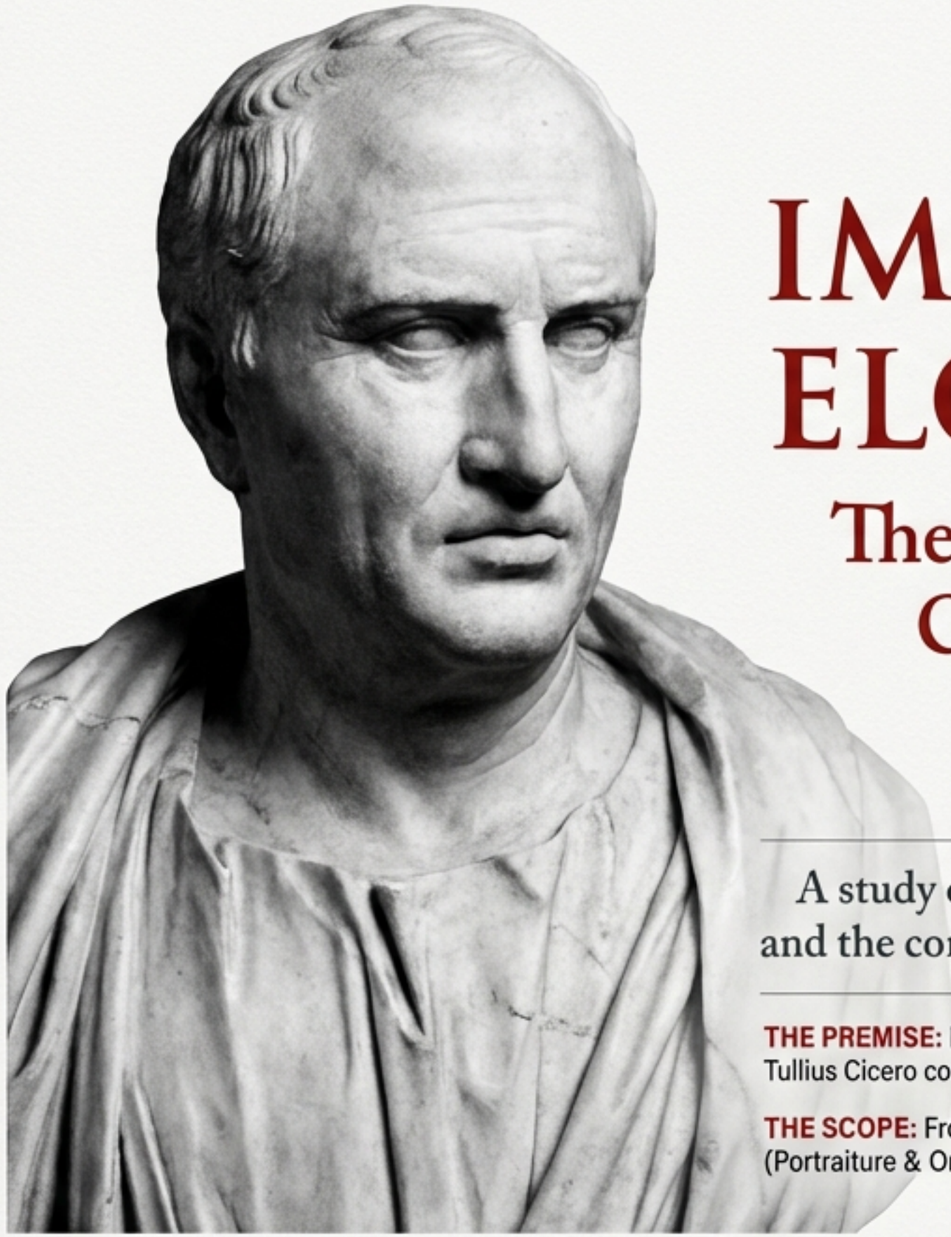


IMPERIUM & ELOQUENCE

The Strategic Alliance of Cicero and Pompey



A study of political branding, rhetorical reality, and the contested memory of the Roman Republic.

