

Elite rhetoric and self-presentation

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ELITE RHETORIC AND SELF-PRESENTATION: METELLUS NUMIDICUS RETURNS

HENRIETTE VAN DER BLOM

Introduction

How did Roman politicians perform in public when challenged on their reputations and careers? What were the parameters for this communication with the public and how did politicians navigate these parameters? In this chapter, I present a case from a Roman republican setting which illustrates some of the tactics adopted to tackle a potentially career-damaging discharge. The case in question is the replacement of Q. Caecilius Metellus in 107 B.C. on the African command with his former subordinate officer, Gaius Marius, and Metellus' return to Rome to face public criticism of his conduct as general.

I shall focus on the textual record of Metellus' oratorical performances in the *contio* because they form part of the great political debate at the time, namely, the tribunician challenge of the senatorial dominance in foreign politics and senatorial corruption more generally, and therefore can throw further light on how this debate played out in the public sphere of the *contio*. Secondly, because these deliberative speeches exemplify some of the performative aspects of public oratory in Rome discussed in current scholarship.¹ And finally, because the textual record of his oratory, albeit few and fragmentary, illustrates well the parameters for communication available to Metellus and the ways in which he operated within a common set of values and expectations of how a Roman senator responded to public criticism.

The main questions to be pursued are: how did Metellus perform in his public addresses in the aftermath of his discharge? What were the reasons behind his grant of a triumph in spite of not finishing the war and being replaced on the command? And, what does his handling of his discharge tell us about the boundaries of public oratorical performances in republican Rome and the unwritten rules of republican politics?

1. *Setting the stage*

First, however, I shall briefly set the stage for Metellus' performance, because it will allow a better understanding of the parameters under which Metellus spoke. Quintus Caecilius Metellus came from a privileged background in an elite family which had been highly

¹ Most prominently by Hölkeskamp (1995), (2013); Morstein-Marx (2004); Flaig (2004); Jehne (2011), (2013).

successful for generations in both politics and military commands. He had lived up to the family history of success, obtaining and fulfilling both civic and military public offices. In 109 B.C., his election to the consulship led the way to his military command in the war against the Numidian Jugurtha in North Africa. In the same year, a special inquest into the conduct of Metellus' predecessors in the war resulted in the conviction and exile of several high-ranking generals and senators.² The conduct of the new commander was therefore under close scrutiny.

Metellus did well as commander, training his soldiers considerably better than his immediate predecessor, winning several battles, defeating the main enemy Jugurtha in two battles although not capturing him, and advancing into Numidian territory.³ So far, it seems that there was nothing to criticise but only to praise. The dramatic change came when Metellus' officer, Gaius Marius, asked for leave to go to Rome and stand for the consulship of 107 B.C. When Metellus showed his reluctance – even ridicule at the thought if we are to believe the two major narrators of this event, Sallust and Plutarch⁴ – Marius started a campaign to both smear Metellus' reputation and advance his own chances of election. Through the allegation that Metellus artificially prolonged the war in order to remain in command, Marius managed to position himself with the soldiers in the army, the Roman businessmen in Africa, and the tribunes of the plebs in Rome as the perfect candidate for the consulship and, as a consequence, also as the perfect candidate for the command in Africa because he promised to finish the war swiftly and capture the enemy Jugurtha. And so Marius was elected to the consulship of 107 B.C.⁵ Although the senate had shortly before prolonged Metellus' command, the tribune T. Manlius Mancinus challenged the senatorial prerogative in foreign policy by passing a bill in the plebeian legislative assembly to transfer the African command from Metellus to Marius.⁶ The date of this vote is not certain, but the tribune is likely to have proposed the law immediately after taking up office on 10 December 108 B.C. or shortly afterwards.

Metellus had to return to Rome, stripped of his command and succeeded by Marius, that is, a general of low birth who had been his subordinate officer. Moreover, Metellus faced serious allegations of prolonging the war unnecessarily.⁷ The fact that several of his predecessors in the war had been convicted of corruption and treasonable dealings with Jugurtha and sent into

² See Alexander (1990) nos. 52-7 for details. Flower (2010) 105-11 gives the broader background.

³ See sources in *MRR*.

⁴ Sall. *Iug.* 64; Plut. *Mar.* 8.3.

⁵ Cic. *Off.* 3.79; Sall. *Iug.* 64-5, 73; Plut. *Mar.* 8.5. On the finer details of this campaign, see Yakobson (1999) 13-19; Tatum (2013), and on the political mood and the political context of Marius' arguments, see Yakobson (2014).

⁶ Polyb. 6.13. Cf. Pina Polo (2013); Steel (2013a) 70-1.

