

## CICERO IN THE WORKS OF SENECA *PHILOSOPHUS*

DANIEL G. GAMBET

*Allentown College of St. Francis de Sales*

Cicero's reputation among his contemporaries has been thoroughly investigated, and the high respect generally accorded him after the time of Quintilian is a commonplace of Roman literary history.<sup>1</sup> Much less is known about his reputation in the intervening generations. What, for instance, did the typically well-educated Roman of Julio-Claudian times think of Cicero? The question is not too easily answered, since most writers of the period leave us only fragmentary evidence of their views. One notable exception is Seneca *Philosophus*, whose works offer a rich and varied mine of *testimonia* for the orator. Given Seneca's stature, this evidence merits a more careful investigation than it has yet received.<sup>2</sup> Besides, Seneca's views very often reflect

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<sup>2</sup> A. Bourguéry, *Sénèque prosateur* (Paris 1922), is comprehensive but undocumented and relatively undetailed. The following works give only summary and incidental treatment to a very few aspects of the subject: A. Gercke, *Seneca Studien* (Leipzig 1895); T. Zielinski, *Cicero im Wandel der Jahrhunderte* (3rd ed., Leipzig 1912); J. Carcopino, *Cicero: the Secrets of his Correspondence*, trans. by O. E. Lorimer (New Haven 1951) 2 vols.; B. Weil, *2000 Jahre Cicero* (Zurich 1962); H. Cancik, *Untersuchungen zu Senecas Epistulae Morales* (Hildesheim 1967); W. Richter, "Das Cicerobild der römischen Kaiserzeit", in *Cicero ein Mensch seiner Zeit*, ed. G. Radke (Berlin 1968) 161-97. The last named monograph is, in my view, occasionally (see below, notes 19 and 44) marked by unnecessarily pejorative interpretations of the evidence. W. A. Alexander virtually ignores Cicero while investigating the Senecan *testimonia* for Caesar, Cato, Pompey and others in some detail: cf. "Julius Caesar in the Pages of Seneca the Philosopher," *Trans. Royal Soc. of Canada* 35 (1941) Sec. II, 15-28; "Cato of Utica in the Works of Seneca *Philosophus*," *ib.* 40 (1946) Sec. II, 58-74; "Seneca the Philosopher in Account with Roman History," *ib.* 41 (1947) Sec. II, 23-46; and "References to Pompey in Seneca's Prose," *ib.* 42 (1948) Sec. II, 13-30.

those of his contemporaries, and studying them provides an opportunity for cursory review of certain predominant trends in Cicero's *Fortleben* in the years from Tiberius to Nero.<sup>3</sup>

One intriguing generalization may be permitted at the outset: Seneca's evidence for Cicero is characterized at almost every turn by the same inconsistency which marked its author's life. This paper, it is hoped, will demonstrate that the former inconsistency is much less baffling than the latter.

Since Seneca nowhere undertakes a systematic portrait of Cicero, the evidence consists largely of incidental references scattered throughout his works. These may be most conveniently grouped for study under five headings: Seneca's view of Cicero as a philosopher, as a literary figure, as a prose stylist, as a statesman, and as a man.

Seneca holds (*Ep.* 100) that content is much more important than form in philosophical writing<sup>4</sup> and observes that inferior philosophical thought is often articulated in quite superior literary style. This distinction makes it possible for him to admire the form of Cicero's philosophical writings while ignoring their content completely. It is clear that Seneca knows Cicero's philosophical works;<sup>5</sup> yet never once does he cite them, even when his subject matter offers an obvious opportunity, as in his frequent disquisitions on old age and friendship.<sup>6</sup> Although he appeals to Cicero's authority for the value of the study of philosophy (*Ep.* 17.2),<sup>7</sup> he repeatedly bypasses the orator in favor of his more original predecessors, e.g., Chrysippus, Epicurus, and

<sup>3</sup> These trends have been explored by the author in *Cicero's Reputation from 43 B.C. to A.D. 79* (Univ. of Penna. diss., microfilm, 1963), and all statements concerning them made in this paper are based on conclusions drawn there.

<sup>4</sup> This distinction runs as a major theme throughout all of *Ep.* 100 and is particularly clear in such statements as (100.1): *oblitus de philosopho agi compositionem eius accusas*. All citations from Seneca's letters in this paper are from *L. Annaei Senecae: ad Lucilium epistulae morales*, ed. L. D. Reynolds in *OCT* (Oxford 1965) 2 vols.; citations of Seneca's other works are from the Loeb edition.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Ep.* 100.9, where he credits Cicero with having composed almost as many philosophical treatises as Papirius Fabianus.

