

Princeton/Stanford Working Papers in Classics

Self-Aggrandizement and Praise of Others in Cicero

Version 1.0

December 2005

Robert A. Kaster

Princeton University

Abstract: Ciceronian invective has received a great deal of attention; yet Cicero's deployment of praise—of himself and others—and others' praise of Cicero open an equally revealing window on late Roman Republican culture. This paper uses Cicero's defense of P. Sestius (March 56 BCE) to give this aspect of Ciceronian discourse some of the attention it is due.

© Robert A. Kaster. kaster@princeton.edu

Self-Aggrandizement and Praise of Others in Cicero

While Cicero's use of invective has rarely wanted for scholarly attention—the names Nisbet (1961) and Koster (1980) are landmarks of the last 40 years—this attention has been especially lively in recent anglophone scholarship. To mention only major surveys within the last ten years, we have had Anthony Corbeill's important book (1996) on the rhetorical and social uses of laughter, which literally could not have been written without Cicero's hostile brand of humor; a chapter in James May's *Companion to Cicero* (2002), also by Corbeill, deals with invective as such; and in *Cicero the Advocate* (2004), edited by Jonathan Powell and Jeremy Patterson, Christopher Craig addresses 'Audience Expectations, Invective, and Proof.' Much less attention has been devoted to Cicero's use of praise, the bright and beaming twin of dark, snarling invective. In this paper I try in a modest way to redress the imbalance.

When I ask myself, first, why this imbalance exists, at least three plausible reasons—not at all mutually exclusive—suggest themselves. Most generally, there is the undeniable fascination of nastiness as such, and the attention-grabbing colors and gestures with which it is often presented: Milton's Satan, Shakespeare's Iago, and the John Claggart of *Billy Budd* are all the most memorable creatures in their respective texts, and Cicero's Piso, though a creature of a markedly different order, bears comparison in that respect. Second, and relatedly, I suspect a sense prevails that praise is the default, the bland path that speech, absent provocations, is more likely to take, especially the speech of people as conscious of protocol as the Romans: for such people praise is the norm, and real significance lies in the departures from the norm that invective provides. (If anyone holds this view, I hope to shake them, if not dislodge them, in the course of these few pages.) Finally, and with reference specifically to Cicero, I suspect a deterrent to examining praise too closely lies in the awareness—if only subliminal—that any treatment of Ciceronian praise must sooner or later confront its most conspicuous instance, the praise Cicero lavishes on his favorite subject, himself.

Cicero's conceit—the 'self-aggrandizement' of my title—is not at first glance, or even second, a very pretty sight to most modern eyes; and those who steel themselves to gaze upon it soon discover the classic study published fifty years ago by Walter Allen under the title, precisely, of 'Cicero's Conceit' (1954), in which he gathers much evidence of the phenomenon and makes it, if not madly attractive, then culturally intelligible, leaving not much scope for further development. But though it's not my aim here to pick any serious fights with Allen, I do want to suggest that there's something more to say on the subject of Cicero's self-praise, and on his use of praise more generally, which was not quite part of Allen's topic. To focus my arguments I will use the *pro Sestio*, the most important and most interesting of the so-called '*post reditum* speeches', in which Cicero takes the opportunity both to look back in time—to give his version of Roman politics leading to the exile he suffered in 58-57—and to look around the current political scene, in a long excursus on the so-called *populares* and *Optimates*.

The speech's scope makes it useful because it is a virtual laboratory of Ciceronian invective and praise. In it Cicero elaborately and memorably caricatures the major villains—Pulbius Clodius Pulcher and the consuls of 58, L. Calpurnius Piso and A. Gabinius—and a couple of minor blackguards, Gellius and P. Vatinius, while abusing a handful of others briefly in passing. More important for my purpose today, he bestows praise on over two dozen contemporaries, in re-

marks that range from brief honorific notices to full-dress encomia. It is also the speech in which his self-aggrandizement seems to reach heights it had not scaled before and would certainly not reach again.

To start, then, I will quickly summarize the main lines of Allen's essay on 'Cicero's conceit,' for orientation, and then fill out the picture a bit by considering how Cicero's self-aggrandizement works in *pro Sestio*. In the second half of my discussion, I will show how Cicero's self-aggrandizement in this speech is inseparable from the praise of others, in the *two* senses of that phrase: both the praise that Cicero bestows on others and, no less important, the praise that others bestow on him.

Among the important points that Allen makes, the four particularly relevant to my own argument can be briefly recapitulated. First, though Roman elite culture nurtured among its members a degree of vanity that is both frankly expressed and quite breathtaking by modern middle-class standards (even modern academic standards), the same culture placed limits on the amount of self-praise that could be tolerated. Second, there is no evidence that contemporaries generally regarded Cicero as conspicuously exceeding those limits, no evidence that any but his enemies found much occasion to criticize his self-praise, no evidence—where his forensic speeches are concerned—that his self-praise was counterproductive (for example, in alienating juries), and no reason to suppose that he would have persisted in it had it been counterproductive. Third, and despite appearances to the contrary, Cicero repeatedly shows himself to be sensitive to the question how far self-praise was socially acceptable. Finally, when he finds himself in circumstances where self-praise seems needed, he typically frames the necessity in terms of maintaining his *dignitas*: that is, he must speak in ways honorific to himself because he is compelled to respond to *iniuriae* that have detracted from his *dignitas* or because the worth of the deeds that have gained him praise would otherwise be in doubt. Here the tensions inherent in self-praise are helpful in making plain hierarchies of value within the culture, as the imperative of maintaining one's *dignitas* trumps the imperative of moderating the way one talks about oneself.