⁷ Inferred from the criticism brought forward by Marius and his supporters in Rome in the run up to Marius' election to the consulship: Sall. *Iug.* 64.5; Plut. *Mar.* 8.5.

exile may also have crossed Metellus' mind.⁸ Indeed, Sallust argues that when the news of the transfer of command to Marius reached Metellus by letter, he was more upset than what was right and proper, crying and having no control over his tongue. He could not bear to hand over the command in person, but left a legate to face Marius.⁹ Sallust and Plutarch clearly relishes the drama of the situation and possibly exaggerates it for entertainment, but the fact that they depict Metellus' reaction in this way, makes it evident that the situation was considered humiliating to Metellus. Indeed, for a man with such an illustrious ancestry, the humiliation extended to his family.

2. *Metellus returns*

Metellus returned to Rome at some point in 107 B.C., but stayed outside the *pomerium* in order to keep his *imperium* intact for a possible triumph.¹⁰ If the transfer was effected in early 107 B.C., it is likely that Marius went to Africa to arrive at the start of the fighting season in the spring.¹¹ Metellus is to have returned to Rome as soon as he heard about the transfer (and possibly before Marius arrived in Africa), so he will probably have arrived in Rome during the spring or summer of 107 B.C.

In Rome, Metellus faced the criticism which had resulted in his dismissal: before his departure, Marius had personally argued Metellus' incompetence and corruption at public meetings in Rome.¹² We can easily imagine that the rhetoric of the tribune T. Manlius Mancinus, who had passed the bill of the transfer of the African command to Marius, was an extension of Marius', namely criticism of Metellus' command and praise of Marius' potential. Already before Metellus' return to Rome, Marius' rhetoric against Metellus reverberated in Rome. Once back in Rome, Metellus faced the challenge of keeping up his public reputation in spite of the humiliating discharge and the hostile rhetoric of Marius and the tribune T. Manlius.

While both Marius as consul and T. Manlius as tribune had the right to call public meetings and address the people at these, Metellus' status as proconsul with *imperium* meant that he could not call a civic *contio* meeting where he could express his version of the events. Instead,

⁸ The Mamilian inquest: Sall. *Iug.* 40; Cic. *Brut.* 128.

⁹ Sall. *Iug.* 82.2, 86.5; Plut. *Mar.* 10.1.

¹⁰ Vervaeke (2014) 78-93 challenges the scholarly consensus that a general would stay outside the *pomerium* in order to keep his *imperium* intact; rather, Vervaeke argues, the general sought to keep his *auspicium* intact.

¹¹ Sall. *Iug.* 86.4. Chantraine (1959) 35-6 and Paul (1984) xxiii, 218 too argue for spring.

¹² Whether in speeches before or after his election to the consulship is unclear; Plutarch and Cicero argues before, while Sallust presents Marius' grand speech as his first piece of public oratory as consul (Plut. *Mar.* 8.5; Cic. *Off.* 3.79; Sall. *Iug.* 84-5).

he would have to wait until a magistrate would call a meeting and summon him to address the people at a public meeting held outside the *pomerium*, and this magistrate could be either a friend or an opponent.¹³ In this situation of a high-profile discharge and public criticism, Metellus could expect to be asked to explain himself at one or more public meetings, but he could not predict when it would happen or who would summon him. Moreover, he could not predict the reaction of the audience, although the audience may have taken the cue from the chair of the meeting, whether friendly or hostile to Metellus.

The evidence suggests that Metellus did get access to a public audience from two passages from one or two speeches delivered by Metellus in the *contio*. Although these passages are difficult to date with certainty to 107 B.C., the content suggests that Metellus tried to defend himself against heavy criticism and we know that Metellus faced exactly such criticism after his return to Rome from Africa.¹⁴ In these two passages (which we shall come to in a moment), Metellus is described as defending himself against the criticism of a tribune called C. or G. Manlius.¹⁵ We have no other information about a tribune of that name, but we do know of T. Manlius Mancinus (tr. pl. 107 B.C.), who was the tribune proposing the bill to transfer the African command from Metellus to Marius. Although it cannot be proven that these Manlii are the same person, it is likely since the names are so similar (and a *praenomen* can easily be mixed up in the transmission),¹⁶ they are both tribunes, and they are both clearly on Marius' side against Metellus. In the following, the C./G. Manlius in the two sources to Metellus' speech(es) shall be taken as the same person as the T. Manlius Mancinus in Sallust's version, and simply be called Manlius.¹⁷

The two passages were transmitted by the second century AD collector of miscellaneous material, Aulus Gellius, and the 6th century AD grammarian Priscian. Before going into the details of the passages, it is necessary to consider briefly the transmission and authenticity of these passages. Gellius' general method of work suggests that he used a written version of the

¹³ *Contiones* outside the *pomerium* was often held in the *circus Flaminius*, a short walk from the Forum: Pina Polo (1989) 185-7; Morstein-Marx (2004) 59-60. See Pina Polo (1989) 43-53; Morstein-Marx (2004) 38-40 for the right to call a *contio*.

