THE WORLD OF TACITUS' *DIALOGUS DE ORATORIBUS*

Coming to terms with the rhetorical arts of antiquity necessarily illuminates our own sense of public discourse and the habits of speech to which it has led. Tacitus wrote the *Dialogus* at a time (*c.* 100 CE) when intense scrutiny of the history, the definitions, and the immediate relevance of public speech were all being challenged and refashioned by a host of vibrant intellects and ambitious practitioners. This book challenges the notion that Tacitus sought to explain the decline of oratory under the principate. Rather, from examination of the dynamics of argument in the dialogue and the underlying literary traditions there emerges a sophisticated consideration of *eloquentia* in the Roman empire. Tacitus emulates Cicero's legacy and challenges his position at the top of Rome's oratorical canon. He further shows that *eloquentia* is a means by which to compete with the power of the principate.

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Aesthetics and Empire in Ancient Rome

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Preface and acknowledgments

This book is about *eloquentia* ("skilled speech") in the world of imperial Rome's educated class. Tacitus wrote the *Dialogus* at a time (*c.* 100 CE) when intense scrutiny of the history, the definitions, and the immediate relevance of public speech were all being challenged and refashioned by a host of vibrant intellects and ambitious practitioners. Although empires and disciplines have waxed and waned, the interest in rhetoric has never abated. For this reason, coming to terms with the rhetorical arts of antiquity necessarily illuminates our own sense of public discourse and the habits of speech to which they have led. This book is written about a dialogue – to my mind (and bias) probably the great single dialogue of Roman antiquity. True enough, appeals to value have fallen out of fashion, yet my claim is meant to encourage rather than antagonize other-minded readers, whom I hope to shuttle over to the same viewpoint in the pages that follow. Like the present study, the *Dialogus* is also about the (still unfinished) project of understanding how speech shapes our views of the world and so gives us a place within it. That project necessarily begins by grappling with at least some of the texts of the Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition, and it is my hope that the reader has already lavished attention on Tacitus' *Dialogus* before turning to the pages that follow.

To be a professional scholar is to assume the inclination to write. The trappings of publication remain, after all, our primary avenue not only to cultural capital (to use the argot), but also, through the institutional employment that publishing brings, to actual capital. Yet it is easy to forget that observers and critics ultimately honor their texts. However ardent the hope or desire that recognition will accrue to a piece of scholarship, in some measure that expectation obscures as much as it drives the curious impulses to disclose the worlds of a text, object, place, or culture. Still, great works cannot stand without admiring critics. Whether the *Dialogus* merits the significance asserted here will of course fall to others to decide.

An author can only be assured of his or her motives. Mine arose upon reading Tacitus' *Dialogus* and finding there sophisticated musings on the literary and cultural dynamics that allowed *eloquentia* to change and flourish in the Roman Empire. Yet the complexity and the programmatic, even optimistic, dimensions, which I thought so apparent at a first reading, had rarely claimed the attention of others. Scholars today are ever eager to debunk received wisdom, but the now unfashionable tale of the decline of literature and culture in the Roman Empire is still clinging to life, at least in the case of Roman rhetoric. Perhaps our habits have outlived our understandings.

The (very) humble origins of this book were a response to my confusion over what the *Dialogus* really could mean, in a confused midterm paper for Susanna Braund's Survey of Latin Literature at Yale University. It was eventually midwifed into a dissertation prospectus, at Susanna's prompting and with the advice of David Quint. Chris Kraus became a third reader for the dissertation, and I could not have asked for a more generous and, when necessary, exacting trio of advisors. What remains of the dissertation are some key arguments in Chapters 3, 4, and 5. These have been thoroughly rewritten, and most of the book is new. A version of part of Chapter 2, van den Berg (2014), appeared in *Classical Quarterly* and is presented here with the journal's permission in slightly revised form.

A number of people assisted the project at different stages. My hope is that they will recognize the ways in which the book has been immeasurably improved by that critical generosity. Sander Goldberg has been a steady supporter and critic throughout the years; he is most often the reader I have had in mind when weighing the imperatives of saying something well and saying something useful. Elaine Fantham read the earliest material and rightly saw where the project would need to go. Two readers for Cambridge University Press – I imagine they're listed in these acknowledgments – made astute and fair observations that allowed an inchoate manuscript to become a book. Early on Antonia Syson made excellent suggestions; at a late stage, Marilyn Skinner and Chris Whitton read through the whole manuscript with keen eyes and experience.

