert Harris' trilogy *Imperium*, where, at the very beginning of the novel, the writer evokes poetry as one of the aspects of Cicero's wide-ranging activity.[75] What is more, the stereotype reverberates thereafter in a review of this novel published by Ross Leckie, a writer as well, in "The Spectator". Leckie is not especially fond of Cicero and so he evokes – as it pleased the anti-Ciceronians for many centuries, when they got the chance to mock the great Arpinate – the verse *o fortunatam natam*..., in a translation which gives an even more unfavourable testimony to Ciceronian poetic skills than the original: "Rome was born a lucky city, / when I as consul wrote this ditty."[76]

It is our task (not to use the obsolete word of Latin etymology – 'mission') to take care that such ironic comments, ones based on the classical stereotype of Cicero the Poet, remain understandable. Because of our profession – as *nomen omen* classicists – we are to preserve the continuity of culture, a part of which is memory of the stereotypes of our ancestors. However, the preservation of shared heritage is not all. For it is exactly this memory that permits us – with full awareness and being free from stereotyped thinking – to face new challenges. Stereotypes are often disregarded or marginalized as a 'shameful' component of our past. Nonetheless, their potential for scholarship is extremely significant. Namely, studies into the reception of stereotypes enhances our awareness of how our forebears organized the world. Furthermore, the subsequent rebellion against given stereotypes testifies to what was important for them, and at which stages. Today, after the old clichés have lost their vitality, we can use them in a twofold manner. Firstly, we may carry out analyses of the reception-trail of those clichés to better understand the social, political, and cultural transformations underway in various epochs, like the birth of anthropocentrism in Petrarch's case, the Erasmian battle against the blind imitation of Cicero's style, or the role of ancient patterns in Voltaire's thought. Secondly, stereotypes focus our attention on the key problems of given issues, provided we do not satisfy ourselves with superficial conclusions, but rather dare deepen our analyses,

75 See Harris (2006) 3.

76 Cf. Leckie (2006); cf. also Beard (2009) 169.

trying to discover the sources of the clichés. It may turn out, for example, that a Roman politician composed poetry not so much for his entertainment only, as for his well-thought-out political campaign, in the full awareness of the fact known to all of us *philologists*, too – namely, that in the end, military force will yield to the power of the Word. Cicero the Poet still has many secrets to be revealed.

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