¹⁴ The internal evidence of the two passages does not rule out that they were delivered at a different point in time, for example, during Metellus' censorship in 100 B.C., but only if we discard the identification of the tribune T. Manlius Mancinus (107 B.C.) with C./G. Manlius criticising Metellus (see the following discussion).

¹⁵ Gell NA 7.11.2 (*C. Manlium*); Priscian (Keil, *Grammatici Latini* vol 2, p. 382) (*G. Manlio*). Both C. and G. stood for Gaius.

¹⁶ Indeed, the *praenomen* T in Sall. *Iug.* 73 is recorded in only two of the primary manuscripts (PA) but not in other such (CBNK).

¹⁷ Most scholars do indeed consider them to be the same person: Münzer *RE* Manlius 61, cf. Manlius 16; Broughton in *MRR* I, 551; Paul (1984) 192; Pina Polo (1989) 21, App. A. no. 205; Doblhofer (1990) 46-7.

speech and that he quoted from it more or less verbatim.¹⁸ Moreover, Gellius knew Metellus' written works (including speeches) well because he quotes from five different works.¹⁹ For a grammarian like Priscian, who was quoting text to illustrate linguistic points, the quotation had to be correct in order to make sense, at least correct in terms of the text extant at the time of quoting. The crucial moment in this transmission history seems therefore not to be at the point of the quoting author, but rather at the point when the speech was written down (and possibly when it was copied). Although oratorical passages are sometimes accompanied with information about their transmission from oral version to written text, these passages are not. We are left to consider circumstantial evidence instead. There is no reason to doubt that Metellus did deliver speech(es) in the *contio* after his return from Africa. Moreover, the situation in which Metellus delivered his speech(es) was important enough for both Metellus and his political opponents to want to record delivered speeches; it is therefore probable that the speech(es) were written down shortly after delivery in an attempt to record the event and provide a version of the event. We know from another passage in Gellius that Metellus had, on at least one other occasion, written down and circulated a version of a (forensic) speech.²⁰ It is therefore possible that Metellus also wrote down a version of his speech(es) delivered after his return to Rome. We cannot know how close the written version(s) was to the delivered, or whether Metellus may have adjusted the delivered version(s) to the people to the different audience of the elite in the written version; even for the abundant Ciceronian material, much is still disputed.²¹ But for the sake of argument in this chapter, I take the premise that we can use these passages and another passage from Gellius as reflections of what Metellus said at these occasions.

Here, I shall analyse these passages with regard to Metellus' self-presentation and communication of his message to the people. The first passage comes from Gellius:

uerba haec sunt Metelli aduersus C. Manlium tribunum plebis, a quo apud populum in contione laccessitus iactatusque fuerat dictis petulantibus: nunc quod ad illum attinet, Quirites, quoniam se ampliolem putat esse, si se mihi inimicum dictitarit, quem ego mihi neque amicum recipio neque inimicum respicio, in eum ego non sum plura dicturus. nam

¹⁸ Holford-Strevens (1988) 47-58, 143-5; Heusch (2011) 117-62.

¹⁹ Gell. *NA* 1.6 (two passages), 7.11.2, 12.9.4, 15.13.6, 15.14.1-2, 17.2.7. McDonnell (1987) 87 with n. 22 argues that Gellius most likely used a collection of Metellus' speeches which may have been edited by Metellus' friend L. Aelius Stilo, the *praeco* (cf. Fronto 15.12-17 with van den Hout (1999) 41).

²⁰ Gell. *NA* 15.14.1-2.

²¹ Powell and Paterson (2004) 52-7 sum up the scholarly discussion on Cicero's speeches and offer a conclusion.

cum indignissimum arbitror, cui a uiris bonis benedicatur, tum ne idoneum quidem, cui a probis maledicatur. nam si in eo tempore huiusmodi homunculum nomines, in quo punire non possis, maiore honore quam contumelia adficias.