Now, it would surely be possible to refine these points in various ways. In the case of the first, for example, it would probably be correct to say that Roman elite culture placed limits on self-praise not despite but, precisely, *because of* the generally high level of vanity that it nurtured in its members, and the competitiveness that such vanity engendered. The vanity, and the point, are embodied neatly in Quintilian's explanation of why boasting causes offense (*Inst. or.* 11. 1. 16): 'for the human mind by its nature has something lofty about it and noble and unable to endure a superior. . . . But the person who elevates himself inordinately is taken to be oppressive and contemptuous, not so much making himself greater but making all others less'; and there is no reason to suppose that Quintilian's generalization about *mens nostra*—by which he means, his own mind and that of others of his class—would have been alien to Cicero and his highly competitive peers. Such added grace-notes aside, however, Allen's discussion very helpfully covers much of the necessary ground.

Still, if we turn to the *pro Sestio* we find that there is a dimension of 'Cicero's conceit' on which Allen's discussion does not really touch. It's an important dimension, and one not limited to this speech; to appreciate it, we must consider first the speech's setting and its argument. On February 10 of 56 a charge of *vis*, or public violence, was brought against Publius Sestius, who as trib-

une in 57 had supported Cicero's recall from exile. Indeed, it is Sestius, along with his fellow-tribune Titus Annius Milo and the consul Publius Cornelius Lentulus, whom Cicero repeatedly credits with being chiefly responsible for that recall: hence the sense of obligation he expresses at the speech's start (*Sest* 2), when he says 'I once thought . . . that I would be obliged to use my voice in thanking those who have most earned my gratitude and publicizing their acts of kindness; but . . . I am now forced to use it in warding off the perils launched against them.' In Sestius's case it was an obligation Cicero was able to fulfill independent of his sentiments, for his correspondence shows that he was at the time rather put out with the man, whom he described as a 'peevish fellow,' *morosus homo* (*QFr.* 2. 4(8). 1). But of course none of that shows on the surface of the speech that he delivered, roughly one month after the charge was first brought, late in the second week of March.

Speaking last as was his custom, after speeches by Gaius Licinius Calvus, Marcus Crassus, and Quintus Hortensius, Cicero felt free to range rather widely, delivering what he calls in the exordium an 'unmethodical and general defense' (*Sest.* 5 *confusa atque universa defensio*). And indeed, it is as difficult to infer from this speech exactly what specific acts the charge of *vis* comprised as it is to discern the exact bases of the prosecution's case in the *pro Caelio*, delivered some three weeks later: though Cicero spends 6600 words describing the events of 58, leading up to and following his departure into exile, and another 2100 words on the events of 57, when Sestius was tribune, he uses exactly 125 words to describe a single act of Sestius as tribune (*Sest.* 79)—and that happens to concern an episode in which Sestius himself was victim of a violent attack and which could not conceivably have figured in the charge. To the extent that this strategy resulted in a certain obfuscation of the charges, that was no doubt a welcome side effect; but it was surely only a side effect, for the main aim of Cicero's strategy was far bolder.

As Andrew Lintott (1999, 110-24) and Andrew Riggsby (1999, 79-84) have well stressed, any charge of *vis* was a political charge, not just in the sense that it was brought by one political clique as a move against another—as was certainly true in Sestius's case—but in the more fundamental sense that it alleged a political crime, a crime against the interests of the community as a whole: any charge of *vis* alleged that the relevant acts were not only criminally wrong but were fundamentally *contra rem publicam*. Consequently, the charge invited a political defense, which is exactly what Cicero mounts, with a bold simplicity and directness: he contends that the events leading to his exile amounted to an overthrow of the *res publica*, and that the events leading to his recall amounted to its restoration. That is why he spends so many thousands of words on the events of 58, and why he really does not need to address any of Sestius's specific acts: if the attacks upon himself undermined the commonwealth, if his expulsion laid it low, if his restoration revived it, then by definition no action on Sestius's part to secure his return could be 'against the public interest.'

