



Universiteit
Leiden

The Netherlands

**Review of Gray, C.; Balbo, A.; Marshall, R.M.A.;
Steel, C.E.W. (2018) Reading republican oratory:
reconstructions, contexts, receptions**

Pieper, C.H.

Citation

Pieper, C. H. (2021). Review of Gray, C.; Balbo, A.; Marshall, R.M.A.; Steel, C.E.W. (2018) Reading republican oratory: reconstructions, contexts, receptions. *Rhetorica*, 39(3), 346-349.
doi:10.1525/rh.2021.39.3.346

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licensed under Article 25fa Copyright Act/Law \(Amendment Taverne\)](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3238801>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

The final chapter, "Boys Performing Women (and Men)," argues that glosses and commentary can help scholars of rhetoric understand the role of performance and delivery in the medieval classroom. Woods shows how manuscripts from a variety of periods and locations exhibit glosses that provide cues for delivering a particular speech, especially when given by a female character. For instance, students were reminded that Dido's speeches ought not to "lack catching of the breath, sighs, and sobs" (Woods 115) or should "be delivered with indignation" (Woods 118). Here, Woods most clearly delivers on the book's promise to investigate the connections between performance, emotion, and gender, tying together a variety of threads from earlier in her text. Likewise, this chapter contributes greatly to a strand of scholarship that has investigated the role of performed discourse in medieval pedagogy. Of particular interest is Wood's sustained consideration of "neuming," or the marking of speeches with musical notation (36-38; 80; 148).

While each of the chapters of *Weeping for Dido* is impressive, the book is more than the sum of its parts. Scholars of medieval rhetoric are likely familiar with Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria Nova*, a text famous for performing the very advice it recommends to its readers. Woods manages what can only be described as a Vinsaufian performance, as she engages in glossing practices that are both informed by and illuminate the book's subject matter. The book is also immensely readable. While the content is impeccably researched, I could easily see assigning *Weeping for Dido* to advanced undergraduates, as Woods has taken great care to define terms and explain unfamiliar stories and allusions. Woods also excels at connecting her findings to phenomena as diverse as modern research on memory and emotion, online roleplaying, and cosplay (146). Likewise, the author and editors deserve praise for the creative formatting that has been used to capture the form and function of medieval manuscript glosses and commentaries. Most importantly, *Weeping for Dido* speaks to the value of studying some of the most common elements of the medieval pedagogical tradition on their own terms; Woods makes a compelling case for why commentary, gloss, and classroom instruction deserve greater attention from historians of rhetoric.

JORDAN LOVERIDGE
Mount St. Mary's University

Christa Gray, Andrea Balbo, Richard M. A. Marshall, and Catherine E. W. Steel, eds., *Reading Republican Oratory: Reconstructions, Contexts, Receptions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. xiv + 366 pp. ISBN: 9780198788201

Studying antiquity means studying fragments, given the highly fragmented nature of our knowledge of its politics, art, and literature. Within

this mosaic of bits and pieces, texts that have been transmitted as fragments are a specifically challenging field of research, one that has attracted lots of scholarly attention in recent decades. Fragments of oratory are a specific case within this field: as the editors of the volume stress in their introduction, every speech we read as text is, in a way, already a fragment, as it is the textualized reduction of a complex form of communication that includes words and arguments. Also, the vocal qualities of the speaker, his performance and *auctoritas*—all these aspects are lost to our immediate perception, even if the full text of a speech is transmitted. And yet, the relevance of fragments for understanding the persuasiveness and impact of oratory in the ancient world is huge. Studying the fragments of Roman Republican oratory therefore means more than simply reading and interpreting the fragments and testimonies in Malcovati's *Oratorum Romanorum fragmenta*; in order to reconstruct their rhetorical potential, one needs a thorough understanding of their historical and cultural embeddedness, and a good grasp of the transmitting author's own agenda.

The volume under review, one of the preliminary proceedings that prepare the new edition of the *Fragments of the Roman Republican Orators (FRRO)* by Catherine Steel and her Glasgow team, has an outspoken interest in the fragments' context that goes beyond textual representation: it includes reconstructions of performance and sensory surrounding. It reflects on the relevance of the speaker's authority and on the changing cultural climate in the second and first centuries BCE, when the interaction with Greek culture increased in Rome and when rhetoric challenged the traditional political hierarchy based on *auctoritas* (Alexandra Eckert). The authors of the volume approach the methodological challenges in an admirably undogmatic way that includes traditional philology, historical studies, and modern theoretical approaches.

In this short review, I can merely offer some lines that run through the volume (by no means an exhaustive list). The volume is divided into two parts: transmission and reconstructions; but as happens with good conference volumes, important questions return throughout the book. A first important theme is the transmitting author, whose reasons for quoting or summarizing must be taken into account when studying (not only oratorical) fragments. S. J. Lawrence convincingly argues that Valerius Maximus' collection of *dicta* should not be understood as neutral; instead Valerius wants to demonstrate the limits of oratory in Republican times (which influences his choice of *exempla*). Armando Raschieri, in a rather additive overview, analyses the contexts in which Quintilian quotes Republican orators. Generally, one of the aims of studying fragmentary Republican oratory has always been to get beyond Cicero for our knowledge about what speaking in the Republic meant and looked like. But as Cicero's canonical status and his canon of orators in the *Brutus* were so powerful after his death, one has to be aware of the Ciceronian intertext that shapes later ancient readers' perceptions. Alfredo Casamento tackles the problem of how to deal with Cicero's legacy in his treatment of

