

Cicero and the Memory of the Gracchi

Cicero's consular orations (*De Lege Agraria I-III*, *Pro Rabirio*, *Pro Murena*, *In Catilinam I-IV*) provide a chance for us to examine how Cicero treated the memory of the Gracchi both before the Senate and the people and how Cicero deals with the same topics using similar examples but for different audiences.

Because of the nature of the Gracchan reforms, the Senate held a much lower opinion of them than the plebs, and in keeping with this difference of opinion, Cicero modified his treatment of their legacy depending on which body he was addressing. Before the people, the Gracchi were heroes, while the Senate remembered them as rabble-rousers. Cicero avoids offending the people by praising the virtues of the Gracchi, but when we consider his references to the Gracchi through the whole of his consular year, Cicero's own opinion of the two men becomes clearer: the Gracchi stood for many of the values of the *mos maiorum*, but because they attempted to disturb the status quo they were not heroes, but the best of the bad.

Using the PHI disk and Diogenes software (keyword "Gracch"), I found that Cicero uses the name of the Gracchi twenty times in all. Of these twenty, thirteen are in speeches delivered before the people while only seven appear in speeches before the Senate. The thirteen before the plebs share a very positive tone while the seven before the Senate either carry negative connotations or outright praise the men who preserved the Republic by killing the Gracchi. Cicero thus presents two radically different opinions. In order to approximate Cicero's own opinion, I will compare and contrast the context of each passage to arrive at a somewhat coherent picture of Cicero's own opinion of the Gracchi.