THE PREMISE: In 66 BCE, Rome faced existential threats. To solve them, Marcus Tullius Cicero constructed a "Perfect General" out of Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus.

THE SCOPE: From the Constructed Image (*De Imperio*), to the Historical Reality (Portraiture & Oratory), to the Contested Legacy (Historiography).

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66 BCE: A REPUBLIC BESET BY TWO THREATS

THE PROBLEM

1. THE PIRATES: Controlling the Mediterranean, cutting off grain supplies, and kidnapping dignitaries. A direct threat to Rome's economic survival.

2. MITHRIDATES VI OF PONTUS: The elusive eastern enemy. After decades of inconclusive struggle, the war seemed endless.

THE SOLUTION

THE MANILIAN LAW: Tribune Manilius proposed a bill giving Pompey unprecedented, supreme command to clean up the East.

THE GAMBLE: Powerful aristocrats (the optimates) opposed this concentration of power. Cicero, a praetor seeking advancement, broke ranks to support it.

CICERO'S ROLE: This was his first political speech (De Imperio Cn. Pompei). His goal was to align his rising oratorical star with Pompey's military might.

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DEFINING THE SUMMUS IMPERATOR (THE PERFECT GENERAL)

Cicero's Rubric for Command

SCIENTIA MILITARIS

(Military Knowledge)

Not just field experience, but a mastery of all forms of warfare. Pompey was schooled by "victory and triumphs" rather than books.

VIRTUS

(Excellence / Courage)

The traditional Roman quality of manliness and valor, expanded by Cicero to include speed, integrity, and self-restraint.

AUCTORITAS

(Prestige / Influence)

The weight of reputation. Cicero argues that the mere name of Pompey terrifies enemies and calms markets.

FELICITAS

(Luck / Divine Favor)

The most dangerous quality—the belief that the gods favor a specific individual's success.

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FELICITAS: THE DARLING OF THE GODS

Cicero's most controversial argument was that Pompey possessed Felicitas—a supernatural luck that could not be taught, only granted by the divine.

THE SULLA PROBLEM: The dictator Sulla had claimed "Felix" as a cognomen. By attributing this to Pompey, Cicero risked painting him as a potential tyrant.

CICERO'S SANITIZATION:

- Cicero claims he speaks of Pompey's luck "timidly," as one should regarding the gods.
- He reframes Felicitas not as a personal claim to power, but as a public asset.
- The war requires not just skill, but divine endorsement.



Divine favor (divinitus) added to virtue makes command a religious necessity.

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VISUALIZING THE LEGEND: THE HEAD OF POMPEY

THE ANASTOLE
(The Lion's Mane)

A direct visual quote of Alexander the Great. Signals his status as a world conqueror ("Magnus").

THE FACE
(Roman Verism)

Unlike Alexander's idealized youth, this is a middle-aged, realistic face. Round shape, double chin, deep wrinkles, and small "beady" eyes.



THE VISUAL TENSION

The portrait captures a conflict of identity. The hair claims the status of a Hellenistic King/God, while the worried, fleshy face insists he is a traditional Roman magistrate magistrate. It is a visual compromise between the "Perfect General" and the republican bureaucrat.

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Pompey on the rostrum: Eloquentia medius

Oratorical assessment

- **THE REALITY CHECK:** While Cicero painted him as the ideal leader, contemporary sources reveal Pompey was not a natural orator.
- **STYLE:** "*Eloquentia medius*" (moderate in eloquence). Lacked the brilliance of Cicero or Caesar. (Velleius Paterculus)
- **DEMEANOR:** Suffered from shyness. Seneca reports that Pompey would blush when speaking in public, a sign of timidity that undercut his military *auctoritas*.
- **CONTENT:** Best when boasting. Quintilian notes he was "abundantly eloquent when narrating his own deeds."
- **POLITICAL VAGUENESS:** Cicero complained that Pompey's speeches were often "giving no comfort to the poor, empty to the rascals"—calculatedly vague to avoid offending factions.