<sup>6</sup> Thus, too, he cites (*Ep.* 95.45) M. Brutus' *Περὶ καθήκοντος* where one might have expected Cicero's *de officiis*.

<sup>7</sup> The exact citation is: . . . *quemadmodum et in maximis, ut Ciceronis utar verbo, opituletur (philosophia) <et> in minima descendat*. The passage is not extant but is listed as fr. 91 of Cicero's lost philosophical works in *M. Tulli Ciceronis: opera quae supersunt omnia*, ed. J. G. Baier and C. L. Kayser (Leipzig 1862-69) 11, p. 66.

Posidonius, when quoting illustrative statements of philosophical principles. In one instance (*Ep.* 108.30) he is even directly critical of Cicero's philosophical thought, remarking that a philosopher who reads the *de republica* must be amazed that *contra iustitiam dici tam multa potuisse*.<sup>8</sup>

This unfavorable judgment of Cicero the philosopher ought not to surprise us, since it is repeated almost unanimously by Seneca's contemporaries<sup>9</sup> and has been confirmed by posterity. Besides, Cicero was simply too eclectic for Seneca: he was not an *actor*, i.e., a creative philosophical thinker, but an *interpres*, i.e., one of those derivative philosophers whom Seneca disdains (*Ep.* 33.8) because *memoriam in alienis exercuerunt*.<sup>10</sup>

If Seneca has little appreciation for the content of Cicero's philosophical works, he has high praise for their form. As a philosophical prose stylist, he rates Cicero as *maximus* and ranks him as *primus* (ahead of Asinius Pollio, Livy, and Fabianus) among Roman writers (*Ep.* 100.9).<sup>11</sup> More significantly, he credits him with having furnished the Latin language with a philosophical vocabulary of its own: he cites (*Ep.* 58.6) Cicero's authority, for instance, for his own use of the term *essentia*<sup>12</sup> (calling him *auctorem locupletem*); he characterizes his translation of *cavillationes* for the Greek *sophismata* as *aptissimum* (*Ep.*

<sup>8</sup> Seneca may reflect here the influence of Didymus Chalcenterus' polemic against Cicero's *de republica* (cf. Amm. Marc. 22.16.16 and Suid. s.v. *Τράγκυλλος*). His disenchantment with Nero and strict adherence to the "regime tradition" (below, 000) may also have led him to judge as unjust the concept of kingship approved in the *de republica*. It seems most likely, however, that this criticism has specific reference to *Rep.* 3.8–28, in which Philus reluctantly (*ib.* 3.8) undertakes the defense of injustice to make more forceful Laelius' argument (*ib.* 3.32–48) that true government is impossible without justice. Cicero himself predicted such criticisms when he had Laelius say to the protesting Philus (*ib.* 3.8): . . . *id tibi . . . verendum est, si ea dixeris quae contra iustitiam dici solent, ne sic etiam sentire videare*.

<sup>9</sup> The lone dissent is in the *vir militaris*, Velleius Paterculus (2.66.5).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Att.* 12.52.3, where Cicero himself admits this charge: *ἀπόγραφα sunt; . . . verba tantum adfero, quibus abundo*.

<sup>11</sup> F. I. Merchant, "Seneca and His Theory of Style," *AJP* 26 (1905) 58, rightly insists that Seneca is here comparing the four writers on the basis of their philosophical prose styles only. Even he would not have included Fabianus in such exclusive company in a broader based ranking of styles.

<sup>12</sup> Actually, Cicero preferred *natura*, and *essentia* is not found in any of his extant philosophical works: cf. H. Merguet, *Lexicon zu den philosophischen Schriften Ciceros* (Jena 1887).

III.1; cf. Cic. *Acad.* 2.75); and he uses one additional philosophical term popularized by Cicero without mention of the orator, *convenientia* (*Ep.* 74.30; cf. Cic. *Fin.* 3.21).<sup>13</sup>

Seneca, then, is greatly taken with the style of Cicero's philosophical works but quite indifferent to their content. His distinction between matter and form explains the apparent inconsistency of this judgment. He alone among extant Julio-Claudian writers identifies the orator as the originator of a Latin philosophical idiom. This is certainly his most original, and perhaps most significant, *testimonium*.<sup>14</sup>