That the commonwealth's interests differed in no important way from his own is the central thought that Cicero uses to undermine the foundation of the prosecution's case. Hence his attempt to identify himself with the *res publica* and vice versa, an attempt that begins at the speech's outset and never lets up (on this aspect of the speech, see esp. May 1988, 90-105, cf. also Graff 1963, 34-5, Habicht 1990, 50):

5 'Fortune herself established that Publius Sestius should hold the tribunate in the civil community's gravest crisis, when the commonwealth, overturned and battered, lay in ruins'—that is, when Cicero himself was in exile;

15 'I must set out in detail the shipwreck that the commonwealth suffered in the previous year [viz., 58, the year of Cicero's exile]: for you will find that everything Sestius later said, did, and intended was aimed at picking up the pieces and restoring the well-being of us all. . . . [T]he bow was bent against me alone (the inexperienced and uninformed commonly said), but in truth against the entire commonwealth, thanks to the transfer to the plebs of a frenzied desperado';

24 '[The consuls of 58] openly made a pact with [Clodius] that they could have their pick of the provinces . . . provided that they first hand over the commonwealth, battered and bound, to the tribune; moreover, they said that the deal, once struck, could be sealed with my blood';

and so on, and on (compare, e.g., *Sest.* 27, 31-33, 49-50, 53-54, 60, 71, 73, 83-84, 87, 112, 128-29, 144-45, 147).

But wait now, you might say: what sort of argument is this? The exile of one man was equivalent to the Republic's overthrow? The restoration of that one man was equivalent to its resurrection? Surely there could be no more striking example of self-aggrandizement, of egomania raised, pathologically, to the level of political principle. Well, yes, that is how it appears at first sight. Yet there are a few things to note about this argument, however bizarre it seems. First, and on a practical level, it apparently worked, or at a minimum did not hurt, for Sestius was acquitted unanimously by the jury of 75 men. Second, and much more important, the argument is not quite what it seems to be at first sight. Consider the passages that follow:

27 'what greater distinction could anyone find in all history than this, that **all patriots, on their own and in concert, and the entire senate, as a matter of public policy, took on the dress of mourning for one of their fellow-citizens?**' [late Feb. 58];

50 '**any risk to my life placed the commonwealth in peril** (as many men said in the senate while I was away [cf. 129]), and **I was for that reason commended to the protection of foreign peoples by letters sent by the consuls** in accord with the senate's resolution' [May/June 57];

73 'Accordingly (he [viz., Lucius Cotta] went on), because by my absence **I had rescued the commonwealth from perils no less great than on a certain occasion when I had been present**, it was appropriate that I be not just restored by the senate but also honored' [1 Jan. 57];

121 '. . . I whom **Quintus Catulus and many others in the senate had called 'father of the fatherland'**'';

128 ‘For **did the senate ever commend** any citizen, save me, to the protection of foreign nations . . . **ever express formal thanks** to the Roman people’s allies for any citizen’s well-being, save mine? **In my case alone did the conscript fathers decree** that provincial governors with the power of command, together with their quaestors and legates, safeguard my life and well-being. **In my case alone**, since the founding of the city, **did the consuls send letters**, in accordance with the senate’s decree, to call together from the length and breadth of Italy **all who desired the commonwealth’s safety: what the senate never decreed** when the commonwealth as a whole faced danger **it thought it must decree to preserve my well-being alone**’ [May/June 57]

129 ‘the hero [viz., Pompey] . . . **bore witness**, in a prepared statement of his views, to the fact **that I alone had saved the fatherland** . . . a packed meeting of the senate so fully aligned itself with his statement that only a single enemy of the people dissented, and that **that very fact was entrusted to the public records**, so that generations to come would ever remember it . . . **the senate decreed** that no one was to watch the heavens for omens, that no one was to bring to bear any cause for delay, and **that if anyone did otherwise, he would patently be seeking to overturn the commonwealth**: his act would be regarded most gravely by the senate and be made the subject of discussion in that body. . . .’ [July 57] [cf. also 31-33, 38, 74, 120-123]

There are several very important points to be made about these passages. First, they show that Cicero’s premise in the speech, identifying himself and his interests with the *res publica* and the public interest, did *not* involve self-aggrandizement, if by that is meant inflating one’s worth beyond some generally recognized assessment: the generally recognized assessment was exactly that his well-being was identical with the commonwealth’s. Nor did his premise involve boasting, if that means engaging in self-praise and making claims about one’s own abilities or status. Cicero was neither praising himself nor making claims of his own; he was *reporting* what others had said of him in praise, for the most part as matters of the formal public record—something that I believe is generally true when he makes such statements about himself; and what others had said of him in praise quite precisely identified him and his interests with the *res publica* and the public interest, thereby providing him with the basis for his defense.

Second, everything that he reports seems to be true as a matter of fact. We know that the senate’s decrees were stored in the *aerarium* and published as public inscriptions, where they could be checked ‘by generations to come,’ as Cicero says. We know that the senate and people had previously assumed mourning dress to mark some public catastrophe, and we know they would do so in the future, but it appears that they had in fact never done so in response to an individual’s misfortune—and by doing so they indeed signalled that the individual’s misfortune was tantamount to a public catastrophe. (It was probably for this very reason that the consuls ordered the senate to resume normal dress, an act for which Cicero could not forgive them: *Sest.* 32.) In fact, Cicero seems to be rather scrupulous in reporting all this testimony: notice that whereas he is unsurprisingly keen to notice gestures made by senatorial decree and to record honors uniquely bestowed on him, he says only that ‘Quintus Catulus and many others in the senate’ applied the honorific phrase *pater patriae* to him, that is, after the suppression of the Catilinarians; he does not say that it was decreed by the senate or that he was the first to be so called—and we happen to know that that title was not bestowed by senatorial decree until the senate gave it to Caesar

after Munda (Livy *Perioch.* 116, Suet. *Iul.* 76. 1, 85. 1, Flor. 2. 13, 34, cf. *Phil.* 2. 31, 13. 23, 25, *Off.* 3. 83), and we also know that Cicero himself, for one, had previously applied the honorific to Marius, when he was defending Gaius Rabirius earlier in 63 (*Rab. Perd.* 27).