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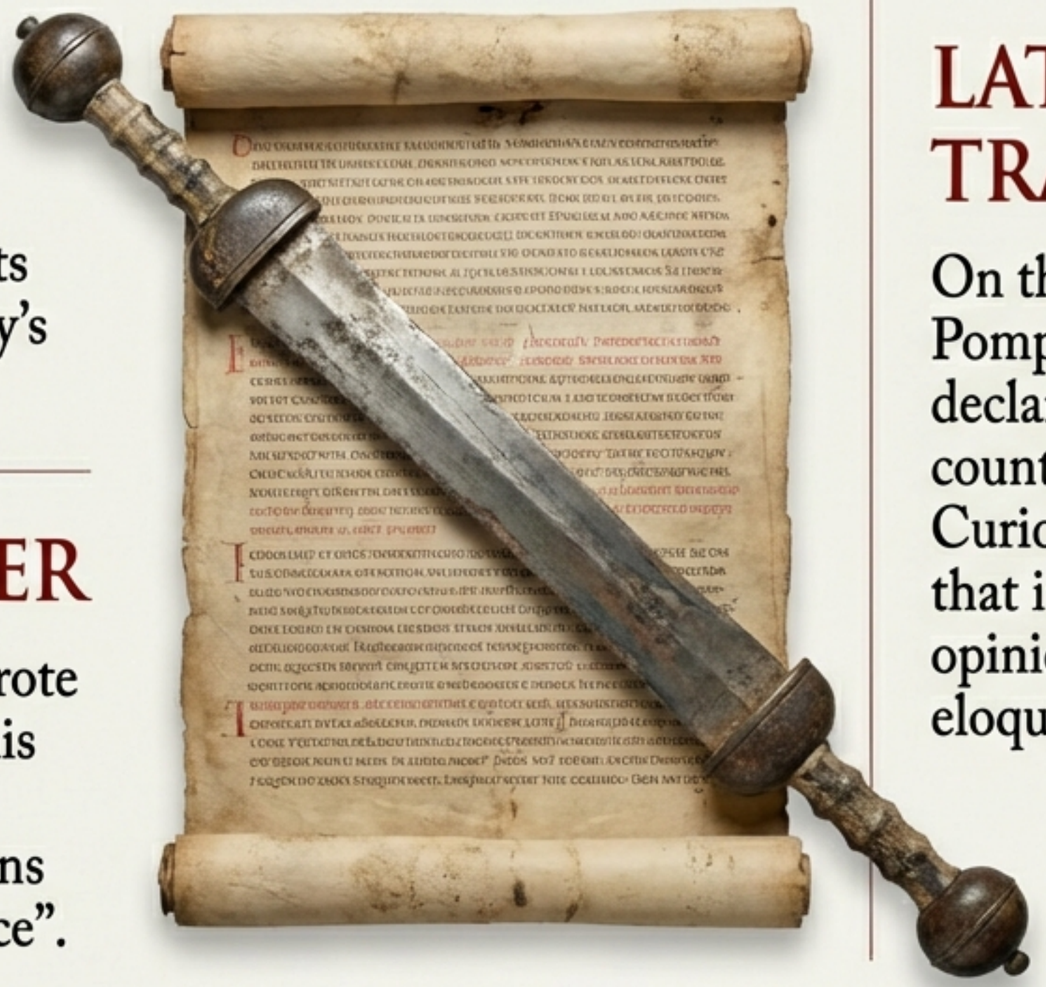
SWORD AND WORD: THE GHOSTWRITING ALLIANCE

THE SYMBIOSIS

The alliance went deeper than public support. Evidence suggests Cicero actively managed Pompey's rhetorical output.

THE GHOSTWRITER

Quintilian reveals that Cicero wrote speeches for Pompey, adapting his style to fit Pompey's dignitas. Pompey recognized his limitations and relied on Cicero for his "voice".



LATE-LIFE TRAINING

On the eve of the Civil War, Pompey resumed declamation exercises to counter the eloquence of Curio and Caesar. He knew that in the battle for public opinion, his "moderate eloquence" was a liability.