It is as a literary figure that Cicero is most abundantly and consistently praised by Seneca. He is variously described as . . . *Cicero . . . noster, a quo Romana eloquentia exiluit* (*Ep.* 40.11), *vir disertissimus* (*Ep.* 107.10; 118.1), one of those *pauca ingenia* who will weather the tides of time (*Ep.* 21.4 f.), *vir eloquentissimus* (*ap.* Gell. *NA* 12.4)<sup>15</sup> and *summus orator* (*ib.* 5). Elsewhere Seneca underscores Cicero's influence as a literary celebrity (*Ep.* 107.10): *Nomen Attici perire Ciceronis epistulae non sinunt*;<sup>16</sup> he cites Cicero's translation of Cleanthes' Stoic hymn as a precedent to justify his own;<sup>17</sup> and in describing the orator

<sup>13</sup> Seneca, however, seems to prefer Posidonius' *ethologian*.

<sup>14</sup> In an earlier period Cornelius Nepos had remarked (*de hist.*, *ap.* Anon. *Cod. Gud.* 278; cf. *Cornelii Nepotis quae exstant*, ed. H. Malcovati [Milan 1934] 251, fr. 57): *philosophiam ante eum incomptam Latinam sua conformavit oratione*. No contemporary of Seneca, however, makes any mention of Cicero's contribution in this area.

<sup>15</sup> Seneca's literary criticisms of Cicero reported by Gellius in *NA* 12.3–10 are generally ascribed to the lost Book 22 of his *Epistulae*: cf. Reynolds (above, note 4) I.v. and *The Medieval Tradition of Seneca's Letters* (Oxford 1965) 17, where the arrangement of books is analyzed. Reynolds maintains that there was a third volume of *Epistulae* and that Book 22 was part of it. He also insists (above, note 4, I.v., *ad* note 2) that the citations from Gellius are genuine.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Suetonius (*Tib.* 7 and *Gram.* 16): . . . *Attici . . . ad quem sunt Ciceronis epistulae*; and Pliny the Elder (*Nat. Hist.* 35.11), who speaks of Atticus as *ille Ciceronis*. Special meaning attaches to this *testimonium*, since Seneca is promising to do for Lucilius precisely what he says Cicero did for Atticus.

<sup>17</sup> The pertinent passage is as follows: *Et sic adloquamur Iovem, cuius gubernaculo moles ista derigitur, quemadmodum Cleanthes noster versibus disertissimis adloquitur, quos mihi in nostrum sermonem mutuare permittitur Ciceronis, disertissimi viri, exemplo. Si placuerint, boni consules; si displicuerint, scies me in hoc secutum Ciceronis exemplum*. There is a copious literature on whether Seneca presents here his own translation or Cicero's. Cf. J. Tolkiehn, "Ein Cicerofragment beim Philosophen Seneca," *WKP* 22 (1905) 555–58, who argues that the translation must be Cicero's, since it would be senseless for Seneca to tell Lucilius to hold him responsible for it, if it weren't. In my view, Seneca is assigning responsibility to Cicero not for the translation itself but for the precedent

Caecina<sup>18</sup> as *facundum virum qui habuisset aliquando in eloquentia nomen, nisi illum Ciceronis umbra pressisset*, he pays tribute to Cicero's unrivaled *principium eloquentiae* during Caecina's *floruit*.

Seneca's wide acquaintance with the works of Cicero constitutes in itself a significant *testimonium*. The range of that acquaintance is evident from the citations in this paper. Two not mentioned elsewhere may be noted here. In the first (*Ep.* 108.30-34), Seneca uses the *de republica* to demonstrate how various types of scholars are wont to display different interests in reading the same book.<sup>19</sup> In the second, he appeals to the example of Cicero in urging Lucilius not to waste valuable time reading the lyric poets: *Negat Cicero, si duplicetur sibi aetas, habiturum se tempus quo legat lyricos*.<sup>20</sup> Verbal reminiscence and paraphrase also occur with relative frequency: Seneca's teaching (*Ep.* 48.2) that true friends must share each other's sorrows as well as joys closely parallels *Fin.* 1.67; his (*Ep.* 114.1) *talis hominibus fuit oratio qualis vita* is reminiscent of *Tusc.* 5.47; and *Tranq.* 11.4 is simply a paraphrase of *Mil.* 92, as Seneca himself attests. Finally, his use of nautical metaphors to describe Cicero's efforts to save the Republic (*de brevitate vitae* 5.1) may well be a deliberate reminiscence of Cicero's frequent description of himself as the "pilot of the ship of state." A comprehensive analysis of Seneca's citations from Cicero reveals that no portion of the orator's works is referred to more often than the correspondence with Atticus. One also senses a certain pedantic eagerness on Seneca's part in citing these letters. I submit that this

involved in translating the sacred words of Cleanthes. This is certainly a more comfortable reading of the passage than Tolkhiehn's. Besides, in his hypothesis, Seneca would be asking Lucilius to approve the translation of a poet whose verses he has elsewhere at least implicitly criticized. The passage proves that Cicero did translate this hymn (probably, as Tolkhiehn suggests, in one of the lost sections of the *de fato*) and that Seneca had seen the translation. Whether he paraphrased it here and, if so, how closely, cannot, of course, be determined.