Very well, you might say: so he's not making it all up and thumping his chest to inflate his worth—but really, *must* he? Isn't it all rather, well, *unbecoming*? Of course I am not suggesting that Cicero found it burdensome or distasteful to identify himself with the *res publica*. But, in a word, no, it was not unbecoming, indeed quite the opposite: *not* to have deployed this testimony as he does would have been ethically strange, for two very Roman reasons. First, he was, as he says at the outset of the speech, 'obliged to use his voice' not only 'in thanking those who [had] most earned [his] gratitude and publicizing their acts of kindness' but also 'warding off the perils launched against them' (*Sest.* 2): satisfying such obligations stood very near the top of the Roman hierarchy of moral imperatives; to have at hand the means to do the job in a way that could extinguish the danger at its source, by overturning its premise, yet to refuse to use those means—well, at very best that would seem to engage in overly nice concerns about oneself, when concerns about oneself were not properly the main item on the agenda.

But—and this is the second reason—there is no ground to suppose that there *was* cause for Cicero to be concerned about himself in any case. The acts of praise that he records—the quasi-ritual gestures of public mourning, the decrees, the letters, and so on—were, very simply, the just reward of the patriot: it was—to use the language Cicero himself uses in the *pro Sestio* (139)—the *bona fama bonorum*, the good opinion that good men spread abroad about one, *quae sola vere gloria nominari potest*, the only thing that can really be called glory. In the system of Roman values—a system that, where glory was concerned, Cicero did not question until the very end of his life—this was the only compensation a good citizen decently sought for his service to the community: such a citizen would of course continue to render that service even if the compensation was not forthcoming; but once glory was gained, not to be glad of it, and not to encourage others to share your gladness by bruiting it about—that would be quite un-Roman. By speaking of that praise, Cicero was just wearing the public character that he was entitled to wear, assembled from all that good men said of him.

Now, it is certainly true that the good men in question could not have intended their praise to be used in the way and for the purpose that Cicero uses it here, to defend a man who surely was guilty, if not of public violence according to the letter of the law, then certainly of contributing to general level of political violence, a point that Cicero himself in effect concedes. It is no less certainly true that the praise of others reported here cannot have been the transparent, unanimous, and spontaneous thing that Cicero represents it as being. For example, he neglects to mention that when the people and the senate adopted mourning in his support, they were following his own lead, for he had assumed mourning after Clodius promulgated the first of the laws aimed against him—a move that Cicero himself later came to regard as a tactical error, as his correspondence from exile shows (*Att.* 3. 15(60), 17 Aug. 58). And surely whatever was going through Pompey's mind on that day in July 57 when he read from a prepared statement to declare Cicero the commonwealth's unique savior, it cannot have been simple; for it was that very claim, when communicated to Pompey by Cicero himself early in 62, that had put a lasting frost on their relations (cf. esp. *Fam.* 5. 7(3). 2-3, April 62), and Pompey himself was the man who had most flagrantly betrayed Cicero during his crisis in 58. But such considerations do not much

matter in the Roman economy of praise. In this economy, praise is a commodity, a thing of value traded back and forth. Any given act of praise is like a piece of currency put into circulation: it becomes fungible, like the cash I might pay you for services rendered, and the recipient is free to use it as suits his needs.

Within this economy of praise a stereotypical view of Cicero would suppose that he was above all a consumer, avidly accumulating and parting with little; but that is not at all the case. As I’ve already noted, his defense of Sestius teems with praise bestowed on others besides himself and the defendant. To illustrate the variousness of this praise, and some of the workings of the economy of praise just remarked, I want to turn in the balance of this paper to consider Cicero the producer of praise, and to praise of others in the second sense of the phrase.

These occasions of praise are summarized in the Appendix, beginning with the simplest and most obvious types and moving to those that are more complex and interesting, both rhetorically and socially; our survey can proceed in the same order. Simplest, most numerous, and surely most familiar are the brief and highly formalized appositive phrases such as we find in the first item (*Sest.* 3), the notice of Quintus Hortensius, ‘a most distinguished and eloquent gentleman,’ in which an epithet denoting social prestige—*clarissimus*, *honestissimus*, *egregius*—is typically joined with one or more terms denoting a specific, valued trait, like eloquence. These are the expected clichés of praise, much like the clichés of abuse that animate invective and allow us to predict that the target of abuse is a base-born wastrel and coward who spent a dissolute youth as a prostitute before becoming a bankrupt cutpurse. But before we dismiss them as mere clichés, let’s pause a moment to consider some of the real work that clichés accomplish.