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THE FRAGMENTATION OF THE ‘PERFECT GENERAL’

49–48 BCE



THE TRIUMVIRATE.
Pompey, Caesar, and Crassus dominate Roman politics.

THE RUBICON.
Caesar crosses the Rubicon.
Civil War begins.
The alliance shatters.

PHARSALUS.
The Battle of Pharsalus.
Pompey, the undefeated Summus Imperator, is routed by Caesar.

THE SHIFT: The Felicitas that Cicero claimed was eternal abandons Pompey.
He flees to Egypt, no longer the ‘Darling of the Gods,’ but a refugee.

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Museum Editorial

POMPEY'S HEAD AND CAESAR'S TEARS

THE EVENT:

Assassinated upon landing in Egypt. His head was severed and presented to Caesar as a "gift".

THE REACTION:

Sources report Caesar wept and turned away in horror. Yet, Caesar omits this scene entirely from his own De Bello Civili.

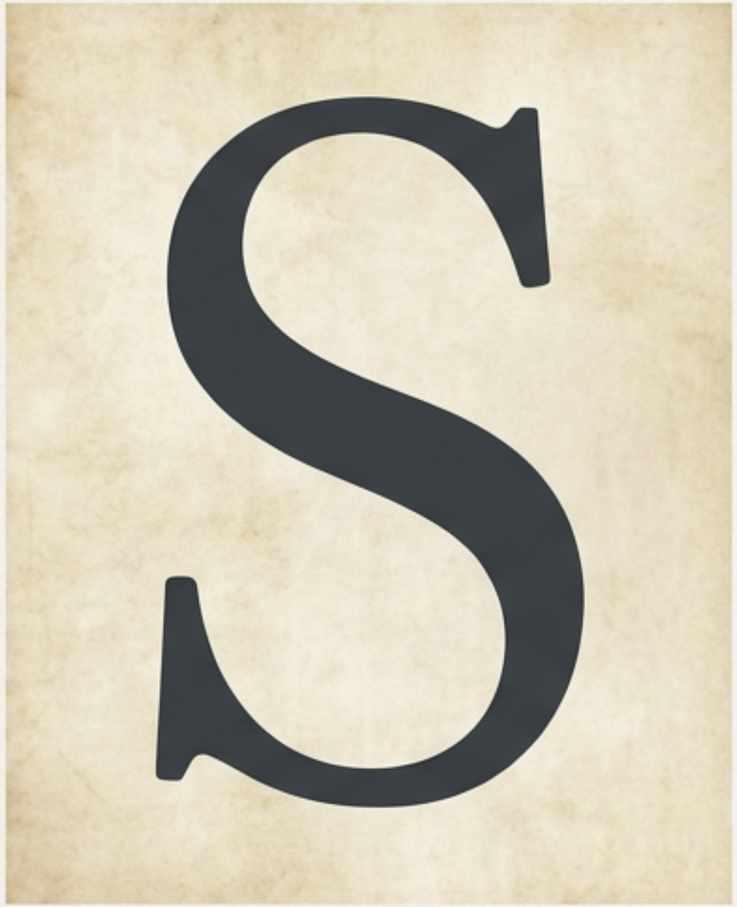
THE SYMBOLISM:

The head, once raised high with the Alexander-like anastole to mimic a king, becomes a tragic prop. It marks the definitive death of the Republic's old order.



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THE BATTTLE FOR MEMORY: POLLIO VS. THE LEGEND



CONTEXT: Cicero is executed in 43 BCE. Historians immediately struggle with how to commemorate the giant of eloquence.

THE "ANTI-CICERONIAN": Asinius Pollio is identified by Seneca the Elder as the only historian to narrate Cicero's death "maligne" (maliciously). He refused to acknowledge Cicero's bravery in death.

SENECA'S VERDICT: Seneca uses Pollio as a negative example. He argues that malignity isolates the historian, while imitation of virtue connects them to the subject.

