

Tenor of Our Times

Volume 9

Article 17

Spring 5-9-2020

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Recommended Citation

Moore, Grady P. (Spring 2020) "Master to Pawn: Cicero's Involvement in the Collapse of Republican Rome," *Tenor of Our Times*: Vol. 9, Article 17.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.harding.edu/tenor/vol9/iss1/17>

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FROM MASTER TO PAWN: CICERO'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE COLLAPSE OF REPUBLICAN ROME

By Grady P. Moore

Rising in the 6th century B.C. from a collapsed kingship, the Roman Republic stood out as a democratic oddity in a world dominated by tyrannical monarchies. The subsequent five centuries saw the once unexceptional city-state grow extensively, first controlling the neighboring towns and regions, then the entire Italian peninsula, then finally the entire Mediterranean, with their borders stretching from Palestine to Normandy. Four hundred years after the birth of the republic, Cicero was born in the town of Arpinum, destined and determined to take up the mantle of Senator. Brilliant in oratory, cunning in the political sphere, and fiercely dedicated to republicanism, Cicero was the formidable force in Roman politics in the mid-first century B.C. However, though he sought to save the Roman Republic, Cicero's arrogance and lack of tact in attempting to manipulate Octavian in the final years of his life led directly to his own demise, the birth of the empire and the destruction of his beloved Republic.

Cicero was born in 109 B.C. to an equestrian family just north of Rome, in the town of Arpinum.¹ Coming from a noble but non office-holding line, Cicero was an outsider to the Roman political sphere. Typically, a lack of a familial history in Roman politics meant one would be excluded from a chance at a political career, but Cicero and his family maneuvered uniquely through marriages and alliances to create a network of social influence that opened the doors to the Roman Senate. Cicero's father made a point of sending his children to Rome to be educated. Himself an invalid, this was perhaps his way of ensuring that his children would have a chance at the senatorial career from which he

¹ Plutarch, *The Parallel Lives* (Loeb Classical Library, 1919), 1.3.

Tenor of Our Times

was restricted.² Cicero, in spite of his relatively modest origins, never apologized for his humble beginnings. Plutarch records a dogged determination in the young lawyer to create a name for himself in spite of the odds against him. Upon being advised to change his cognomen to better his chances in Roman public life, Cicero is recorded to have laughed and boldly announced that he would carry the name Cicero (Latin for chick pea) to greater heights than the legendary names of the day.³

Unlike most men of his day, however, his plans for greatness never involved any military success. From his earliest years until his demise, Cicero's view on power and his own ability to wield it centered almost entirely around the field of persuasion. Being an intellectual at heart, Cicero was thoroughly averse to any sort of military involvement. It is unclear as to whether it was due to a lack of aptitude in the military arts or a distaste for blood or some other reason, but after serving as an aide to Pompeius Strabo during his teenage years, Cicero appears to have sworn away from military life. His early twenties show little to no military involvement.⁴ Instead, they were dominated by a passionate pursuit of academic and rhetorical excellence, skills he would rely on throughout his career. This preference for persuasion over force would be a theme throughout his life, and is clearly seen in his actions during the Catiline Conspiracy and in the assassination of Julius Caesar.

Cicero's masterful grasp of oratory and rhetoric stemmed from an abundance of natural talent. Hailed by his contemporaries as a prodigy, he was compared by Plutarch to Plato, and was described as being "capable of welcoming all knowledge and incapable of slighting any kind of literature or training."⁵ His talent propelled him to such

² Torsten Peterson, *Cicero: A Biography* (New York: Biblio and Tannen, 1963), 28-29.

³ Plutarch, *The Parallel Lives*, 1.4-6.

⁴ Thomas Wiederman, *Cicero and the End of the Roman Republic* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1994), 24.