A debt is likewise owed to those who have improved individual chapters or sections as well. Parts of Chapter 6 were presented at the University of Caen in 2007, and Benjamin Goldlust was especially helpful for discussing the French scholarship on Roman dialogue. Parts of Chapter 2 were presented to the participants at MACTE in spring 2011. An audience at UCLA generously endured a far too inchoate version of Chapter 7, and I can only hope that this last installment is some recompense for the first. Parts of

the Introduction got a hearing from audiences at the Five College Faculty Seminar in Classics and the New England Ancient Historians' Colloquium; they were also improved by the tenacious gaze of Rick Griffiths and Luca Grillo. It is, of course, a pleasure to have colleagues who take time from their obligations to offer assistance. Becky Sinos' love of Platonic dialogue has come in handy on more than one occasion. My research interns at Amherst College kept me on my toes through a number of semesters (in order): Alex Butensky, Kevin Wu, Sarah Ashman, and Sophie Padelford. Jessica McCutcheon showed me the dependence of a lengthy argument on a single missing word, and Curtis Dozier was especially helpful with all things Quintilian. Tom Keeline kindly discussed material on declamation and education. Steve Johnstone and Adam Geary kept me intellectually (and "literally") nourished at a time when jejune circumstance contributed little to the writing of a book. Colleagues at the Thesaurus Linguae Latinae in Munich helped resolve questions about technical vocabulary, and it was as a postdoctoral fellow in the former workplace of Alfred Gudeman, the American expat and devotee of the *Dialogus*, that I first came to appreciate how much a project on literary rhetoric had to lean on patient philology. Jill Harries and Serena Connolly lent their expertise for a number of details of legal procedure; their corrections are a reminder of the great peril that exists for the scholar of rhetoric who holds law and judicial procedure at arm's length. Discussion with Bruce Frier also made me revisit clothing and cramped spaces in the *Dialogus*. Pramit Chaudhuri read chapters very early on, and discussion with him about our (and others') books has been stimulating at every turn. Conversations with Yelena Baraz, Tony Corbeill, Kirk Freudenburg, Roy Gibson, Christopher Krebs, David Levene, Ayelet Haimson-Lushkov, John Oksanish, Irene Peirano, Andrew Riggsby, and Teresa Shawcross have provided great stimulation for thinking creatively and critically about rhetorical prose and Roman dialogue as literary genres. It is to Katie Edwards that I owe the greatest debt, as well as the promise of no swift repayment: *à toi le monde*. Rhetoric, for all its invention and innovation, derives from a tradition of inherited arguments and hackneyed claims, and at this late stage we can only say what our predecessors already have. It's fitting therefore to note that I would happily repay the generous assistance of others with almost anything, except with the responsibility for any lingering errors.

Abbreviations, texts, and translations

Except where indicated, the Latin text of Tacitus' *Dialogus* follows Roland Mayer's Cambridge "Green and Yellow" commentary, on the assumption that readers of this book who know Latin may also be reading along with Mayer's helpful edition. In this book, however, all foreign languages are translated, and translations are mine unless otherwise indicated. Exceptions to universal translation arise in the instances in which close paraphrasing in English immediately surrounds the citation in Latin, rendering a translation otiose, if not obtrusive.

Journal titles are abbreviated in the Bibliography according to the conventions of *L'Année philologique*. The abbreviations for Greek and Latin works are from P. G. W. Glare (ed.), *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford, 1996), when available, and otherwise from S. Hornblower, A. Spawforth, and E. Eidinow (eds.), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 4th edition (Oxford, 2012). Other abbreviations are listed below.

BNP	*Brill's New Pauly*. 22 vols. (1996–2011)
CIL	*Corpus inscriptionum Latinarum* (Berlin, 1863–)
HWRh	G. Ueding, et al. (eds.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*. 11 vols. (Tübingen, 1992–2014)
LPW	A. D. Leeman, H. Pinkster, J. Wisse, et al. (eds.), *M. Tullius Cicero: De oratore libri III*, 5 vols. (Heidelberg, 1981–2008)
LTVR	E. M. Steinby (ed.), *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae*, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1993–2000)
OGIS	W. Dittenberger (ed.), *Orientis Graecae inscriptiones selectae* (Leipzig, 1903–5)
OLD	P. G. W. Glare (ed.), *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford, 1996)
ORF	H. Malcovati (ed.), *Oratorum Romanorum fragmenta liberae rei publicae*, 4th edition, 2 vols. (Turin, 1976–9)
PIR^{I}	*Prosopographia Imperii Romani Saec. I. II. III*. 3 vols. (Berlin, 1897–8)

PIR^2	*Prosopographia Imperii Romani Saec. I. II. III.* 8 vols. (Berlin, 1933–)
ROL	*Remains of Old Latin. Volume I: Ennius and Caecilius.* (Cambridge, Mass., 1935)
TLL	*Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* (Munich, 1900–).[1]

[1] Citations of the *TLL* include the notation [author, year] to indicate the lemma's author and the publication date of the fascicle in which the lemma appears.