‘These are the words of Metellus from his speech against the tribune of the plebs Gaius Manlius, by whom he had been provoked and taunted in impudent terms in front of the people at a *contio*: Now, as for him, citizens – who thinks he will seem greater if he repeatedly says that he is my enemy, whom I do not accept as a friend and do not take account of as an enemy – I shall not say anything more. For I consider him unfit to be praised by good men and not even worthy of criticism from decent people. If you name a man of this kind, against whom you cannot take action, you honour rather than abuse him.’²²

Rhetorically, this passage is characterised by well-balanced clauses (for example, ‘neque amicum recipio neque inimicum respicio’ and ‘cui a uiris bonis benedicatur ... cui a probis maledicatur’).²³ This suggests a speech prepared in advance of the meeting. Whether Gellius refers to a public meeting held by Manlius before or after Metellus’ return to Rome does not matter. In any case, Metellus tried to respond to Manlius’ criticism by using a standard line of unworthiness of his opponent.²⁴ Although Gellius read this as an example of philosophical continence under attack, Metellus’ argument was also a common rhetorical strategy to undermine his opponent’s attack. The avoidance of the name of the opponent considered unworthy of mention can be paralleled in other instances of Roman senators avoiding the name of their opponent.²⁵ Moreover, the moralising tone was regularly adopted in Roman oratory.²⁶

The second brief passage, preserved by Priscian, gives us another glimpse into Metellus’ performance:

Metellus Numidicus in oratione, qua apud populum G. Manlio tribuno plebis respondit: nam ut aliis plerumque obuenienti magistratu ob metum statuæ polliceantur, ...

²² Gell *NA* 7.11.2. Translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

²³ Cf. Bardon (1952) I. 100-1 for discussion of this passage.

²⁴ There is a parallel in Cicero’s attack on Vatinius: Cic. *Vat.* 1.

²⁵ Gaius Gracchus’ unsuccessful usage against L. Calpurnius Piso Frugi in 123 B.C. (Cic. *Font.* 39; Schol. Bob. in Cic. *Flacc.* p. 96, 26. (Prisc. *GL* 2, p. 386, 3; *Isid. Etym.* 2.21.4.)), and Cicero’s multi-faceted tactics of not naming Clodius in his speeches after his return from exile; cf. full discussion in Steel (2007).

²⁶ Edwards (1993) 137-72; Hammar (2013).

‘Metellus Numidicus, in the speech in which he responded to Gaius Manlius, tribune of the plebs, in front of the people: “For statues are usually promised by others out of fear to a magistrate who happens to arrive...”’²⁷

This passage is too short to allow us much consideration of style, but Priscian was interested in Metellus’ phrase because of his use of the passive ‘polliceantur’. Whether this passage and the passage just discussed above derive from the same speech is not clear from the brief contextual comments, but the context is clearly the same. Here, Metellus seems to refer to a general practice of locals in provinces promising honorific statues to Roman magistrates, including generals, in an attempt to placate the representatives of the dominant Roman power. This passage suggests that Metellus was trying to defend himself against an allegation of extortion or corruption while on command in Africa or, at least, to contrast his own behaviour with what often happened.²⁸ Such an allegation would fit well with the overall criticism of his incompetence, and, moreover with the accusations of corruption against his predecessors in Africa, with which Manlius tried to implicate Metellus.

The first passage from Gellius suggests advance preparation of Metellus’ speech, and indeed Metellus would probably have had quite some time between the receipt of his dismissal and his arrival in Rome to prepare a public response to the criticism of his conduct. Also, the length of time between his arrival and this public meeting is unknown and would have furnished him with extra time to prepare. As noted, he would have had to wait to be summoned by a magistrate to address a public meeting, but even if summoned at the last minute, Metellus will undoubtedly have done some advance preparation of a public response: he will have thought through his arguments to present his discharge in the most favourable light, he will probably have considered which arguments and styles would be most persuasive in front of which audience (friendly *contio*, hostile *contio* and senate; he might even have considered the risk of a defence speech in court or inquiry), and he will have thought about the most effective delivery.

Indeed, the rhetorical polish in the first passage not only suggests advance preparation but also an acknowledgement on Metellus’ part that a well-executed speech could make his performance more convincing.²⁹ The political message in the two pieces is a rejection not only

²⁷ Priscian (Keil, *Grammatici Latini* vol. 2, p. 382).

²⁸ This is unlikely to be seen in the context of a *repetundae* trial because the timing is wrong: Alexander (1990) no. 51, with n. 1. Moreover, the passage from Priscian does not suggest the context of a trial.

²⁹ This preparation could backfire: Dion. Hal. *Isaeus* 4 tells us that the orator Pytheas argued that the speeches of Isaeus and Demosthenes could appear suspect because of their rhetorical and polished style.

of the criticism – extortion in the second passage it seems – as being out of step with normal practice, but also a rejection of the messenger himself – Manlius – as an unworthy opponent. Although the audience reception is not known, Metellus’ rhetorical tactic may hint at the reception he hoped for or anticipated. Metellus’ attack on the tribune who had persuaded the people to supersede Metellus in Africa might not have received a favourable response in a public meeting arranged by that tribune, Manlius. Not only would Manlius have been able to respond directly and immediately to Metellus’ criticism, and thereby influence the popular audience present, but Manlius could also have prepared the meeting in such a way that the audience was predisposed against Metellus.³⁰ In such a setting, Metellus’ performance may have been risky and self-defeating, which suggests that Metellus instead spoke at a public meeting called by a friendly magistrate. Indeed, Sallust suggests that Metellus had supporters in Rome, but Sallust’s depiction of Metellus being received in Rome with great rejoicing by both the people and senators seems an exaggeration deriving from the account of Metellus’ friend and legate, Rutilius Rufus.³¹