⁵ Plutarch, *The Parallel Lives*, 2.3.

heights that the fathers of his schoolmates began to become jealous of him, as Cicero's eloquence and intellect towered far above that of their sons. He was an especially gifted poet. Plutarch references a poem written by a juvenile Cicero that was apparently extant and relatively well-known some two centuries after Cicero's death. Even in his own time he was relatively famous, being called the "best poet among the Romans" while still living.⁶ In addition to being extremely naturally gifted, Cicero benefited from the tutelage of his mentors, Lucius Crassus and Marcus Antonius. Known as two of the greatest orators of the generation preceding his, Crassus and Antonius are counted among Cicero's most impactful influences. Formally, Cicero was educated largely by Philon the Academic, disciple of Cleitomachus, who Plutarch describes as widely loved and admired by the Romans.⁷

Entering public life for the first time at the age of about twenty-six, Cicero's unique talent quickly propelled him to notoriety. He served as a lawyer, articulating arguments with such eloquence and grace that he immediately attracted the attention and respect of the intellectual class.⁸ Cicero made his first significant splash in Roman politics with his defense of Roscius of Ameria. Roscius' father had been put to death under proscription and his inheritance sold for a wildly discounted price to Chrysogonus, a freedman of Sulla, the then dictator of Rome. When Roscius publicly set forth the perceived injustice, accusing Sulla's men of wrongdoing, Chrysogonus was indignant and arranged for Roscius to be accused of patricide on trumped-up evidence.⁹ In his biography *Cicero*, W.K. Lacey explains that the prosecution thought that their proximity to Sulla rendered them invincible: in an era of proscriptions and dictatorship, few would dare to challenge the mighty tyrant. Cicero, however, had no such scruples. In spite of a 'weak and reedy' frame, he

⁶ Plutarch, *The Parallel Lives*, 2.4-5

⁷ Ibid 3.1

⁸ W.K. Lacey, *Cicero* (New York: Harper and Row Inc., 1978), 14-15.

⁹ Plutarch, *The Parallel Lives*. 3.4-6

Tenor of Our Times

brazenly attacked Chrysogonus, openly accusing his men of conspiracy and winning the freedom of Roscius.¹⁰

Such an attack can be used as evidence against the commonly made claim that Cicero lacked courage and was unwilling to risk his own well-being. Plutarch describes this era as a time when “murders without number or limit filled the city,” and private hatred manifested itself in the outright killing of political rivals.¹¹ In other words, it was not a safe time to be in the courtroom attacking the principle power-player of the city. But such boldness would come to characterize Cicero: his innate, idealistic belief in the law and in its divine supremacy guided his actions throughout his life, convincing him to take stances on the belief that the righteousness of his actions would see him through.¹²

In his defense of Roscius, Cicero “speedily made himself a name by the mingled caution and boldness of his opposition to the dictator.”¹³ It was no mistake either. Cicero had carefully planned out the nature of his entrance into public life. In an era in which the printing of speeches was relatively rare, Cicero made certain to produce a copy of his oration for consumption by the Roman public. Lacey comments on Cicero’s striking ambition apparent through this act, stating that the unambitious of the era did not take the time to write out their speeches for publication. Beyond that, he states that *For Roscius* was meant to be something of a manifesto, declaring the duty of the nobles in power to uphold governmental justice instead of abusing their position for personal and material gain.¹⁴

¹⁰ Lacey, 15-16

¹¹ Plutarch, *The Parallel Lives*. 31.1

¹² Edward J. Swain, “Cicero’s Role in the Fall of the Roman Republic” (master’s thesis, San Diego State University) 21. <http://sdsu-dspace.calstate.edu/> (accessed April 13, 2018).

¹³ Theodor Mommsen, *The History of Rome*, vol. 4 (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press and the Falcon’s Wing Press, n.d.), 482.

¹⁴ Lacey, 15

In spite of his bravery in the courtroom, however, the threat of a vengeful Sulla was enough to convince the young lawyer that a hiatus in Athens would be beneficial. Citing his sickly frame and questionable health, he left for Athens in 79 B.C. to further his education and strengthen his body. He spent two years there, as well as in Asia Minor and Rhodes studying oratory and philosophy and learning from some of the most well-respected scholars in the Mediterranean world.¹⁵ By 77 B.C. when an older and more educated Cicero returned to Rome to begin his career in politics, the members of his aristocratic circle that had guided and mentored him had all died. Crassus, Sacevola, and Antonius had all either been murdered or passed away from old age, leaving Cicero with few connections with which to start a political career. The want of patrician connections among the non-elites had kept the Roman Senate relatively pure of non-aristocratic members for a number of centuries, consolidating power in a small circle of families. As a result, few of the equites, Cicero's class, ever made it to Senatorial status.¹⁶