We can notice, first, that though the number of people praised is not small, the range of qualities for which they are praised is quite narrow. Save for the Laenii—members of a provincial family of Brundisium, who sheltered Cicero on his flight into exile, praised at *Sest.* 131 as *doctissimi*—the qualities cluster very densely around *fortitudo* and *fides* and related excellences on the order of *constantia*, *gravitas*, and *magnitudo animi*, along with *virtus* in the strongly gendered sense of ‘manliness.’ They are the core virtues of Roman public life, the virtues of the *boni*, the ‘good men’ who uphold the common good, the patriots. They are predictable and stereotypical as such, and they are useful in praise and valued in practice precisely because they are predictable and stereotyped: just because they are unsurprising and non-idiosyncratic they can be shared to a superlative degree by any number of men, and those men can uphold the common good just because they share them. To put the point another way: we would not expect to hear Pompey praised as ‘the most nimble mind of his generation,’ not just because nimbleness of mind was not conspicuous among his traits, but because the Romans did not especially value mental agility as a political virtue—and because the form of the expression ‘most X of his generation’ is too distinctive, too individualizing. It is the great merit of the Latin superlative, for this purpose, that it is non-exclusive: only one man can be called ‘the most nimble mind of his generation’ but any number of men can be *fortissimi*. (In this respect the praise bestowed on Cicero, for example as ‘the unique savior of the commonwealth,’ appears all the more extraordinary.) The praise that Cicero bestows in these phrases distinguishes the recipient, but only by placing him in a category of men who are distinguished to an equally superlative degree in respect of bravery, loyalty, and the like. The categories taken all together define the *boni*, the real patriots.

Of course it is a favored stance of Cicero, especially in the speeches after his exile, that all the *boni* really stand together on the same side—which is to say on his side—united against an out-cast band of renegades and desperadoes. Accordingly, just because they identify the qualities of the *boni*, these brief ‘courtesy notices’ serve at the same time as markers denoting the people who—at least for the present occasion—can be regarded as *mei*, the ‘people on my side’. Here the phrases serve two main purposes. First, and more straightforwardly, they are a form of currency, used to underwrite a system of retributive justice; or in other words, payback, the return I make to those who have helped me, just as an invective is the return—the unwanted gift—I give to those who have harmed me. One example of this payback is the praise of the Laenii, the family of Brundisium already mentioned, whose cultivation receives notice; another example is the praise twice bestowed in the course of the speech on Lucius Ninnius (*Sest.* 26, 68), who as tribune in 58 had done what he could to support Cicero in the run-up to his exile.

More subtly, the phrases of praise are a means of maintaining a certain public face when referring to persons with whom one’s relations were not unproblematic. Hortensius, that ‘most distinguished and eloquent gentleman,’ was in fact one of the aristocrats who Cicero believed had betrayed him out of spite and envy at his moment crisis (see esp. *Att.* 3. 9(54). 2), had let him down during his exile, and had continued to be obstructive even after his return; only after Hortensius supported him for election to the college of augurs, three years after this speech, could Cicero speak of him with genuine warmth. But of course this was not the occasion to let any of those resentments show, when Hortensius was part of the team defending Sestius. Even more problematic were Cicero’s relations with Pompey and Crassus, both of whom were present at the trial, Crassus as another advocate for the defense, Pompey as a character witness for Sestius: ‘conflicted’ does not begin to describe Cicero’s attitude toward Pompey, who had ruthlessly failed him in 58; as for Crassus, just a few weeks before this speech Cicero had learned—from Pompey—that the magnate was funding the archvillain Clodius in his ongoing villainies (*QFr.* 2. 3(7). 4). But of course both receive the expected token of courtesy.

Still, the case of Pompey and Crassus provides a reminder that even the merest clichés of courtesy can have real force, if not through their presence then by their omission. In the one passage where Cicero cannot avoid referring to the three dynasts—Pompey, Crassus, and Caesar—all together, he does so in these terms (*Sest.* 39): ‘Gnaeus Pompeius, a most distinguished man and most friendly disposed to me now, as he was (to the extent possible) then; Marcus Crassus, the bravest of men, with whom I enjoyed every degree of friendship . . .; and Gaius Caesar, whom I had never given just cause to be estranged from me . . .’ The omission of even a specious superlative makes the reference to Caesar—who was *not* present—every bit as chilly as the March day on which the speech was delivered. That chill is made only more biting in the one apparently laudatory phrase that C. applies to Caesar in the speech, when he refers to him as ‘a gentle person to whom bloodshed is alien’ (*Sest.* 132). Given that Caesar had for two years been slaughtering Gauls by the ten thousand, we might suspect irony; but Cicero is no doubt thinking only of Roman blood, and the irony lies elsewhere. Cicero alludes to Caesar’s position opposing the execution of the Catilinarians in December 63: it was of course on those executions that Clodius had based his attack on Cicero, and Caesar had restated his view in a public meeting called by Clodius just days before Cicero fled in March 58 (*Plut. Cic.* 30. 4, *Cass. Dio.* 38. 17. 1-2)—a fact that Cicero suppresses in this speech, though he surely did not forget it.