The second passage from Priscian suggests another tactic on Metellus’ part, namely downplaying the criticism by, it seems, arguing that what happened to him was an everyday occurrence in the provinces or contrasting his own behaviour with common practice. It is easier to see Metellus adopting this kind of argument in a public meeting called by Manlius, although it is equally possible that he was summoned by a friend to address the people.

While the short fragments do not give us information about Metellus’ delivery (tone of voice, gestures, movements), Gellius’ interpretation of Metellus’ response as an example of philosophical continence suggests that Metellus may have appeared calm and composed in his performance, rather than agitated and enraged at the allegations against him.³² A further clue to Metellus’ performance lies in his address of his audience as *quirites* (‘citizens’) which indicate what Hölkeskamp has called a ‘rhetoric of inclusion’: the orator includes the audience in a community of citizens who all have a share in the state; by using this address, the orator aims at a rhetorical construction of consensus.³³ By including the audience on his side of the quarrel, Metellus also very clearly separates them from Manlius (*illum, eum*) and Manlius’ viewpoint, and he suggests that the audience should moreover be included among good and decent men (*boni* and *probi*) in refusing even to mention or criticise Manlius. This rhetoric

³⁰ Examples of this type of tactic is evidenced in some of Clodius’ *contiones* of the 50s B.C.; cf. Tan (2013).

³¹ Sall. *Iug.* 88.1 with Paul (1984) 220.

³² Although Gellius may not have had more information than the text he quotes, he interprets Metellus’ response in philosophical terms.

³³ Hölkeskamp (2013) 19-20.

would have been more effective if Sallust is right in the friendly reception of Metellus at the time of his return to Rome. Alongside this rhetoric of inclusion (and exclusion of Manlius), Metellus' use of first-person singular pronouns (*ego*, *mihi*) suggests that another type of rhetoric is employed too, namely a 'rhetoric of asymmetrical address' in Hölkeskamp's words, which means that the *ego* of the orator claims the role of leadership, guidance and authority, which demands acceptance if not also obedience from the audience.³⁴ This asymmetry was built into the hierarchical Roman culture and was re-enacted in the *contio* with the speaker and his audience as the actors. The same authoritative approach could be argued to be present in the fragment from Priscian where Metellus may have been teaching Manlius and the audience that Manlius' suggestion of Metellus' wrongdoing was mistaken in light of current practices in the provinces, or, alternatively, Metellus distanced himself from such practices. By these subtle, yet clear, signals to his audience, Metellus could convey his own superior position as guide to right conduct, his audience's inclusion on the right side of the question, and Manlius' exclusion from the citizenry of good and decent people. These types of addresses formed part of Metellus' self-presentation and indeed his performance in the *contio*.

3. *Metellus triumphs*

In spite of the criticism and verbal attacks, Metellus was allowed to celebrate a triumph in 106 over the Numidians and Jugurtha and his honorific *agnomen* Numidicus – the conqueror of the Numidians – was formally acknowledged.³⁵ This grand recognition of his achievements in Africa came from the senate.³⁶ Metellus still had powerful supporters there, and the grant of a triumph was not only a recognition of Metellus but also a political statement of the senate against the recent and scathing criticism, even conviction in a public inquiry, of senatorial corruption and collusion with the enemy. The grant signalled that in the senate's view, Metellus was not the bad general which Marius and Manlius had claimed, and Metellus therefore illustrated the point that senators generally were not necessarily bad, and that the humiliating discharge was unjust to Metellus, his family and indeed to the senate as a body. The grant could also be read as the senate's means to counter Marius' command by emphasising that Metellus

³⁴ Hölkeskamp (2013) 23-7.

³⁵ Degrassi (1947) 85 (*fasti triumphales*); *Act. Tr.*; *Cic. Brut.* 135, *Att.* 1.16.4 (SB 16); *Vell.* 2.11.2, 15.3-4; *Eutrop.* 4.27.6; *Auct. de vir. ill.* 62.1; *Schol. Bob St* 176. The *agnomen* is attested in the *fasti triumphales* and most of the literary sources. If Linderski (1995) 436-43, (2007) 115-29 is right to understand the triumphal *agnomen* as informally given to a general by his soldiers and only accepted formally by the senate if mentioned in the *fasti*, then the senate will have conferred the *agnomen* to Metellus and it would have reinforced the senate's defiant stance against Marius.