Cicero, however, was not to be defeated by the restrictions of the class system. A lawyer of "ambition, talents, and self confidence", he acquired a devoted following through concerted political maneuvering. He sought to befriend and assist as many as possible while offending and making enemies of few.¹⁷ He actively tried to avoid cases in which he would be the prosecutor, instead opting to act as a defense lawyer when given the opportunity. Men who had been defended, believed Cicero, were far more grateful than those who had used him as a means of attack. He even went so far as to attack the prominent orator Hortensius for "using his great talents to injure men and not, as formerly, to save them."¹⁸ Such an approach helped him ascend the *cursus honorum*, the Roman political ladder, rather quickly, holding each magistracy at or

¹⁵ Lacey, 17

¹⁶ Petersson, 74.

¹⁷ Ibid 33.

¹⁸ Petersson, 74.

Tenor of Our Times

near the youngest possible age, including consul (the highest) at forty-three.¹⁹

Above anything else, the events of the Catiline Conspiracy were fundamental in Cicero's development into both an avid enemy of the imperial system and a major player on the Roman political stage. The Catiline Conspiracy was the attempt of Lucius Catiline, a notable patrician and member of the Senate, to overthrow the Republic and establish himself as king. The episode is recorded extensively by Sallust, who describes Catiline as a psychopathic monster, reveling in civil war and destruction and capable of endless treachery.²⁰ Making him all the more dangerous was the fact that he seems to have been almost

superhumanly talented. Sallust tells of his abilities to “endure hunger, cold and want of sleep to an incredible degree”, and to carry on “of any form of pretense or concealment.”²¹ His charisma and wealth bought him a significant following among those similar to him both in spirit and plight. Catiline, who was deep in debt, preached a gospel of rebellion and absolution of debts to citizens in desperate



Cicerone Denuncia Catilina, meaning “Cicero denounces Catiline,” was painted by Cesare Maccari in 1889. The painting depicts Cicero accusing Catiline on the Senate floor of conspiracy to overthrow the consulship of Marcus Tullius Cicero and Gaius Antonus Hybrida.

¹⁹ Shrikant Yelegaonkar, *Western Thinker's in Political Science*, (Solapur, India: Laxmi Book Publication, 2009) 127. <https://books.google.com>. (accessed April 16, 2018).

²⁰ Sallust, *The War with Catiline*. Trans. Bill Thayer. (New York: Loeb Classical Library, 1921) <http://penelope.uchicago.edu>. (accessed April 12, 2018). 3.1

²¹ *Ibid*, 5.4.

financial straits. The problems of the indebted came in many cases from mismanagement of property granted after military service, while other issues stemmed from general irresponsibility, debauchery and pursuit of various vices at the expense of work. In addition, many of his following were just rebellious criminals who thought they would gain from seeing the system crumble. Sallust is harsh on the rebels, describing them as wantons, perjurers, gamesters and murderers.²²

Resentful and restless, the rebels-to-be were numerous and willing to sacrifice their lives at Catiline's command. Catiline's original plan had been to win the consulship and obtain absolute power from there, but his campaign for office was blocked by the efforts of Cicero and other Republicans who saw the malevolent goals of his scheme. The exposition of his ploy brought a nasty sequence for Rome and its citizens. Expelled from the city after a fiery declamation by Cicero to the Senate, Catiline was pushed out into northern Italy with his army. From there he concocted a scheme to simultaneously assassinate Cicero and burn the city, but his plan was foiled when his lieutenants were captured and executed. Discouraged by the setbacks, much of his following deserted, and he tried in vain to escape to Gaul. Becoming trapped between two legions, the affair was settled in a battle north of Rome in which Catiline and nearly all of his followers were slaughtered.²³

The effects of this near loss of the Republic had a significant impact on Cicero's view of kingship. The success of Catiline's operation almost certainly would have accelerated the decline of Rome, with Catiline essentially playing the role of self-indulgent psychopath that Nero and Caligula were to play later in the empire's history, but in a much less stable setting. Fires would have burned down the city and hundreds of political opponents would have been murdered, with Cicero himself undoubtedly being among the first.²⁴ This brief taste of civil war and potential tyranny, compounded with the bad experience the entire

²² Sallust, 14.2.

