

Immortal Efforts: Divine Audiences in Cicero's *Post Reditum* Speeches

While Cicero was exiled from Rome in 58 BCE, the city was exposed to grave threats like the breaking of consular rods, and the burning of homes and temples. When Cicero came back a year later, he likened it to a rebirth and intended to thank those responsible for calling him back to the city. In doing so, he praised many as divine figures for securing his return to Rome. Such religious language, marks another development in the ever-evolving religious thought of one of Rome's leading figures. This larger trend in Cicero's works, especially his treatises, has recently been reevaluated, granting Cicero a fundamental place in the evolution of late Republican Roman religion (Beard, North, and Price 1998; Cole 2013). This trend has examined, to a lesser degree, developments across Cicero's many orations. My paper addresses two speeches from Cicero's post-exile period, where the religious language is aligned with the identities of Cicero's audiences, but especially their Roman sensibilities.

There are four main speeches pertaining to Cicero's return from exile: *Post Reditum ad Senatum*, *Post Reditum ad Quirites*, *de Domo Sua*, and *de Haruspicum Responsis*. The latter two, especially the *de Domo Sua*, have received far more attention for their more explicit religious focus (Lennon 2010; Beard 2012). This has caused some to suggest that the arguments were more harmless or accidental than intentional, even if individual speeches strategically used religion (Gildenhard 2011). When the religious language of the two *Post Reditum* speeches has been analyzed, some have focused on the ritual aspects like the *devotio* (Dyck 2004). My approach unites the ritual aspects with the rhetorical (Nicholson 1992), within the broader context of Cicero's return to Rome.

The two *Post Reditum* speeches provide a rare opportunity to compare Cicero's different strategies before two audiences (Ramsey 2007). Before the Senate, Cicero credits Q. Caecilius

Metellus Nepos with promoting his return to Rome by calling him *divinitus* (*Red. Sen.* 26); so too Lentulus Spinther, Metellus' co-consul, who is called 'parent and god' in both speeches (*Red. Sen.* 8; *Red. Pop.* 11). On the other hand, Cicero gives near-divine power to the people when he thanks them for aiding in his return (*Red. Pop.* 25). Attributing divine credit to an individual or a collective audience is not new in Cicero's speeches. Nevertheless here we see Cicero giving such credit to different parties for virtually the same action. He does the same to the gods (*Red. Sen.* 9; *Red. Pop.* 1). The cynical reading would consider such praise to be empty platitudes; the stakes of Cicero's exile demonstrate their sincerity.

Notably, the threats to the republic are similar between the speeches — houses destroyed, consular rods broken, temples set aflame — with Cicero using nearly identical language (*Red. Sen.* 6-7, *Red. Pop.* 14). These threats are, rhetorically, common in Cicero's speeches (cf. *Verr.* 2.1.7, *Cat.* 1.12, etc.). Nevertheless, in his earlier speeches Cicero had refrained more from attributing divine qualities to those who defended Rome. After exile, Cicero's language changed: he was more willing to credit equally those gods and humans that helped him see Rome again. Indeed, such gratitude continues and expands in the more hectic days of the Late Republic when Octavian and Antony vie for power (*Phil.* 3.3).

For Cicero, these threats only became fully realized once he had been forced from Rome. Once exiled, the loss of Rome had become real. In showing his gratitude for their aid, Cicero wanted his audiences not only to feel the same dread he had had while abroad, but to know that his thanks to them equaled that due to a parent or god. The efforts of the Senate and people of Rome saw to Cicero's return, ultimately guaranteeing that Rome's safety was restored.

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