³⁶ Vervaet (2012); Rich (2014) 210-14 – both with further references.

had almost finished the war. The fact that the senate was still in control of grants of triumphs, in spite of inroads on other traditional senatorial prerogatives, made it a potent weapon with which to communicate the senatorial version of the events and act out the senate's position.

The continued criticism, however, is evidenced by a further passage from a speech of Metellus:

Quintus autem Metellus Numidicus in oratione, quam de triumpho suo dixit, his uerbis usus est: qua in re quanto uniuersi me unum antistatis, tanto uobis quam mihi maiorem iniuriam atque contumeliam facit, Quirites, et quanto probi iniuriam facilius accipiunt, quam alteri tradunt, tanto ille uobis quam mihi peiorem honorem habuit; nam me iniuriam ferre, uos facere uult, Quirites, ut hic conquestio, istic uituperatio relinquatur.

‘But Quintus Metellus Numidicus, in the speech which he delivered on his triumph, used these words: Insofar as you as a collective are much superior to me, he inflicts, Quirites, a much greater injury and insult on you than on me, and insofar as good men more easily accept a wrong than inflict one on another, he brings you in a worse situation than I; for he wants me to suffer an injury and you to inflict it, Quirites, so that I will have grounds for complaint, and you be the object of criticism.’³⁷

The address to the *quirites* confirms that this is also a speech in the *contio*. This is again a highly polished passage from Metellus, and similar in approach and words to the other passage from Gellius (*probus*, for example): indeed, his use of the Socratic maxim ‘to do wrong is worse than to suffer it’,³⁸ resonates with his rejection of Manlius as an unworthy opponent in the other Gellian passage. In spite of these similarities, the two passages probably derive from two separate public meetings. Indeed, the description of the speech as ‘on his triumph’ suggests that Metellus delivered it in connection with his triumph, either shortly before or after his triumph in 106 B.C.

There is clear evidence of commanders addressing the people to recount their achievements, and that is was customary to do so.³⁹ The evidence suggests that the timing of

³⁷ Gell NA 12.9.4. For a brief discussion of this speech in the context of grants of triumphs, see Rich (2014) 232-3.

³⁸ Plato *Gorgias* 473a- 475e.

³⁹ Pina Polo (1989) 147-50 lists the evidence: 486 B.C., Sp. Cassius, DH 8.70.1-5 (customary); 194 B.C., Cato the Elder, Prisc. (Keil, *Grammatici Latini* vol. 4, 310); 191 B.C., P. Scipio Nasica, Livy 36.40.14; 189 B.C., L. Scipio Asiaticus, Livy 37.58.6-7; 167 B.C., L. Aemilius Paullus: (a) sources following Polybius – Livy 45.40.9-42.1 (customary); Diod. 31.11.1; Plut. *Aem.* 36; App. *Mac.* 19 (customary), (b) other sources – Vell. 1.10.4

such a speech could be both before and after the triumph. Apart from general self-praise, the message would presumably differ between speeches before or after a triumph. If delivered before a triumph, and especially before a triumph had been granted, the commander could use the speech to communicate his version of the events and to justify his request of a triumph; a *contio* was the best opportunity to address the widest possible audience. If delivered after a triumph, the speech would be an oral accompaniment to the visual spectacle of the procession, and thereby a further medium through which to communicate the magnitude of the achievement. If there was a considerable time period between arrival at Rome and the triumph itself, it would make sense for the commander to take the first opportunity to address the people as an occasion to give his account of his military success.

In Metellus' case, the accusation of wrongdoing against Metellus suggests that he delivered the speech before his triumph in an attempt to counter any obstruction of the triumph such as obstruction of the passing of the necessary plebiscite granting Metellus *imperium* for the day of his triumph.⁴⁰ Indeed, the reference to an *iniuriam* or 'injury' seems to refer to an attempt on the opponent's side to deny Metellus the *honor* of the triumph. The formal point of criticism against Metellus could have been that he had not managed to finish the war against Jugurtha (although that was not a prerequisite for a triumph), but there is no doubt that the underlying criticism was the more general allegation of senatorial corruption and mismanagement at home and abroad.⁴¹ The present tenses in the passage furthermore suggests that this was a live issue and therefore that the speech preceded the triumph. The unnamed opponent criticised by Metellus may be Manlius again, as someone who had worked against Metellus in 107 B.C., and possibly also in 106 B.C. if another magistrate had given Manlius access to the *contio*. We know of no other tribune attacking Metellus in 107-106 B.C., and the only known tribune of 106 B.C. is Q. Mucius Scaevola, who was a supporter of the senate.⁴² Of course, it could have been another tribune among the ten tribunes of the year, but it was not unheard of that a *privatus*