²³ Sallust, 60.6.

²⁴ Sallust, 24.4.

Tenor of Our Times

Roman state had had under Sulla, who had killed many, set within Cicero an intense aversion to monarchy that would only increase throughout his life.

However, the success of Cicero in this instance may ironically have been the seed of his downfall. Throughout his life, Cicero's strategy was to dominate the political sphere, relying on subservient generals to carry out the government's objectives. His associates in this approach varied based on the period; during his consulship (which contained the Cataline affair) it was Antonius, his fellow consul, who led the armies. There was a clear delegation of duties between the two leaders: Cicero would handle the majority of the lobbying and the senators, speaking to the assembly and managing the political aspects, while Antonius would be in charge of the army and its march against the rebels.²⁵ Antonius' character was well-suited for the partnership. According to Plutarch, Antonius was "a man who, of himself, would probably not take the lead either for good or for bad, but would add strength to another who took the lead," making him perfect for such an alliance.²⁶ In this situation, Cicero took the initiative and the duo helped save the Roman state. Such an approach to power, however, had its obvious risks. Cicero's lack of hard power made him reliant on the good will and like-mindedness of the generals commanding the army. He could persuade and maneuver, but he had no concrete ability to carry out his objectives. It is likely that Cicero's success with Antonius made him overconfident in his ability to manipulate armies from afar, leading to him underestimating the risks of his future partnership with Octavian.

Another parallel appears when considering the fact that Antonius was thought to have some knowledge of Cataline's plans. This bit of information is mentioned by Plutarch and Sallust, but it almost passes unnoticed, as though it is a trivial side note. However, it is clear that at

²⁵ Sallust, 36.3.

²⁶ Plutarch, *The Parallel Lives*, 11.1.

the start of the affair, Antonius “knew about the conspiracy of Catiline and was not averse to it, owing to the magnitude of his debts.”²⁷ This was the drawback of Cicero’s lack of hard power. Antonius joining with Cataline would have all but ensured the end of the republic, and Cicero with it. The gamble to trust Antonius was no doubt a highly calculated one: at that point the tide was clearly against Catiline and there would be little personal motive for treachery by Antonius. He was, after all, occupying the highest office in the land, and his debts, while significant, did not warrant such violence. The decision ended up functioning flawlessly and rescuing Rome, but Cicero’s reliance on the subservience of an associate holding the real power was risky and would eventually backfire.

The next great threat to Cicero’s beloved Republic came in the form of Gaius Julius Caesar, a senator and highly successful general who became dictator after a bloody civil war, only to be assassinated by a coalition of some sixty senators. Caesar’s death was a rare case in which Cicero approved of political violence. He would ideologically acknowledge that justice should be “impartial, consistent, and firm” in all cases, including those calling for capital punishment, but at heart he was thoroughly a pacifist: imperfect peace was generally to be favored over justice-seeking wars.²⁸ He also genuinely, deeply believed that “nothing is more destructive to governments, nothing is in such complete opposition to justice and law, nothing is less suitable for civilized men than the use of violence in a state which has a fixed and definite constitution.”²⁹ Cicero consistently showed himself to be morally averse to civil war and bloodshed, even when it served his purposes. The reality

²⁷ Plutarch, *The Parallel Lives*, 12.3.

²⁸ Neal Wood, *Cicero’s Social and Political Thought*, (Berkeley: University of California, 1988), 57.

²⁹ Cicero, *De Legibus*, trans. Clinton Walker Keyes. Quoted in Edward Swain, “Cicero’s Role in the Fall of the Roman Republic.” (San Diego State University, 1977), 10.