<sup>18</sup> Son of the Caecina defended by Cicero in 69 B.C.: cf. *RE* 3.1 (1897) 1237 f.

<sup>19</sup> Seneca cites *Rep.* 2.18 specifically in *Ep.* 108.30, but his other direct quotations in this section are apparently from the lost books of *Rep.* Cf. *M. Tulli Ciceronis: de re publica*, ed. K. Ziegler in *BT* (Leipzig 1964) 136, where they are listed together as *fr.* 7. Richter (above, note 2) 184 *ad* note 55, incorrectly cites this passage as evidence that Seneca disapproved of "Cicerone's philologische Interessen." Seneca is actually criticizing Cicero's readers' excessive interest in philology, which impedes their pursuit of philosophy.

<sup>20</sup> The reference here is to a non-extant work, probably the *Hortensius*. This is the view of L. Alfonsi, "Cicerone e i lirici", *RFIC* 38 (1960) 170-177.

eagerness derives from Seneca's desire to display his acquaintance with newly available source material and suggests a later publication date for the letters than that proposed by Carcopino,<sup>21</sup> viz., the principate of Augustus. In any event, it clearly calls into question Carcopino's opinion that the "... editors (of the letters to Atticus) would have bored everybody ...,"<sup>22</sup> if they had published them during the reign of Claudius or Nero.

Even Seneca's endorsement of Cicero's literary excellence is not totally unqualified. He seems to have had little taste for the orator's poetry (*de ira* 3.37.5; Gell. *NA* 12.5)<sup>23</sup> or for his somewhat notorious *urbanitas* (*Constant.* 17.3 to 18.5).<sup>24</sup> He shares the former criticism with his contemporaries<sup>25</sup> and with posterity, and the latter with his father<sup>26</sup> and Cato.<sup>27</sup> Cicero's "wit" clearly offended the Stoic sense of *gravitas*.

Seneca's high esteem for Cicero as a literary figure reflects the opinion current in the schools in which he had been trained. His familiarity with Cicero's works is also typical of his times and points to their popularity as objects of study in the Julio-Claudian schools. His two criticisms enhance rather than detract from his praise, since they give assurance that his critical faculty remained fully operative in his evaluation of Cicero's literary achievement. Seneca was not, like so many of his contemporaries, merely repeating in mechanical fashion stock praises he had learned in school.

<sup>21</sup> Carcopino, (above, note 2) 1, p. 36, and *passim*.

<sup>22</sup> Carcopino, 1, p. 34.

<sup>23</sup> The criticism is implicit in *de ira*. In contending that one need not necessarily become the enemy of all who scorn his literary talents, Seneca offers this argument: "... *Cicero, si derideres carmina eius, inimicus esset*. It is somewhat more explicit in the excerpt from Gellius: Seneca sarcastically (and absurdly) suggests that Cicero's fondness for Ennius' archaic poetry may result from his wish that *suos versus videri bonos*.

<sup>24</sup> Seneca criticizes in particular Cicero's handling of Vatinius (*Constant.* 18.5), characterizing his wit in this case at least implicitly as *contumelia* proceeding from one who was *procax*, *superbus*, and *iniuriosus* (*ib.* 18.5).

<sup>25</sup> See, for example, Cassius Severus' criticism preserved in Sen. *Contr.* 3 *praef.* 8. Compare also Iuv. 10.124 and Quint. *Inst.* 11.1.24.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Sen. *Contr.* 7.3.9.

<sup>27</sup> Cato's bitter comment on Cicero's *urbanitas* during Murena's trial ("What a funny consul we have, my friends!") is recorded in Plut. *Comparison of Demosthenes and Cicero* 1.5. Macrobius (*Sat.* 2.1.12) gives evidence that this criticism was common: "... *quis item nescit consularem eum scurram ab inimicis appellari solitum? quod in oratione etiam sua Vatinius posuit*. Cicero professed not to be annoyed by it (*Fam.* 9.20.1).