(customary); Val. Max. 5.10.2; Sen. *Dial.* 6.13.3; Ampel. 18.13; 146 B.C., Scipio Aemilianus, Festus (Pirie and Lindsay (1930) 366); 106 B.C., Metellus Numidicus; 81 B.C., Sulla, Plut. *Sull.* 34.2; 61 B.C., Pompeius Magnus, Livy *per.* 103; Pliny, *NH* 7.99; Oros. 6.6.4. Malcovati (1976) 212 argues that such speeches were customary, but Itgenshorst (2005) 111 mentions that only three other such speeches are known, ignoring the other evidence.

⁴⁰ In order to qualify for a triumph, Metellus had to retain his original *imperium* (hence the need to stay outside the *pomerium*) but he also needed a plebiscite granting him *imperium* to be held in the City on the day of the triumph: Rich (2014) 233.

⁴¹ For the finishing of a war as no prerequisite for a triumph, see Degrassi (1947) 74-7 on the 14 triumphs *de Poenis* in the first Punic War; Rich (2014); *contra*: Bastien (2007) 236-8, 247; Pittenger (2008) 84.

⁴² Q. Mucius Scaevola (*RE* 22) held a *contio* at which L. Licinius Crassus (*RE* 55) spoke in favour of the *lex Servilia* restoring senators to juries: Cic. *Brut.* 161.

could oppose the grant of a triumph.⁴³ Indeed, the delay between Metellus' arrival in Rome in spring-summer 107 B.C. and his triumph in 106 B.C. (securely dated by the *fasti triumphales*⁴⁴) was probably not Metellus' choice (for, say, preparing the triumph) but more likely the result of obstruction to the law granting him *imperium* for the day of the triumph. The senate and Metellus might even have found it convenient to wait until Manlius left office on 9 December 107 B.C. before getting the law passed.

Metellus' attempt to get the people on his side by saying that his opponent was simply using the people for his own purposes was a standard rhetorical tool in contional oratory,⁴⁵ but also an important argument in the broader struggle between senators and tribunes for the people's favour. Underlying the dissatisfaction with the senatorial elite's behaviour and achievements in the war against Jugurtha was a more profound struggle about power distribution at Rome. What Metellus hints at in this passage is that those who claim to operate on behalf of the people are merely using the people to further their own agenda of obtaining power and influence for themselves without necessarily working for the best interests of the people.

The inclusion of a philosophical maxim in this speech may suggest that Metellus adopted a calm and composed appearance when addressing the people, as I have suggested he did in his *contio* speech after his return from the African command. And if this is right, we might also imagine him limiting his gestures and movements during his speech, preferring to communicate his message of being the wronged party through well-articulated arguments and a calm demeanour as this would underline an image of self-confidence in the knowledge of being right. Moreover, the emphatic use of *quirites* underlines even sharper than in the earlier Gellius passage Metellus' use of the rhetoric of inclusion, further underscored by his repeated use of second person plural pronouns (*uobis, uos*): it is Metellus and all good Roman citizens against Manlius (*ille*). By contrast to the earlier passage from Gellius, Metellus here uses a different kind of *ego*, namely one which he presents as inferior to the *quirites* ('qua in re quanto uniuersi me unum antistatis'). This 'rhetoric of self-effacing modesty' was much more current in democratic Athens than in republican Rome,⁴⁶ which again suggests that Metellus borrowed this notion from Greek rhetoric alongside the Socratic maxim.

This hypothesis of calm behaviour in the speech against Manlius and in the speech on his triumph is supported by our knowledge of Metellus' behaviour in 100 B.C., when he was sent

⁴³ Ser. Sulpicius Galba (cos. 144 B.C.; *RE* 58) opposed the grant of triumph to L. Aemilius Paullus (*RE* 144) in 167 B.C.: Livy 45.35.8-9, 45.36.2-6; Plut. *Aem.* 30.2-4.

⁴⁴ Degraffi (1947) 85.

⁴⁵ Morstein-Marx (2004) 252-8 on contional oratory and the attempt to undermine the authority of the opponent.