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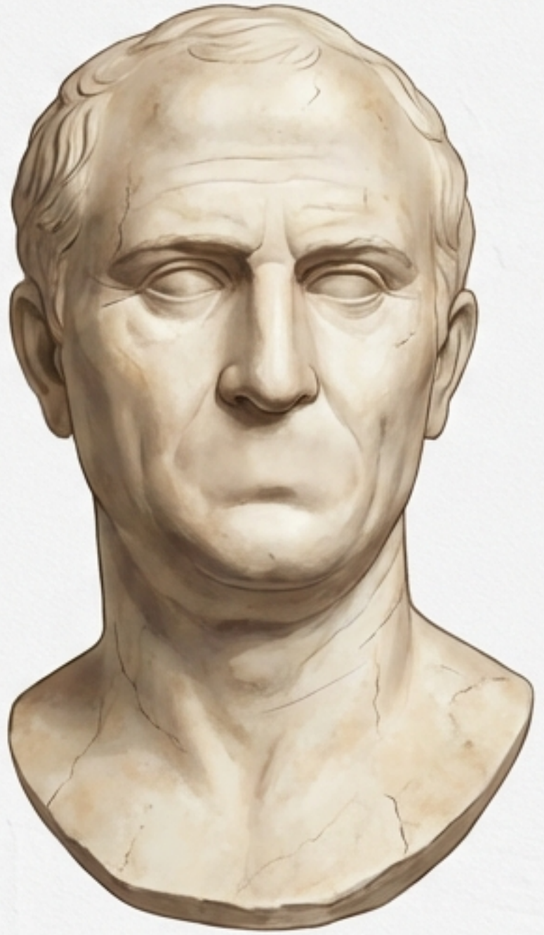
THE SILENCE OF THE LATIN TONGUE

THE INCIDENT: Pollio walks out of a poetry recitation because a line bemoans Cicero. He refuses to listen to praise of his rival.

THE VERDICT OF POETRY: The poet Cornelius Severus produced the most enduring eulogy:

"Conticuit Latiae tristis facundia linguae" (The sad eloquence of the Latin tongue fell silent).

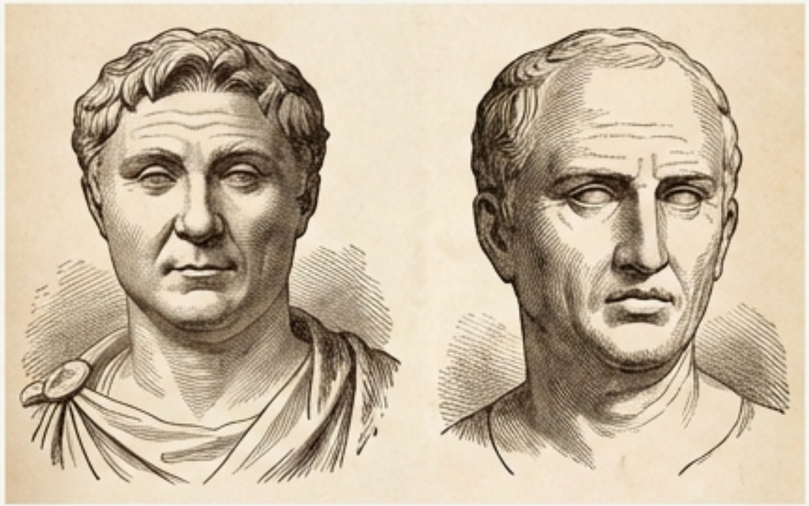
KEY INSIGHT: Seneca argues Severus succeeded because he imitated Cicero's style to praise him. While Pompey left a marble head, Cicero left a "living voice" that later authors competed to emulate.



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Conclusion: History as the art of persuasion

POMPEY: Constructed as a demigod of Felicitas. In reality, a capable but shy administrator. Legacy frozen in marble.



CICERO: The architect of the image. Even in death, his legacy became a battleground for historians.

The "Alliance of Imperium and Eloquence" defined the late Republic. Cicero provided the words that made Pompey a legend; Pompey provided the power that gave Cicero relevance. In the end, the constructed image outlived the messy reality.

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