Seneca, as we have seen earlier, gives unqualified approval to Cicero's philosophical and oratorical styles, but his overall evaluation of Cicero as a prose stylist is somewhat less unequivocal. On the one hand he praises the deliberate (*gradarius*)<sup>28</sup> character of Cicero's style as its chief excellence (Ep. 40.11) and commends its rhythm (Ep. 110.7): *Lege Ciceronem: compositio eius una est, pedem curvat lenta et sine infamia mollis . . . omnia apud Ciceronem desinunt, apud Pollionem cadunt . . .* Yet elsewhere (Ep. 114.16) we find this criticism: *Quid illa in exitu lenta, qualis Ciceronis est, devexa et molliter detinens nec aliter quam solet ad morem suum pedemque respondens?* Seneca objects here to constant repetition of the same *clausulae*, which in *vanum exeunt, et sine effectu nihil amplius quam sonant*. We know from Gellius (NA 12.4, 7) that he also criticized Cicero's fondness for archaisms, specifically his use of *suaviloquens* and *breviloquentiam* (Rep. 5.9.11) and his approving citation of certain archaic verses of Ennius (Brut. 58).

Seneca himself resolves the apparent conflict in these references (Ep. 114.13): . . . *oratio certam regulam non habet: consuetudo illam civitatis, quae numquam in eodem diu stetit, versat*. He applies this principle to his criticism of Cicero's archaisms in one of the excerpts preserved in Gellius (NA 12.7): *Non fuit . . . Ciceronis hoc vitium sed temporis; necesse erat haec dici, cum illa legerentur*. Both citations are good illustrations of what Bourgéry calls Seneca's "evolutionist" theory of style.<sup>29</sup> Canons of style are not immutable: they evolve. As a result, certain characteristics of Cicero's style regarded as embellishments in his own day, e.g., archaisms and repetitive *clausulae*, had come to be looked upon as blemishes in Julio-Claudian times. Thus Seneca discouraged Nero and his other pupils from the study of Cicero and the Republican orators in general, as Suetonius and Quintilian

<sup>28</sup> Cf. ThLL 6.2, s.v. *gradarius*, where this passage is specifically cited for the meaning *cuius oratio gradatim . . . progrediebatur*. John C. Rolfe, *Cicero and his Influence* (Boston 1923) 67 f., suggests that Seneca here "... may be contrasting his (Cicero's) delivery with that of the vehement declaimers of his own day."

<sup>29</sup> Bourgéry (above, note 2) 88. Merchant (above, note 11) 45, takes essentially the same position: "Even the assignment of a usage (for Seneca) is a requirement resulting from the nature of speech, which does not have one fixed rule, but changes with the age." Seneca himself was of course a victim of his own theory of style: cf. Quint. Inst. 10.1.125-30 and H. F. Culver, "Quintilian's Condemnation of Seneca," CB 44 (1967) 26-28.

attest.<sup>30</sup> While both sources suggest that he did so entirely out of jealousy toward the *veteres oratores*, it seems more likely that he was at least partially motivated by his belief in a continuous evolution of style.

In Seneca's view, Cicero's general excellence as a prose stylist could not be challenged, but certain features of his style were outdated. Thus he did not himself imitate Cicero's style, nor would he propose it for imitation by others. This policy apparently enjoyed considerable popularity in the schools of the period A.D. 40–65, where the evidence points to a perceptible move away from Cicero as a stylistic model.

Seneca's contemporaries, and the writers of the Julio-Claudian period in general, had a stereotyped and somewhat limited view of Cicero's political career. This stemmed from their training in the rhetorical schools. Their view of Cicero the statesman was the schools' view. The schools portrayed him as the great orator who saved Rome from Catiline in 63 B.C., was exiled, and, twenty years later, attempted to save the Republic again through his *Philippics*, only to meet with proscription and death. One might expect to find this same image reflected in the writings of Seneca. Such is not entirely the case.

Seneca does see 63 B.C. as the apogee of Cicero's political career. He declares him *servator rei publicae* for his handling of Catiline and observes that his death might have been happy had it occurred before the Civil War (*Consolatio ad Marciam* 20.5). He condemns (*Ben.* 5.17.2) Rome's ingratitude in having exiled the orator after a consulship which was, to quote Seneca's grudging compliment (*de brevitate vitae* 5.1), *non sine causa sed sine fine laudatum*.<sup>31</sup> He makes one brief reference (*de ira* 2.2.3) to *Clodio Ciceronem expellenti* and mentions Cicero's death three times: once as an example of instances *ubi bonorum exitus mali sunt* (*Tranq.* 16.1); again in a reference (*de ira* 2.2.3) to

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Suet. *Ner.* 52: (*Neronem avertit*) *a cognitione veterum oratorum Seneca praeceptor, quo diutius in admiratione sui detineret*; and Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.126: . . . (*Senecam*) *potioribus praeferri non sinebam, quos ille non destiterat incessere, cum diversi sibi conscius generis placere se in dicendo posse iis, quibus illi placent, diffideret*.