Tenor of Our Times

of this can be seen in Cicero's absence as a conspirator in Caesar's murder. His omission from the conspiracy may not have been the result of ideological differences: Brutus and Cicero were close friends, sharing many of the same opinions and ideals.³⁰ Perhaps, in their plotting, Brutus and Cassius (Caesar's infamous murderers) were afraid that in spite of his deep opposition to Caesar and everything his reign stood for, Cicero's pacifism would make him unsupportive of the murder. Their fears, however, were unfounded. After the murder, Cicero expressed a wish of having been included in the plot, and went so far as to say that Mark Antony, Caesar's right hand man, should have been killed as well. Overall, however, Cicero was peace-loving, and his revulsion to violence was well known even in his own time. Indeed, in later life, upon being sent a statue of the god of war, he responded: "Why do you send me a statue of Mars? You know I am a pacifist!"³¹

With Caesar gone, it appeared briefly as though the republican system that Cicero so loved was on its way back to preeminence in Rome. However, in the days and weeks following the assassination, the political climate would shift more and more in the favor of the Caesarian faction, led by Mark Antony. Antony had been Caesar's right-hand man, so close that the conspirators had questioned whether or not murder him along with Caesar. He himself apparently feared such a threat, as upon hearing of the assassination of Caesar he donned Plebeian dress and fled into the streets. The *liberatores*, as the assassins called themselves, had decided against killing Antony on the moral grounds that only Caesar had been a tyrant. Soon, however, they were faced with the reality of Antony as Caesar's successor in all but name.³²

³⁰ Lily Ross Taylor, *Party Politics in the Age of Caesar*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1949). 175-177.

³¹ Michael Duncan, *The History of Rome* (New Zealand: Herodotus Press, 1963), Vol. 1, ed. 1. 28-29.

³² Plutarch, *Makers of Rome*. Trans. Ian Scott-Kilvert, (New York: Penguin Books, 1965) 15.1-7.

Speaking at Caesar's funeral, Antony had seized upon the sentiments of the people to incite a riot. At the podium he had held up the bloodstained toga worn by Caesar during his assassination and denounced the conspirators as murderers and villains.³³ Inspired by the injustice of the deed and the tragedy of the loss of their champion, the mob responded by burning Caesar's body and then proceeding to "attack the houses of his assassins."³⁴ The riot was the beginning of a massive surge of support for the Caesarian faction. Taking advantage of public sentiments, Antony used the legacy of Julius Caesar to propose and pass decrees on essentially whatever he desired. Entries from Caesar's personal notebook were doctored to fit Antony's agenda and as the lone consul his power among the Senate was essentially unchecked.³⁵

"Tyranny survives though the tyrant is dead," said Cicero at the peak of Antony's power.³⁶ Lost and nearly powerless, the Republican faction of the Senate seemed doomed to an indefinite period of Antonian domination. Though his consulate was coming to an end and the upcoming consuls were unfriendly to him, Antony had arranged the appointment of himself as governor of Cisalpine Gaul, the adjacent northern province, where the distance and considerable legions. Due to his alienation of the Republicans while in office, Antony needed a way to safeguard against the possibility of a Ciceronian prosecution for his misconduct. The province would also provide a convenient excuse to build up forces he needed for continued domination of Rome. Under Caesar's command, he had been scheduled to receive control of Macedonia, but he astutely saw that being so far from Rome would only allow his enemies to gain a foothold. In Cisalpine Gaul, on the other

³³ F.B. Marsh, *Founding of the Roman Empire*. (London, Oxford University Press, 1927) 166-167.

³⁴ Plutarch, *Makers of Rome*, 284

³⁵ Lacey, 143.

³⁶ Stewart Perowne, *Death of the Roman Republic*. (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc. 1968). 236.

