

## PUBLIC OPINION AND POLITICS IN THE LATE ROMAN REPUBLIC

This book investigates the working mechanisms of public opinion in Late Republican Rome as a part of informal politics. It explores the political interaction (and sometimes opposition) between the elite and the people through various means, such as rumours, gossip, political literature, popular verses and graffiti. It also proposes the existence of a public sphere in Late Republican Rome and analyses public opinion in that time as a system of control. By applying the spatial turn to politics, it becomes possible to study sociability and informal meetings where public opinion circulated. What emerges is a wider concept of the political participation of the people, not just restricted to voting or participating in the assemblies.

CRISTINA ROSILLO-LÓPEZ is Senior Lecturer in Ancient History at the Universidad Pablo de Olavide, Spain. Her first book, *La corruption à la fin de la République romaine: aspects politiques et financiers* (2010), studied corruption during the Late Roman Republic, and received the Maestranza Order Research Award 2013. She has also written several articles and book chapters about politics, popular political culture, financial matters and rhetoric in the Late Roman Republic.

PUBLIC OPINION  
AND POLITICS IN THE LATE  
ROMAN REPUBLIC

CRISTINA ROSILLO-LÓPEZ

*Universidad Pablo de Olavide*



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-14507-8 – Public Opinion and Politics in the Late Roman Republic  
Cristina Rosillo-López  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom  
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA  
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
4843/24, 2nd Floor, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, Delhi – 110002, India  
79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.  
It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of  
education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)  
Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781107145078](http://www.cambridge.org/9781107145078)  
DOI: 10.1017/9781316535158

© Cristina Rosillo-López 2017

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception  
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,  
no reproduction of any part may take place without the written  
permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2017

Printed in the United Kingdom by Clays, St Ives plc

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

ISBN 978-1-107-14507-8 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of  
URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication  
and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain,  
accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-14507-8 – Public Opinion and Politics in the Late Roman Republic  
Cristina Rosillo-López  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

---

*For Igor, for every single day*

## *Contents*

<i>List of Maps</i>	<i>page</i> ix
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	x
Introduction	1
1 Public Opinion in Rome: Definition, Models and Constraints	6
1.1 How Public Opinion Was Expressed and Understood in the Late Roman Republic	6
1.2 Public Opinion and the Debate on the Political Nature of the Late Roman Republic	12
1.3 Public Opinion and Informal Politics	16
1.4 Theoretical Considerations and Models of Public Opinion	18
1.5 Censorship and Public Opinion during the Late Roman Republic	27
1.5.1 Legal Constraints: Censuring Writings and Speech	30
1.5.2 Censorship in Practice before 49 BC	34
2 Sociability and Politics	42
2.1 The Physical Background of Public Opinion: Walking and Promenading as a Political Tool	43
2.2 Locations and Occasions of Sociability and Public Opinion in Rome	47
2.2.1 The Forum and Its Surroundings	52
2.2.2 Outside the Forum: <i>Compta</i> , Streets, and Neighbourhoods	64
2.2.3 Houses	70
3 Rumours, Gossip and Conversations in Roman Political Life	75
3.1 Rumours and Politics in Rome	78
3.2 Circulation of Rumours Outside Rome	87
3.3 Rumours, Gossip and Social Discipline	93

4	Political Literature and Public Opinion (I): Defining Political Literature	98
4.1	Authorship	102
4.2	Audience and Literacy	106
4.3	Distribution and Circulation	109
5	Political Literature and Public Opinion (II): Genres of Political Literature	119
5.1	<i>Satura</i> , Verse, Popular Verse	120
5.2	Political Literature in Prose	131
5.2.1	Pamphlets or Tracts	132
5.2.2	Open Letters	141
5.2.3	Memoirs and Historical Writings	142
5.2.4	Graffiti and Placards	144
6	Groups and Agents of Public Opinion	155
6.1	Groups of Public Opinion	157
6.2	Leaders and Movers of Public Opinion	171
6.3	Disseminators of News and Public Opinion	175
6.4	Misreading Public Opinion: The Case of Caesar's Murder	187
7	Rhetoric and Public Opinion: Theory and Practice	196
7.1	How to Deal with the Audience according to Latin Rhetoricians	197
7.2	The Orator before Public Opinion	201
7.3	Public Opinion in Practice in the Courts of Justice	204
7.3.1	The Speeches against Verres	204
7.3.2	Pro Cluentio	210
7.3.3	Pro Rabirio Postumo	214
8	Conclusions	219
8.1	Public Opinion and the Public Sphere in the Late Roman Republic	219
8.2	Public Opinion in the Early Principate	229
	<i>Bibliography</i>	236
	<i>Index of People</i>	265
	<i>Subject Index</i>	269

*Map*

Map 2.1 Shopping facilities in the Forum Romanum and nearby *page 59*

## *Acknowledgements*

I could not have completed the project of writing a book about public opinion in Rome without the help of many institutions, colleagues, family and friends who supported me along the way.

The writing and publication of this book was financed by the research projects ‘Opinión pública y comunicación política en la República Romana (siglos II-I a de C.)’ (HAR2013-43496-P, Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad, Spain) and ‘Las clientelas provinciales en el Occidente del Imperio romano’ (HAR2010-16449), the Return Fellowship of the Basque Government, the Research Fund of the Universidad Pablo de Olavide; the José Castillejo Fellowship (Ministerio de Educación, Spain), and the Humboldt Stiftung Research Fellowship for Experienced Researchers (Germany).

I would like to thank the Department of Classics of New York University and the Lehrstuhl für Alte Geschichte of the Technische Universität Dresden for their hospitality. My colleagues in the Ancient History and Economic History departments of the Universidad Pablo de Olavide have always provided me with a congenial work environment.

The attendees of the conference ‘Locating Popular Culture in the Ancient World’ (Edinburgh, 2012) and at the FIEC (Fédération internationale des associations d’études classiques) meeting in Bordeaux (2014) served as testing boards for many of the hypotheses in the book. The doctoral students of the Universidade de São Paulo in 2014 raised some very interesting questions on this subject. I would also like to thank the anonymous reviewers at Cambridge University Press, who took time of their own to help improve this book, Michael Sharp, the team at Integra, and Charlotte Tupman, who revised my English.

This book has been enriched by conversations in formal and informal settings with many colleagues, who helped to clarify many issues and offered valuable suggestions, for which I am grateful: Jean-Jacques Aubert, Henriette van der Blom, Francisco Beltrán Lloris, Joy Connolly,



*Acknowledgements*

xi

Juan Manuel Cortés Copete, Cyril Courier, Romana Erice Lacabe, Julio Cesar Magalhães de Oliveira, Elena Muñoz Grijalvo, Michael Peachin, Joaquín Ruiz de Arbulo and Catherine Steel. I am also indebted to Martin Jehne and Antonio Duplá Ansuategui for reading parts of the book and providing helpful ideas.

Special thanks are due to my friend Francisco Pina Polo, who always believed in this project and volunteered to read the whole manuscript. Furthermore, he provided three essential things: invaluable comments, helpful messages of support and great jazz records!

Any errors remain my own responsibility.

My family and friends around the world have always provided me with the support I needed. Raquel, mi verdadera gemela, is always there. Igor shares my life, so I want to share this book with him.