I can round off this survey by looking briefly at two other passages where Cicero uses praise for more substantial argumentative purposes than merely positioning himself vis-à-vis another person in passing. The first occurs early in the speech, when Cicero is providing the obligatory sketch of the defendant's early life, to show that the virtues Sestius displayed as tribune had deep roots. Because he wishes to show, in particular, that the devotion Sestius displayed in supporting Cicero himself and working for his restoration is of a piece with the admirable devotion Sestius earlier displayed to several authoritative older men—his own father and the fathers of his first and second wives—he must bring the older men onstage, which he does in these terms (*Sest.* 6-7):

Publius Sestius' father, judges, was (as most of you recall) a wise, pure, and strict man who came in first in the elections for tribune of the plebs—in a field that included some of the most notable men at a very favorable time for our community [that is, the 90s BCE]—but was thereafter less keen to enjoy further office than to be seen worthy of it. . . . **Gaius Albanus**, a most honorable and respected man . . . [T]hat most excellent and unfortunate man, **Lucius Scipio**, . . . who had been cast out when the commonwealth was tossed on turbulent seas—a man then prostrate in a foreign land who would rightly have followed in the footsteps of his ancestors . . .

If Cicero seems to be working especially hard in the first and last cases, that is because he is, with good reason. The 'excellent and unfortunate' Lucius Scipio was Lucius Cornelius Scipio Asiagenus, an adherent of Marius who became consul in 83, and a thoroughly unpleasant piece of work even by the terrible standards of the 80s: deeply treacherous, twice deserted by his army, he fled to Marseille either just before or just after being proscribed—though of course Cicero's euphemisms and clichés disclose none of this. As for the elder Sestius, he is introduced in terms that make him a paragon even among defendants' fathers, who generally are made to seem candidates for sainthood: whereas 'strict' (*severus*) is what any father should be, the only individuals Cicero elsewhere describes as both 'wise' (*sapiens*) and morally 'pure' (*sanctus*) are the Optimate leader Quintus Catulus the elder, and Socrates. When Cicero assures the majority of the judges that they recall the good man's election to a tribunate sometime in the halcyon days of the 90s, he is merely planting a useful idea in their minds, for most of them almost certainly were too young to recall it in fact. When he says that the elder Sestius 'was thereafter less keen to enjoy further office than to be seen worthy of it,' he means that the man either withdrew from further service to the commonwealth or was defeated when he stood for further office: were he an opponent, Cicero would of course attack him for the former or demean him for the latter.

In these sketches Cicero toils to spin hay into gold, using praise for rhetorically conventional ends in ways that are—unsurprisingly—economical with the truth. My last example involves a passage that is much more ambitious and revealing in several ways: the praise of the 'godlike' Milo and the 'immortal manliness' he displayed while tribune in 57, one of the two full-fledged encomia that Cicero incorporates in the speech. (The other encomium, of Cato (*Sest.* 60-63), would be no less interesting to examine.) The passage occurs at the climax of what passes for Cicero's formal defense, just before he turns from his narrative of past events to consider present circumstances, in the excursus on *optimates* and *populares* that engrosses the last third of the speech. The premise of the encomium, briefly, is this (esp. *Red. sen.* 6-8, *Sest.* 71 ff.): a terrible riot had bloodied the forum on January 23 of 57, when Clodius's thugs violently disrupted a vote aimed at Cicero's recall, and in the days and weeks that followed the same thugs ran amok in the city; when, in the course of their frenzy, they attacked Milo's house, Milo had shown proper re-

straint, at first seeking only to bring a charge of public violence against Clodius for attacking the home of a magistrate; and it was only after he was blocked from bringing the charge—when, as Cicero puts it, ‘the courts were uprooted’ (*iudicia sublata*)—that Milo assembled an armed force of his own, to meet force with force for the sake of the common good. In so doing, as Cicero says, Milo demonstrated that ‘it is ever right to resist by law and legal procedure the crimes of reckless men . . . ; but if the laws are not in force, . . . then life and liberty must of necessity be defended with a bulwark of force’ (*Sest.* 86).

There are two points to be made about this encomium: first, it is the single most deceptive passage in the speech—not a small claim in itself; second, the deception is useful to Cicero in two quite different ways. As commonly in Cicero’s speeches, the deception lies not so much in what he says as in what he fails to say: it does indeed appear that Milo was prevented from bringing a charge against Clodius; but the root cause was almost certainly an action taken by Cicero’s own allies in the senate, who had declared a *iustitium*, a cessation of legal processes and all other public business, as a kind of general strike to protest the riot of January 23—an event to which Cicero happened to refer in the parallel narrative he gave when thanking the senate immediately after his return in September 57 (*Red. sen.* 6-8, cf. Meyer 1919, 109 n. 3, Maslowski 1976, 30, Brunt 1981, 229-30), but which he completely suppresses here. The suppression allows him to present Milo, not as the headstrong and impulsive character we otherwise have reason to think he was, but as a model of sober constitutionality; and having created that character for Milo, he is able to make it do double duty. First, and more directly, it is useful for the defense of Sestius: it allows him to cast Sestius in the same mold as Milo and argue that he, too, had assembled a *praesidium* of his own—that is to say, a crew of gladiators and armed thugs—only unwillingly, under compulsion, and for the sake of self-defense (*Sest.* 79).