⁴⁶ Hölkeskamp (2013) 23.

into exile by Saturninus. Alongside his son's, his family's and his friends' impassionate, even dramatic, campaign for a recall, Metellus himself seems to have adopted a calm and composed appearance in order to underline his own dignified position and the injustice of his banishment.⁴⁷ Fragments of two letters sent by Metellus to supporters in Rome during his exile, and preserved by Gellius, offer direct evidence of his self-fashioning and his message of composure in the knowledge of being a blameless victim but also a parallel to the fragmentary speeches of 107-6 B.C.:

illi uero omni iure atque honestate interdicti, ego neque aqua neque igni careo et summa gloria fruniscor ("truly those men were interdicted from all law and respectability, but I lack neither fire nor water, and enjoy the highest glory")

at cum animum uestrum erga me uideo, uehementer consolor et fides uirtusque uestra mihi ante oculos uersatur ("but when I see your affection towards me, I am comforted very much, and your loyalty and courage remain before my eyes").⁴⁸

Again, we see a highly polished rhetorical style with alliteration in the second fragment (*uestrum...uideo, uehementer... uestra... uersatur*), the use of the rhetoric of inclusion of audience and exclusion of enemies, and references to his supporters' moral qualities (*fides* and *uirtus*) as well as his own supreme *gloria*. The written medium of letters certainly lent itself better to carefully wrought phrases, and the audience of these letters, Cn. Domitius (cos. 96 B.C.) and L. Domitius (cos. 94 B.C.) was already on Metellus' side in the conflict, but the clear similarities in rhetorical methods and self-presentation between the speech fragments and these letter fragments suggests that this was a public persona Metellus projected in both situations. This furthermore suggests that Metellus' appearance of calm composure as an exile in 100 B.C. was a repeat or elaboration of his earlier performance in 107-6 B.C.

4. Conclusion

Metellus' performances show that he was acting on behalf of himself as well as the senate and that he posed as the representative of good citizens against the tribunes attacking senators for

⁴⁷ Cic. *Fam.* 1.9.16 (SB 20); Sen. *Ep.* 3.3.4. For discussion of Metellus' behaviour in 100-99 B.C., see Kelly (2006) 84-8, 143-5. For discussion of Cicero's use (and manipulation) of Metellus' *exemplum*, see Kelly (2006) 153-3; van der Blom (2010) 195-203.

⁴⁸ Letter fragments quoted by Gell. *NA* 17.2.7, 15.13.6, and discussed in Kelly (2006) 85-7; the translations of the two fragments are Kelly's.

incompetence and corruption. In formal terms, he did not need to respond to Marius' and Manlius' allegations (except if he had been formally called to address a *contio* by a hostile tribune), but the threat of loss of reputation and, just as serious, the loss of a triumph meant that Metellus had to react. A politician's status did not only depend on formal recognitions such as a triumph, but also on his reputation across the political spectrum, including the people. Not least in a situation when the people was antagonised against the senate and could be persuaded to vote against legislative proposals, against candidates for public office, and for inquiries and other special measures aimed at the political elite. Apart from the political disadvantage of popular hostility, it was important to save face against an opponent's personal attack for sake of honour itself; that of himself and of his family. Metellus could not simply stand by and watch Manlius destroy his reputation.

Metellus' decision to take up the challenge in the place where it had been issued – the *contio* – shows how much importance he placed on his public reputation with the people and how well he understood the possibilities of contional rhetoric. The fact that he prepared and delivered at least two speeches characterised by elegant clauses, philosophical content, rhetoric of inclusion, and a strong counter attack on one of the leaders in the opposition against him, Manlius, illustrates not only Metellus' skill as an orator, but also more generally the central role played by public speech in Roman republican politics, the personal nature of the political game, the performative aspects of public speeches, and the crucial need to protect and maintain personal and family reputation in a political system focused on individuals and not on policies or parties. The struggle between Marius – a self-made man and ostensibly the champion of the people and all virtuous Romans – and Metellus – allegedly the incompetent representative of a too-influential family and a corrupt senate – shows how personal ambition for public office and power could be staged as a clash between mass and elite.⁴⁹ Metellus' performance, admittedly in glimpses only, seems to have played into this stage set: his philosophical hints and polished rhetoric suggested his elite education and expertise in the higher echelons of Roman society, while his depiction of Manlius as an unworthy opponent could also be understood by his audience as the superiority or haughtiness of an elite senator dismissing the people's representative. Based on these passages, Metellus did nothing to reject the image of senatorial arrogance and sense of pre-eminence, but instead used the public meetings to

⁴⁹ See also Yakobson's (2014) discussion of the political implications of this struggle.

promote himself as a worthy representative of all good Roman citizens, of the true leaders of the Roman state, and of the leading families of Rome and the senate.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ I should like to thank the editors of the volume for the invitation to contribute in spite of not having delivered a paper at the conference from which this volume arises. Thanks are also due to audiences in Chicago and Nottingham, who gave helpful feedback to earlier versions of this chapter. The chapter has also benefited from discussions with John Rich, Ida Östenberg and Carsten Hjort Lange, to whom I am most grateful. Finally, this chapter was inspired by my work on the Fragments of the Roman Republican Orators project and discussions with Catherine Steel, who also offered feedback on early drafts of this chapter.