

BOOK REVIEW

Reading Republican Oratory: Reconstructions, Contexts, Receptions. CHRISTA GRAY, ANDREA BALBO, RICHARD M.A. MARSHALL, and CATHERINE E.W. STEEL, eds. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018. Pp. 366. Hardback, \$105.00. ISBN 978-0-19-878820-1.

This new edited volume is the latest product of the Fragments of Republican Roman Orators (FRRO) project, funded by the European Research Council. The volume, like the project itself, seeks to increase and deepen our understanding of the world of republican oratory, and excludes Cicero's speeches in the hope of turning the spotlight onto other, more obscure figures. The remains of republican oratory (absent Cicero) which survive to the present day are only the tip of the iceberg. We know oratory was an essential and ubiquitous feature of public life in Rome, but reconstruction of the particulars is a challenge. Who spoke, when and where they spoke, what they said, and the environment in which they said it are all important considerations, but difficult (if not impossible) to answer with any certainty. Before this project, Malcovati's edition of fragments was the main resource available for scholars of republican oratory. In this volume, several authors reflect on what kind of material was left out by Malcovati, and on the limits of collecting fragments as a method of investigating republican oratory.

These papers originated with a conference organized in Turin in 2015 by Catherine Steel and Andrea Balbo, and approach the topic of republican oratory from many different angles. Some interpret and contextualize surviving fragments of real speeches published in the republican period; some turn their attention instead to the authors who transmit those fragments, offering analysis of what those authors were up to and how that might have shaped the fragments they've given us. Dugan, in his playful chapter on Gaius Titius, uses "netting the wolf-fish" as a sort of allegory for the whole enterprise. The volume is not a broad introduction to "reading republican oratory," but a collection of specific essays on various specific pieces of evidence for republican oratory – on the tips of various icebergs, so to speak. Each paper will no doubt be a useful resource to scholars who specialize

in its particular subject. Most do not seem to be aimed at more general audiences; the rationale behind particular interpretive moves or attempts at reconstruction may be familiar to specialists, but is not spelled out in many of these papers.

There are eighteen papers in total, and I do want to call attention to some papers in the volume which particularly stood out to me. The papers on Fulvia and Cornelia at the end of the volume (by Bill Gladhill and Judith Hallett respectively) were a welcome inclusion, and offered excellent test cases for what constitutes republican oratory. Both women can be said to survive, after all, as “fragmentary orators” in a certain sense. Earlier in the volume, S. J. Lawrence offers a fascinating analysis of the relationship between *eloquentia* and *potentia* in Valerius Maximus’ *exempla*. Where others have seen a straightforward collage of positive examples of the “power” of eloquence, Lawrence sees subtlety and strategy, an artful presentation of *exempla* that makes them seem increasingly sinister, hinting at a “dark side” of republican oratory. The following chapter on Cassius Dio, by Christopher Burden-Stevens, offers a similarly thoughtful reevaluation of Dio as a reporter on republican oratory. Dio, he argues, mined Cicero’s extant speeches for stylistic and historical details to bring verisimilitude and detail to the speeches he invented and put in the mouths of Cicero, Gabinius, Catulus, and others. Those speeches are certainly not fragments in the traditional sense, and their relation (if any) to the orations which were really delivered at these moments is unclear, but they may nevertheless be more “accurate” than has usually been thought. Finally, Anthony Corbeill takes up the task of reconstructing Clodius’ contional speech in 56 BCE “*de haruspicum responsis*,” to which Cicero’s oration of the same name responds. The result is not only amusing but edifying. It allows Corbeill to address and interpret a kind of evidence which lies outside Malcovati’s purview, but nevertheless has much to contribute to discussions of republican oratory.

In general, these papers encourage us to expand our idea of “what we have” surviving of the lost world of republican oratory, and offer experiments in new ways to generate insight from what remains.

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