The second end this tricky encomium serves becomes plain when we recall two facts about Milo: as tribune in 57 he, too, had labored for Cicero’s recall and was therefore among those to whom Cicero owed a great deal; second, he was currently at risk, because Clodius had in early February brought Milo to trial before the people on a charge of violence with Pompey himself as his defender, and at the time of this speech that trial—after several stormy sessions memorably described in a letter from Cicero to his brother—was in adjournment, the charge still hanging over Milo’s head (esp. *QFr.* 2. 3(7). 1-3). In other words: by offering this encomium Cicero is working to repay his debt to Milo, not just by offering the currency of generalized praise, but by laying out a specific plea in his defense. In fact, we know that Cicero had done just this sort thing—speaking in one trial with an eye on another—very recently (*QFr.* 2. 3(7). 6): on February 11, the day after Sestius was charged, Cicero appeared in defense of Calpurnius Bestia; and as he tells his brother, he took the occasion to lay the grounds of his future defense, inserting in his speech for Bestia an extended eulogy of Sestius, just as he inserts in the present speech for Sestius an extended eulogy of Milo. It pleases me to imagine that on this occasion Pompey—one of Milo’s *advocati*, seated there in court while Cicero spoke—was taking notes.

I hope I have made the case that the practice of praise as we find it in Cicero is at least as interesting as the practice of invective, and if anything more diverse. On the one hand, one could publicly praise others for any number of reasons, as we see Cicero doing in the eulogies he doles out in *pro Sestio*. On the other hand, the person eulogized was free to turn the praise he received to any number of uses, as we also see Cicero doing, in the passages commonly regarded as self-

aggrandizing. To use again the economic metaphor I invoked earlier, praise was a fungible currency, and no token of praise was determinately any one thing, forever and immutable. If we had a view larger than Cicero himself affords—if we had more of the orations and correspondence of his contemporaries—we could trace a vast economy of praise at work, in which little of the praise is quite what it seems, and even less of it ever seems to be just one thing, as the tokens are traded back and forth, repaying a creditor here or underwriting an expansion of one’s own *dignitas* there. But even with the limitations of the material we have in Cicero, there is, I think, ample scope for further work.

APPENDIX: CICERO AS THE PRODUCER OF PRAISE

- a. “Courtesy” notices (applied in speech to 24 different individuals; some examples):
 - 3 “**Quintus Hortensius**, a most distinguished and eloquent gentleman” (clarissimo viro atque eloquentissimo)
 - 6 “**Gaius Albanus**, a most honorable and respected man” (honestissimi et spectatissimi viri)
 - 9 “their [viz., the Capuans’] **town councilors**, men of the greatest bravery and excellence” (fortissimi atque optimi viri)
 - 12 “**Marcus Cato**, then tribune of the plebs and an extraordinarily brave patriot” (tribuno plebis, fortissimo atque optimo civi, cf. 60-63 below)
 - 12 “**Marcus Petreius**’ exceptionally patriotic spirit, the surpassing manliness he displayed for the common good, his authority with the soldiers, and his experience on campaign” (excellens animus amore rei publicae, . . . praestans in re publica virtus, non summa auctoritas apud milites, non mirificus usus in re militari)
 - 15 “**Gnaeus Pompeius**, a most distinguished man and (despite the best efforts of many) most friendly disposed toward me” (vir clarissimus mihi quae multis repugnantibus amicissimus, cf. 39 “Gnaeus Pompeius, a most distinguished man and most friendly disposed to me now, as he was (to the extent possible) then” / clarissimo viro mihi quae et nunc et quoad licuit amicissimo, cf. 67)
 - 26 “**Lucius Ninnius**, a man of unbelievable loyalty, largeness of spirit, and firm resolve” (vir incredibili fide, magnitudine animi, constantia, cf. 68 “Lucius Ninnius, whose loyalty and manliness never wavered on my behalf” / cuius in mea causa numquam fides virtusque contremuit)
 - 39 “**Marcus Crassus**, the bravest of men, with whom I enjoyed every degree of friendship” (quocum mihi omnes erant amicitiae necessitudines, vir fortissimus”)
 - 58 “<**Lucius**> **Lucullus**, a man and general of the highest caliber” (summo viro atque imperatore, cf. 93 “an extraordinarily brave citizen of the highest caliber”, fortissimum ac summum civem, also referring to but not naming Lucullus)
 - 70 “the leader of the senate, **Publius Lentulus**, became my champion, pitting his authoritative judgment against the resistance of Piso and Gabinius, and on the motion of the eight tribunes made a truly excellent statement on my case” (auctoritate ac sententia sua Pisone et Gabinio repugnantibus causam suscepit tribunisque plebis octo referentibus praestantissimam de me sententiam dixit, cf. 72 “the grave and manly performance of the consul Publius Lentulus” / virtus, actio, gravitas P. Lentuli consulis, 144 “in my eyes a god” / deum ac parentem statuo)
 - 85 “**another tribune of the plebs [Milo]**—a godlike man (yes, I shall say what I think, and what all agree with me in thinking), godlike and endowed with a remarkable, an unprecedented largeness of spirit, gravity, and loyalty” (divini hominis—dicam enim

quod sentio et quod mecum sentiunt omnes—divini, insigni quadam, inaudita, nova magnitudine animi, gravitate, fide praediti cf. 86-89 below)

