

Antiquarian Digressions in Cicero's *De haruspicum responso*.

The 50's were a period of political turbulence in Rome, marked by the murders of prominent citizens, and political prosecutions (Lintott 1968). It is under these circumstances that antiquarianism flourished once again through the works of authors such as Marcus Terentius Varro, and Publius Nigidius Figulus. The subject of antiquarian studies was very broad, ranging from the origins of sacred and political law, festivals, and Roman customs to genealogical and etymological research (Momigliano 1950). The profound objective behind the development of antiquarianism was to bring to light all the elements of tradition pertaining to the glorious Roman past -what is widely known as the *mos maiorum*- especially during periods of political instability (Rawson 1972).

Thus it becomes evident that antiquarianism, albeit a scholarly genre, was not detached from Roman political life, and it influenced to a certain extent the literary production in the 50's. The works of Cicero, the erudite orator and politician who was also Varro's acquaintance, are not an exception (Rawson 1985). Scholarship has already examined the role of antiquarian digressions in Cicero's dialogues (Wisse 2002), but their function in his political orations has been understudied. In *De haruspicum responso*, Cicero makes use of a variety of antiquarian information and methodology, dealing with the origin of the rites and rituals of *Bona Dea* (§12), the *ludi Megalensis* (§22), the life of Publius Valerius Publicola (§16), and the practice of the *disciplina Etrusca* (§20). These topics are fully exploited by Cicero in order to achieve his main purpose, i.e. to underline the profligacy and the degeneracy of his opponent Clodius.

In this paper, I attempt to trace and analyze the antiquarian material in *De haruspicum responso*, and justify its use with regards to Cicero's own purposes, taking into consideration the historical background of the period. I begin with a broad overview of antiquarianism in order to indicate the parameters which are essential in establishing the

digressions' antiquarian character. I also include a short reference to the main Roman practitioners of this genre in order to show that antiquarian production is closely bound to political turbulence. The bulk of my discussion, however, attempts to foreground various antiquarian elements in certain passages from *De haruspicum responso*. Through the presentation of the excerpts I intend to clarify the antiquarian content of each passage, and trace intertextual links with antiquarian works where possible. Finally, I illustrate the function of these digressions in the oration as political invective against Clodius, and a mean to add authority to Cicero's arguments.

Lintott, A. W. 1968. *Violence in Republican Rome*. Oxford : Clarendon Press.

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