<sup>31</sup> Seneca, like certain more modern critics, seems to forget that Cicero's orations, which posterity reads and studies in close sequence, were actually delivered over a long period of time to a variety of audiences and that Cicero often enough praises his consulship primarily in self-defense against the attacks of Antony.



*Antonio occidenti* (*Ciceronem*); and finally in deploring his murder at the hands of a *cliens* (*Tranq.* 16,1).

Cicero's consulship, exile, and death were all favorite themes of the Imperial rhetoricians, and Seneca in using them is being faithful to the schools' image of the orator.<sup>32</sup> Julio-Claudian declaimers also credited Cicero time and again with leadership of the Republican cause in the Civil War and extolled his *Philippics* as the last great swan song of Republican resistance. Seneca, however, fails to mention the *Philippics* even once and such references as he does make to Cicero's political activity in the Civil War years portray him only as a passive witness at the disintegration of the Republic, a helpless spectator at *tantum Catilinarum* (*Consolatio ad Marciam* 20,5), whose attempts to preserve the state were totally ineffective (*de brevitae vitae* 5,1).<sup>33</sup>

Seneca, then, clearly minimizes Cicero's efforts against Antony. In so doing he is departing from the rhetorical school stereotype, to which he otherwise remains faithful. Several explanations suggest themselves. Seneca, in the first place, is not a systematic historian: as Alexander has pointed out,<sup>34</sup> he uses historical events only to illustrate moral theses. Thus, if his subject matter never afforded him an occasion to discuss Cicero's role in the Civil War, we might attribute the absence of favorable *testimonia* to a simple lack of opportunity. Our evidence, of course, clearly contradicts this hypothesis. Consequently, we must conclude that Seneca's departure from the schools' image of Cicero in this instance is deliberate. A second explanation has more merit: as Alexander has also shown,<sup>35</sup> Seneca subscribed to the "regime tradition's" flattering and highly idealized image of Augustus. He may well have been unwilling to tarnish that image by any unnecessary reminders of Augustus' faulty judgment of Antony. A third explanation has greatest appeal: Seneca could not praise Cicero as the defender of the Republic *in extremis* without dimming the

<sup>32</sup> So faithful in fact that he does not go beyond the schools' image even when he has the opportunity, e.g., his treatment of Marcellus' exile and recall (*Helv.* 9.6-8), where Cicero's role goes unmentioned.

<sup>33</sup> See below, p. 181, for the text of this citation.

<sup>34</sup> W. S. Alexander, (above, note 2) "Seneca in Account with Roman History," 45 f.

<sup>35</sup> Alexander, (above, note 2) "Julius Caesar in the Pages of Seneca the Philosopher," 28.

political glory of his personal superhero, Cato.<sup>36</sup> Thus he chooses Cato and actually transfers to him much of the very praise which the Imperial rhetoricians were wont to heap upon Cicero. According to Seneca's reading of Roman history (*Constant.* 2.2): *Neque enim Cato post libertatem vixit, nec libertas post Catonem*. The Republic, in his view, died with Cato, and not, as the rhetoricians had it, with Cicero: with Cato's death, *libertas emisit animam* (*Ep.* 95.72); while others supported either the Pompeian or Caesarian faction in the Civil War, Cato alone took the side of the Republic (*Ep.* 95.70).<sup>37</sup>

Three factors, then, seem chiefly operative in Seneca's evaluation of Cicero's political career: his adherence to the "regime tradition," which made him loathe to praise Cicero at Augustus' expense; his training in the Julio-Claudian schools, which led him to follow the standard declamatory themes where his own political creed or personal preferences were not at issue; and his hero-worship of *sanctus Cato*, which required him to exaggerate Cato's role in the Civil War to Cicero's detriment. These factors explain but scarcely excuse Seneca's inconsistency in praising Cicero's political activity in 63 and denigrating it in 43. His evaluation of Cicero's statesmanship does not do the orator full justice.