130 "that extraordinary gentleman [viz., **Metellus Nepos**], a true Metellus indeed" (vir egregius ac vere Metellus)

131 "the house of those most excellent and cultivated men, **the Laenii**—Marcus Laenius Flaccus, his father, and his brother" (optimorum et doctissimorum virorum)

b. More extensive characterizations:

6 "**Publius Sestius' father**, judges, was—as most of you recall—a wise (*sapiens*), pure (*sanctus*), and strict (*severus*) man who came in first in the elections for tribune of the plebs—in a field that included some of the most notable men at a very favorable time for our community—but was thereafter less keen to enjoy further office than to be seen worthy of it."

7 "that most excellent and unfortunate man, **Lucius Scipio**, . . . who had been cast out when the commonwealth was tossed on turbulent seas—a man then prostrate in a foreign land who would rightly have followed in the footsteps of his ancestors."

29 "**Lucius Lamia**, who not only held me in singularly high esteem . . . but was also eager even to meet death on behalf of the commonwealth . . . a Roman knight, a most honored and virtuous man, a superb citizen and patriot who together with the senate and all other patriots was then mourning the misfortune of a friend and of the commonwealth."

67 "this most excellent and heroic man . . . **Gnaeus Pompeius** . . . who had mastered with a victor's manliness citizens utterly steeped in crime, the fiercest enemies, vast tribes, kings, peoples strange and wild, innumerable pirates, slaves, too, in massed array, who ended all wars on land and sea and extended the bounds of the Roman people's dominion to the ends of the earth"

c. Full-fledged *laudationes*:

60-63 "The splendid distinction of **Marcus Cato** . . . the real vigor that inheres in seriousness of character, uprightness, largeness of spirit—in a word, manliness—which remains calm when the storm is raging, provides a beacon in the gloom, abides and cleaves to its ancestral home even after it has been dislodged, shines always with its own light and never is soiled by others' dirty doings. . . ."

86-89 "On this topic even you praise **Milo**, and rightly: for have we even seen his like for immortal manliness? Seeking no other reward than the good opinion of patriots—a thing nowadays thought passé, and despised—he faced every form of danger, the most demanding toil . . . and alone among all our fellow citizens has, I think, demonstrated . . . what it is ever right for outstanding men to do in the commonwealth, and what they are constrained to do: it is ever right to resist by law and legal procedure the crimes of reckless men who seek to overturn the commonwealth; but if the laws are not in force, if legal procedure has been suspended, if the commonwealth has been overwhelmed by arms . . ., then life and liberty must of necessity be defended with a bulwark of force. . . . I shall speak at some length in his praise . . ."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Allen, W., Jr. 1954. Cicero's Conceit. *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 85. 121-44.

Brunt, P.A. 1981. *Iudicia sublata* (58-57 B.C.). *Liverpool Classical Monthly*. 6. 227-31.

Corbeill, A. 1996. *Controlling Laughter: Political Humor in the Late Roman Republic*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

- . 2002. Ciceronian Invective. *Brill's Companion to Cicero: Oratory and Rhetoric*. Ed. J. May. Leiden: E. J. Brill. 197-217.
- Craig, C. 2004. Audience Expectations, Invective, and Proof. *Cicero the Advocate*. Ed. J. Powell and J. Paterson. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 187-214
- Graff, J. 1963. *Ciceros Selbstauffassung*. Heidelberg: C. Winter.
- Habicht, C. 1990. *Cicero the Politician*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Koster, S. 1980. *Die Invektive in der griechischen und römischen Literature*. Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie, 99. Meisenheim an Glan: Hain.
- Lintott, A. W. 1999. *Violence in Republican Rome*. 2nd edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Maslowski, T. 1976. *Domus Milonis oppugnata*. *Eos*. 64. 23-30.
- May, J. M. 1988. *Trials of Character: The Eloquence of Ciceronian Ethos*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- May, J. M. (ed). 2002. *Brill's Companion to Cicero: Oratory and Rhetoric*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- Meyer, E. 1919. *Caesars Monarchie und das Principat des Pompeius*. 2nd edn. Stuttgart: Cotta.
- Nisbet, R. G. M. 1961. *Cicero: In L. Calpurnium Pisonem Oratio*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Powell, J., and J. Paterson (eds.). 2004. *Cicero the Advocate*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Riggsby, A. 1999. *Crime and Community in Ciceronian Rome*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.