Tenor of Our Times

hand, he could maintain his army, his immunity and his influence on Rome as he awaited the coming events in the Republic.³⁷

Antony's grand plan was complicated by Octavian's arrival onto the scene in May 44 B.C. Scorning the advice of his mother and father-in-law to renounce his claim to the inheritance, Octavian returned from his schooling in Macedonia to boldly claim the three-fourths of Caesar's estate bequeathed to him in his will. From the beginning, Antony staunchly opposed Octavian and dismissed the young Caesar as an unimportant upstart.³⁸ Octavian, however, was more capable than Antony believed. Inheriting the powerful name of Caesar, he went to work immediately putting his advantages to good use. He fulfilled the stipulations of his great-uncle's will, distributing from his own pocket the seventy-five drachmas bequeathed to the people in Caesar's will.³⁹ He also set about building up a network of support, both politically and militarily. Going with his uncle to Cicero, who at that time "commanded more influence than any other man in Rome," Octavian offered that they form a sort of partnership.⁴⁰ In it, Cicero would offer his eloquence and political influence while Octavian would give Cicero "the security to be derived from his wealth and his armed forces."⁴¹ As can be seen by the arrangements of previous Ciceronian power structures, this sort of establishment was exactly the kind preferred by the elder statesman and the type in which he could do his best work.

The intentions of Octavian at this moment are unclear. Whether or not he acted according to a master plan to use and then drop the old statesman will never be known, but it is clear that Cicero thought Octavian relatively dedicated to both him and the Republican way. He

³⁷ Eleanor Goltz Huzar, *Marc Antony: A Biography*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1978). 83.

³⁸ Plutarch, *Makers of Rome*. 16.4.

³⁹ Marsh, 173.

⁴⁰ Plutarch, *Makers of Rome*. 16.7.

⁴¹ Plutarch, *The Parallel Lives*. 44.1.

also does not seem to have viewed as a threat of monarchical usurpation. Whether Octavian had an overarching plan or not, it is obvious that Cicero firmly believed that the young general was largely following Cicero's directives. In a letter to Brutus, Cicero calls Octavian "a stream from the fountainhead of my policy," indicating that he felt a genuine level of control over the young leader.⁴² Arrogance and vanity must have played a significant role in this opinion. It appears as though Octavian's youth and lack of experience lulled Cicero into believing that he was not a threat, at least not a current one. Raised in the age of the *Cursus Honorum* in which no man could start a political career before the age of thirty, he may have just assumed that Octavian, who was not even twenty, would be disregarded as a political leader for the coming decade or so. While Octavian was indeed incredibly young, Cicero's antiquated views on age and its restrictions for power blinded him to the true nature of Octavian's ambitions.

Cicero's contribution to the Cicero-Octavian partnership came in a series of fiery speeches directed against Mark Antony called the Philippics. Named after the declamatory speeches by Demosthenes in his movement against Philip of Macedon, the Philippic speeches were delivered by Cicero from May 44-June 43 B.C. and are widely considered among the greatest speeches ever written. Pointed and fiery, they had an inflammatory effect on the situation. Harping upon Antony's hostility and tyrannical actions, Cicero likened him to Catiline, Clodius and other criminals Cicero had dealt with in his career.⁴³ The effect of the speeches were such that, at least nominally, the entire Senate turned against Antony. He was forced out of the city with his armies, intending on taking his appointed governorship in Cisalpine Gaul. However, the acting governor, Decimus Brutus, was not keen on giving up his post,

⁴² Cicero, *The Letters of Cicero*. (London: George Bell and Sons, 1900).

⁴³ M. Tullius Cicero, *The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero*. trans. C.D. Yonge. (London: George Bell and Sons, 1903.)

Tenor of Our Times

and Antony found himself cornered between the armies of Octavian and Decimus Brutus, as well as the forces of the consuls Pansa and Hirtius.

The Battle of Mutina in April of 43 saw Antony nearly defeated and Octavian established as the de facto leader of the republican forces. However, with Antony no longer a threat to the republic, Octavian faced the daunting prospect of losing his armies, or worse, being charged as a criminal for raising an army without senatorial permission.⁴⁴ Technically, Octavian risked being prosecuted for rebellion for raising and commanding an army without official consent. The senate “became afraid of a young man who had enjoyed such brilliant good fortune.”⁴⁵ Here he called on the influence of Cicero to help bolster his standing among the Republicans. To Cicero, the system they had established had functioned perfectly. The Republic was on its way to restoration, and Octavian seemed to be the perfect lieutenant, obediently managing military affairs while Cicero worked towards what he assumed were their shared political goals. Appealing to the Senate on Octavian’s behalf, he urged the aristocrats to allow Octavian to circumvent the age restrictions traditionally restricting young candidates seeking office. The debt owed for Octavian’s service, Cicero urged, outweighed the formalities that would prevent him from taking up the office. Convinced by the passionate urgings of such an august member, the senators were persuaded to grant Octavian these honors.⁴⁶

