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978-0-521-06678-5 - Mass Oratory and Political Power in the Late Roman Republic

Robert Morstein-Marx

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MASS ORATORY AND POLITICAL POWER IN THE LATE ROMAN REPUBLIC

This book highlights the role played by public political discourse in shaping the distribution of power between Senate and People in the late Roman Republic. Against the background of the current debate between “oligarchical” and “democratic” interpretations of Republican politics, Robert Morstein-Marx emphasizes the perpetual negotiation and reproduction of political power through mass communication. It is the first work to offer an extensive analysis of the ideology of Republican mass oratory and to situate its rhetoric fully within the institutional and historical context of the public meetings (*contiones*) in which these speeches were heard. Examples of contional orations, drawn chiefly from Cicero and Sallust, are subjected to an analysis that is influenced by contemporary political theory and empirical studies of public opinion and the media, rooted in a detailed examination of key events and institutional structures, and illuminated by a vivid sense of the urban space in which the *contio* was set.

ROBERT MORSTEIN-MARX is Professor of Classics at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He is the author of *Hegemony to Empire: the Development of the Roman Imperium in the Greek East, 149–62 BC* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1995).

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To Sara, Eric, and Matthew

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Acknowledgments

This project began more than a decade ago with a paper delivered to the annual meeting of the American Philological Association in December 1992, which contained in fifteen minutes' compass the kernel of the argument of this book. Many interruptions, professional and private, have slowed its progress, and it has at times been nerve-wracking to monitor the constant stream of new publications emerging from the very debates that gave rise to this book. In retrospect, I find that while some of my points have now been anticipated, at least in part, many others have been greatly enriched by work that has come out since 1992, and that there still seems to be room for my own synthesis of the material. I know well that this will be far from the last word on the *contio* and Republican mass oratory. My greatest hope for the book is that it might stimulate, rather than foreclose, further debate on some central, though relatively neglected, phenomena of Roman political life.

It is a real pleasure to recall how many colleagues and friends have assisted me in this project over the years. Constraints of space prevent me from expressing my gratitude to all as fully as I would like, yet the signal services of some must be publicly acknowledged. Andrew Dyck, Erich Gruen, Alexander Yakobson, and two anonymous readers for the Press took up the burden of reading the penultimate draft of the manuscript; their comments, corrections, and objections contributed immeasurably to the value of this work. (Of course, any slips and errors that remain are my own responsibility alone.) Nathan Rosenstein read and commented on an earlier draft and cheerfully answered many a query that I would have been too embarrassed to ask others. Fergus Millar generously allowed me to see a draft of *The Crowd in Rome* in advance of its publication, and over the whole course of this project has been most kind and supportive despite our numerous points of disagreement – which on my part, at least, seem to be rather fewer now than when I began. My thinking has been repeatedly stimulated by conversations with Anthony Corbeill, who also kindly showed me some of his

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Acknowledgments

work in advance of publication, as did Michael Alexander. Malcolm Bell, then Mellon Professor at the American Academy in Rome, obtained for me the necessary permit to study the remains of the Republican Rostra under the pavement of the Forum, and the Soprintendenza archeologica di Roma (Area archeologica Foro Romano-Palatino) efficiently and courteously afforded access to that monument on the appointed day. Most references were checked by my successive research assistants, Debra Nousek and Greg Smay, who corrected a number of slips and offered useful suggestions. To all I wish to convey my warmest thanks, as I do also, for other suggestions, assistance, and other kindnesses, to Christer Bruun, Harriet Flower, Jerise Fogel, Nicholas Horsfall, Matthew Roller, Richard Saller, Jeffrey Tatum, William Turpin and Ellen Magenheim. For their helpful and friendly responses I also thank the audiences on which earlier versions of parts of the argument were tested, at Berkeley, the University of Pennsylvania, Smith College, Toronto, the University of Southern California, meetings of the American Philological Association, the Classical Association of the Canadian West, and the University of California at San Diego Working Seminar on Ancient Politics and Contemporary Political Science.