Sulpicius Rufus and Cotta in the *Brutus*, whereas Ian Goh and Elena Torregaray Pagola look for genres not influenced by Cicero in which relevant information on Republican oratory can be found: Republican satire (Goh with a very dense, associative, and inspiring reading of Lucilius' book 2), and comedy (Torregaray Pagola with a close reading of a section of Plautus' *Amphitruo*). John Dugan contributes a methodologically far-reaching chapter for the case of Macrobius' quotation of the second-century BCE orator Gaius Titius. His working method has the potential to offer unexpected results for other fragments as well: based on New Historicism and Clifford Geertz' concept of thick descriptions, Dugan concludes that "the only Titius we will read will be that which has been digested . . . within Macrobius' corpus" (148). The less famous Titius receives pride of place in the shape of the volume, as his Macrobian fragment is treated in two chapters: Dugan's reading is the last in part 1 ("Transmission"), whereas Alberto Cavarzere's superb philological reconstruction of the fragment's possible meaning, which shows a deep knowledge of its juridical aspects, opens the second part.

A second major theme, partly related to the first, is the difference between authentic fragment and testimonium. "Authenticity" plays a role in a number of contributions; what is genuine? And can we make a distinction, especially in historiographical or biographical genres, between authentic fragments and invented speeches? Sometimes, speeches written by a historiographer offer hints at their "original" in the form of intertextuality and quotation. This citationality is shown by Christopher Burden-Strevens' reading of the debate on the *lex Gabinia* in Cassius Dio, in which the speeches of Pompey, Gabinius and Catulus are all indebted to Cicero's *De imperio Cn. Pompei*. Generally, many authors of the volume plead for enhancing our appreciation for testimonia when trying to understand fragmentary Republican oratory. Kit Morrell reconstructs how Cicero and Cato drifted apart after Cicero's exile because of the question of the legality of Clodius' laws; her chapter not only sheds new light on Cato's role in the politics of the era (without dealing with fragments of his), but also provides a fresh context for Cicero's (non-fragmentary) speech *De provinciis consularibus*. One of the highlights of the volume is Anthony Corbeill's detailed reconstruction of Clodius' speech on the *haruspicum responsa*, not least because he shows that careful reading even of Cicero's speeches can still offer surprises. He distils no less than seven fragments of Clodius' speech—which is not even mentioned in Malcovati's *ORF*—from Cicero's *De haruspicum responsis*, and even dares to print a hypothetical reconstruction of Clodius' full speech on six pages—a text I highly recommend to read with students in classes on Roman oratory. Finally, Cristina Rosillo-López, in her stimulating chapter, reminds us of the importance of informal conversation within Roman politics and shows that such conversations often transgressed the boundaries of the personal sphere and entered public discourse (e.g., in the case of *altercationes* that interrupted formal speeches and that show similarities with what we

know of informal verbal exchanges of political enemies on the street); she concludes that informal conversation had to be *learned* by Roman politicians and was part of their oratorical munition.

With Rosillo-López' chapter, we are at the boundaries of oratory; in this respect Judith Hallett makes the most daring step by suggesting that two fragments (transmitted in some medieval manuscripts of Nepos) of a letter by Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi, should be included into the corpus of fragmentary oratory because the letter engages in a political (and therefore public) debate, makes use of highly rhetorical language, could also have been read out aloud, and finally because of Cornelia's important role in preparing the oratorical careers of her sons. (I doubt, though, that this is enough to allow for inclusion in *FRRO*.) Hallett's contribution is one of three that explicitly treat the theme of women's oratory. Ben Gladhill reconstructs the importance of Fulvia's public laments for the development of Clodius' funeral and of the speeches held in the *contio* at that occasion. Cristina Pepe shows the broad range of funeral orations for deceased women, ranging from formal addresses at the *rostra*, as in the cases of Caesar's and Octavian's speeches in 67 and 51 BCE respectively, to private lament, as codified in the *Laudationes Turiae et Mordiae*. This variety within a single genre is also stressed by Hans Beck, who revisits the (men's) funeral orations and shows that, despite their topical features, they differed in tone and content depending on the circumstances, the family tradition, and the authority of the speaker.

A final major theme of the volume is the role of performance. After summarizing the prescriptions for *actio*, Jennifer Hilder's chapter on the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* suggests that the *Rhetorica* offers a glimpse of changing aesthetic expectations for performance at the beginning of the first century BCE, which moved away from the boastful rhetoric of tribunes like C. Gracchus towards a more restrained rhetoric for *populares* politicians. Andrea Balbo surveys what we know about the *actio* of orators other than Cicero in order to overcome the fixation on Cicero's personal preferences, which he advocated and which then became canonized. The chapter is very thorough and explicitly wants to solicit further research on the "grammar of *actio*" in antiquity; yet it cannot escape the "Ciceronian trap," as most of the evidence stems from Cicero's testimonies.

Whether or not one agrees with all arguments on offer in the volume, it is meant as a true compliment that it really is worthwhile reading it from beginning to end (which is not true for all edited volumes). It has sharpened my awareness for the problems of the material; and it offers methodological food for future research. In this sense, it is a perfect preparation for Steel's new edition of the fragments. It will be very interesting to see how the new *FRRO* will react to the challenges this volume has formulated.

CHRISTOPH PIEPER
Leiden University