Finally, we must consider the evidence for Seneca's estimate of Cicero the man. The philosopher ranks him with the *optimi* along with Socrates and Cato (*Tranq.* 16.1) and credits him at least implicitly with the possession of *magnae virtutes* (*Ben.* 4.30.1 f.).<sup>38</sup> In Seneca's judgment, Cicero was a good man, but not perfect, for his character, when measured with a Stoic yardstick, was found wanting in several

<sup>36</sup> This same bias seems operative in his interpretation of at least one pre-Civil War event, the *Bona Dea* trial of Clodius. Seneca's narrative cites Cato's testimony against Clodius (for which Seneca is our sole witness), but not Cicero's. He censures both men for tolerating Clodius' bribery of jurors during the trial and quotes *Att.* 16.1 to describe it. Seneca is clearly both heir of and contributor to the "Cato legend," a point thoroughly developed by Alexander, (above, note 2) "Cato of Utica in the Works of Seneca *Philosophus*," 59-74.

<sup>37</sup> This is a relatively common theme in Seneca: cf. *Ep.* 14.12; 104.30 f., 33.

<sup>38</sup> The pertinent text (*Ben.* 4.30.1) is as follows: *Sacra est magnarum virtutum memoria, et esse plures bonos iuvat, si gratia bonorum non cum ipsis cadit. Ciceronem filium quae res consulem fecit nisi pater?* Seneca's other preserved reference to Marcus *filius* is somewhat more complimentary: cf. *Clem.* 1.10.1, where he refers to the use Augustus made of young Cicero's talents and includes him in the general characterization *quidquid floris erat in civitate*.

important respects. He was, in the first place, too preoccupied with the vagaries of political fortune. Thus Seneca writes to Lucilius (*Ep.* 118.1): *Itaque in antecessum dabo nec faciam quod Cicero, vir disertissimus, facere Atticum iubet, ut etiam "si rem nullam habebit, quod in buccam venerit scribat."*<sup>39</sup>

Then, after listing several examples of political gossip gleaned from Cicero's letters, he concludes with this observation (*ib.* 2 f.): *Sua satius est mala quam aliena tractare, se excutere et videre quam multarum rerum candidatus sit, et non suffragari. Hoc est, mi Lucili, egregium, hoc securum ac liberum, nihil petere et tota fortunae comitia transire.* More fundamentally, Cicero is guilty of the Stoic *crimen pessimum* of inconstancy; he is the very opposite of the Stoic *sapiens* because he was unable in his lifetime to stand *supra fortunam* (*de brevitate vitae* 5.1-3):

M. Cicero inter Catilinas, Clodios iactatus Pompeiosque et Crassos, partim manifestos inimicos, partim dubios amicos, dum fluctuatur cum re publica et illam pessum euntem tenet, novissime abductus, nec secundis rebus quietus nec adversarum patiens,<sup>40</sup> quotiens ipsum consulatum suum non sine causa sed sine fine laudatum detestatur!<sup>41</sup> (2) Quam flebiles voces exprimit in quadam ad Atticum epistula<sup>42</sup> iam victo patre Pompeio, adhuc filio in Hispania fracta arma refovente! "Quid agam?", inquit, "hic, quaeris? Moror in Tusculano meo semiliber." Alia deinceps adicit, quibus et priorem aetatem complorat et de praesenti queritur et de futura desperat. (3) Semiliberum se dixit Cicero: at me hercules numquam sapiens in tam humile nomen procedet, numquam semiliber erit,

<sup>39</sup> Cf. *Att.* 1.12.4.

<sup>40</sup> Compare Asinius Pollio ap. Sen.  *Suas.* 6.24: *Utinam moderatius secundas res et fortius adversas ferre potuisset!*

<sup>41</sup> Cf. J. D. Duff, *L. Annaei Senecae: Dialogorum libri X, XI, XII* (Cambridge 1915) note *ad loc.*: "I do not remember that Cicero, though he bitterly regretted the consequences, anywhere quite curses the glorious Nones of December: but he wrote to his brother from exile (1.3.1): *meus ille laudatus consulatus mihi te, patriam, fortunas eripuit.*"

<sup>42</sup> The text is not clear here. Some editors read *Axium* and ascribe this passage to a lost book of letters *Ad Q. Axium*: cf. *M. Tulli Ciceronis epistulae*, ed. W. S. Watt in OCT (Oxford 1958), vol. 3, where it is listed as *fr.* 6 of a *liber incertus* of letters to Axius. Others follow Lipsius' emendation *Atticum*. The passage as quoted can be found in no extant letter to Atticus, but it has been suggested that it may represent Seneca's paraphrase of *Att.* 13.31.1, where Cicero refers to himself as *semiliber*. This seems improbable, since the rest of Seneca's paraphrases in *de brevitate vitae* 5.1 f. have no relation whatever to *Att.* 13.31.1.

integrae semper libertatis et solidae, solutus et sui iuris et altior ceteris. Quid enim supra eum potest esse, qui supra fortunam est?