Two important books that were published in 2002 and came into my hands too late to be integrated into the present argument are Peter Holliday's *Origins of Roman Historical Commemoration in the Visual Arts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) and Fergus Millar's *Roman Republic in Political Thought* (Hanover, NH and London: University Press of New England); I urge readers to consult the first especially in connection with my third chapter and the second with my introduction and conclusion. I have tried to give due attention to all relevant works published through 2001. It would be unrealistic to assume that I have done so with fully equal success in all the fields and sub-disciplines represented in this book, ranging from Republican political history to Ciceronian oratory to Roman topography, monuments and coins, and I apologize in advance to any whose work has been unjustly overlooked. In this connection, I would like to thank especially Karl-Joachim Hölkeskamp, who very kindly shared some of his remarkable bibliographical knowledge and in particular offered guidance with recent German scholarship. Here at the University of California, Santa Barbara, my colleagues in the Political Science Department, Peter Digeser and Eric Smith, offered valuable and stimulating bibliographical suggestions in their field. I would also like to thank Michael Sharp, Commissioning Editor for Classics at Cambridge University Press, for the interest he took in this project and the efficiency with which he has seen it through. Readers, as well as I, owe thanks too to Jan Chapman, my indefatigable copy-editor, who

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removed countless blemishes from the final typescript and never balked at the extra labor that my corrections and reconsiderations entailed.

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C	A. C. Clark, ed., <i>Q. Asconii Pediani orationum Ciceronis quinque enarratio</i> (OCT), Oxford, 1907
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
Cr	J. W. Crawford, ed., <i>M. Tullius Cicero: the Fragmentary Speeches</i> , 2nd edn., Atlanta, 1994
<i>FGrH</i>	F. Jacoby, <i>Fragmenta der griechischen Historiker</i> , Berlin and Leiden, 1923–
Gordon	A. E. Gordon, <i>Illustrated Introduction to Latin Epigraphy</i> , Berkeley, 1983
Greenidge–Clay	A. H. J. Greenidge and A. M. Clay, <i>Sources for Roman History, 133–70 BC</i> , rev. by E. W. Gray, Oxford, 1960
<i>Itt</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Italiae</i>
<i>ILLRP</i>	A. Degrassi, <i>Inscriptiones Latinae Liberae Rei Publicae</i> , 2 vols., Florence, 1965
<i>ILS</i>	H. Dessau, <i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i> , 5 vols., Berlin, 1892–1916
L	W. M. Lindsay, ed., <i>Sextus Pompeius Festus: De verborum significatu quae supersunt cum Pauli epitome</i> (Teubner), Leipzig, 1913
<i>LTUR</i>	<i>Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae</i> , 6 vols., Rome, 1993–2000
M	B. Maurenbrecher, ed., <i>C. Sallusti Crispi Historiarum reliquiae</i> , 2 vols., Leipzig, 1891–93
<i>MRR</i>	T. R. S. Broughton, <i>Magistrates of the Roman Republic</i> , 3 vols., New York, 1951–86
<i>OLD</i>	P. W. Glare, ed., <i>Oxford Latin Dictionary</i> , Oxford, 1982
<i>ORF</i>	E. Malcovati, <i>Oratorum Romanorum Fragmenta</i> , 4th edn., Torino, 1976

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List of abbreviations

Peter

H. Peter, *Historicorum Romanorum Reliquiae*, 2nd edn., 2 vols., Leipzig, 1906–14

RE

A. Pauly, G. Wissowa, and W. Kroll, *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, Stuttgart and Munich, 1893–*Roman Statutes*M. H. Crawford, ed., *Roman Statutes* (Bull. of the Institute of Classical Studies 64), 2 vols., London, 1996

RRC

M. H. Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage*, 2 vols., Cambridge, 1974

St

T. Stangl, ed., *Ciceronis Orationum Scholiastae*, Vienna, 1912

TLL

Thesaurus Linguae Latinae, Leipzig, 1900–