

Words on Fire

Why is political rhetoric broken – and how can it be fixed? *Words on Fire* returns to the origins of rhetoric to recover the central place of eloquence in political thought. Eloquence, for the orators of classical antiquity, emerged from rhetorical relationships that exposed both speaker and audience to risk. Through close readings of Cicero – and his predecessors, rivals, and successors – political theorist and former speechwriter Rob Goodman tracks the development of this ideal, in which speech is both spontaneous and stylized, and in which the pursuit of eloquence mitigates political inequalities. He goes on to trace the fierce disputes over Ciceronian speech in the modern world through the work of such figures as Burke, Macaulay, Tocqueville, and Schmitt, explaining how rhetorical risk-sharing has broken down. *Words on Fire* offers a powerful critique of today's political language – and shows how the struggle over the meaning of eloquence has shaped our world.

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Eloquence and Its Conditions

ROB GOODMAN
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For my parents

Lords and serfs are seldom good speakers.

— Carl Gustav Jochmann

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