Surely Cicero's lamentations from Thessalonica in 58 B.C. kept Seneca from including him in his list of celebrated Romans who bore exile with exemplary fortitude (*Ep.* 24.4 f.).

Seneca is of course not alone in Imperial times in underscoring Cicero's lack of *constantia*. Livy, Asinius Pollio, and Julius Bassus all point to the same failing.<sup>43</sup> Laistner suggests that Livy's criticism, like Seneca's, derives chiefly from his Stoic idealism.<sup>44</sup> The latter two writers are probably under the influence of the so-called *Cicerokarikatur*, a tradition prejudicial to Cicero which originated with the *Invectiva in Ciceronem*.<sup>45</sup> Its clearest trace in the evidence for Cicero in the first one hundred years after his death is this charge of inconstancy.

Quite predictably, Seneca's derogation of Cicero's inconstancy is implicitly contrasted throughout his works with his admiration for Cato's Stoic fortitude. In one instance he asks (*Ep.* 71.12): *Quidni ille (Cato) mutationem rei publicae forti et aequo pateretur animo?*; and Cato's constancy in the face of political adversity and death is one of his favorite themes (*Ep.* 24.6-8; 95.69-72; 104.30-33).<sup>46</sup> Seneca's unwillingness to follow the lead of the rhetorical schools in praising Cicero's fortitude at the hour of death gives added point to this contrast.

This, then, is Seneca's opinion of Cicero as a man: his character is praiseworthy, but not perfect; he is a good man, but an imperfect Stoic; he is, in short, Cicero, not Cato.

What did Seneca think of Cicero? He regarded him as a superb

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Livy *ap.* Sen. *Suas.* 6.22: . . . *omnium adversorum nihil ut viro dignum erat tulit (Cicero) praeter mortem*; Julius Bassus, *ap.* Sen. *Contr.* 2.4.4: *Nemo sine vitio est: . . . in Cicerone constantia*; for Asinius Pollio, see above, note 40.

<sup>44</sup> M. L. W. Laistner, *Greater Roman Historians* (Berkeley 1947) 74.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. T. Zielinski (above, note 2). Zielinski's article, "Die Cicerokarikatur im Altertum," *Festschrift zum 25 jaehrigen Stiftungsfest des hist.-phil. Vereines der Un. Muenchen*, 14-20, was not available to the author.

<sup>46</sup> Each of these citations constitutes a very artificial declamatory paean to Cato of the type which Seneca disdains in the case of Cicero (*de ira* 2.2.3 and 2.3.4): *Saepe Clodio Ciceronem expellenti et Antonio occidenti videmur irasci . . . Hanc iram non voco, motum animi rationi parentem*. Richter (above, note 2) 184, reads *de ira* 2.2.3 out of context as evidence that Seneca ". . . bekennt seine leidenschaftliche Parteinahme für Cicero gegen Clodius und Antonius."

prose stylist (if outdated in some respects), an incomparable orator, and a literary figure of the highest distinction—all views typical of the age in which Seneca lived. He apparently read more widely in Cicero than did most of his contemporaries, and he is unique in our sources for his period in seeing the orator as the originator of a Latin philosophical prose idiom. Like most Julio-Claudian writers, he judged that Cicero saved Rome in 63; but he denied him any credit for his political activity after 63, an opinion decidedly atypical of Seneca's times and unfair to Cicero. He regarded him not as a philosopher but as a derivative of other philosophers. Finally, he found Cicero lacking in Stoic wisdom and therefore an imperfect man.

In the Senecan hierarchy of values, of course, the last two qualifications are the most important: the only really worthwhile man is the combination of true philosopher and Stoic *sapiens*. Cato, *cuius . . . placuit et vita et oratio* (*Ep.* 11.10), is both. Cicero, in Seneca's view, is neither. His *oratio* pleases, but his *vita* does not.

If one considers Seneca's *testimonia* in the broader perspective of all the evidence for Cicero from the Julio-Claudian period, two conclusions are immediately apparent: Seneca thought more deeply and more keenly about Cicero than most of his contemporaries; but his fundamentally unfavorable judgment of the orator is clearly at odds with the majority opinion of his time.