At the time of Octavian’s appointment as consul, it must have appeared to Cicero that the Republic once again had been saved from disaster. He had needed some help from the assassins of Julius Caesar and some tremendous assistance from this young Octavian, but the tranquil days of Republican glory seemed to be returning at last. The senate would convene, the consuls would oversee and the Roman world would return to the status quo. Ever proud, the man who had been named

⁴⁴ Marsh, 174.

⁴⁵ Plutarch, *The Parallel Lives*, 45.5.

⁴⁶ Plutarch, *The Parallel Lives*, 46.1.

Pater Patria must have felt he was fulfilling his duty to defend his country.

Then, seemingly out of nowhere, Cicero's idyllic plans were shaken to their core by the violent shock of betrayal. After initially allying with Republican forces to defeat Antony in northern Italy, Octavian spurned Cicero to unite with Lepidus and a floundering Antony in 43 B.C., creating the Second Triumvirate and effectively ending the Republic. The blow must have been intense for Cicero: in spite of all his hard work, the Republic had fallen. Among the first decrees of the all-powerful trio was to proscribe over two hundred men in Rome, naming them enemies of the state. Overcoming Octavian's reluctance, Antony demanded that Cicero be included in the proscriptions, and agreed to "no terms unless Cicero should be the first man to be put to death."⁴⁷ Octavian fought this initially, but rather half-heartedly, seeing that the death of Cicero would be vital for the success of the Triumvirate.⁴⁸ Devastated at the betrayal, Cicero fled to the Italian coast in mourning. He faced a decision with fatal implications: flee to join Brutus and Cassius or return to test the mercies of Octavian. Unfortunately, he never got to choose. Paralyzed by his uncertainty, he was captured by the agents of Antony and murdered on December 7, 43 B.C. He was 73.⁴⁹

The legacy of Cicero's interactions, wide reaching and ubiquitous, continues to ring throughout the western world. He revolutionized Latin literature and language, creating dozens of novel terms and forming a philosophical canon that became standard academic reading for the next two millennia. His oratorical skill has inspired speakers through the centuries, with his Philippics still being counted among the great speeches of history. However, perhaps his greatest

⁴⁷ Plutarch, *The Parallel Lives*. 46.3

⁴⁸ The exchange of proscriptions among the Triumvirate is recorded by Plutarch as being extremely cutthroat and utilitarian, with each member sacrificing allies in order to eliminate enemies. Lepidus, for example, allowed his brother to be included and Antony permitted that his uncle be killed.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 47.1-48.4.

Tenor of Our Times

influence on the world comes through the life and impact of his betrayer, Octavian. The Pax Romana, the spread of Christianity and the standardization of the Mediterranean world all stemmed from the power and rule of the emperor of Rome. Octavian's continued political savvy, even-keeled decision making and remarkable ability to consolidate power guided Rome to an age unseen before and since, an era of prosperity and learning that may never be recreated. The greatness of Octavian was the greatness of Rome, and no one was more responsible for that than Cicero.

Through era and eon, Cicero has remained enigmatic. Hailed among the greatest of orators, he is an icon of republicanism, of classical idealism and of ancient Rome. However, in one of the great ironies of history, it was the most famous advocate of republicanism that created the first Emperor of Rome. How did such a titan of democracy, and such a fervent enemy of tyranny, play such a crucial role in the creation of the world's largest and most impactful dictatorship? The arrogance of Cicero, the view of the world as his pawn and the assumption that his senatorial wisdom and intellectual ability garnered him some sort of superiority led rise of the exact political structure he abhorred. In a dramatic turn of fate, the mightiest player of an era became a pawn and his erstwhile pawn became king.