THE GREEK TYRANT AND ROMAN POLITICAL INVECTIVE OF THE LATE REPUBLIC

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Distinguished commentators on the history of the late Republic such as L. R. Taylor, R. Syme, C. Wirszubski, D. C. Earl, and K. Büchner have discussed the problem of the charges of *regnum*, *dominatio*, and *tyrannis* as used in first century B.C. Roman political invective. Perhaps Wirszubski's definition of *regnum* best exemplifies their explanation of these charges:

> The odious term regnum signifies a power, or a position, which even if formally legal, is incompatible with the spirit of the republican constitution but not necessarily monarchy.[1]

This is most certainly the correct explanation of the charge of *regnum* (*dominatio*, *tyrannis*). However, these commentators have not noticed that the vocabulary of this accusation extended beyond the terms *regnum*, *dominatio*, and *tyrannis*, which designated the "despotism" of a political enemy. These charges were regularly used in combination with four other words of abuse, *vis*, *superbia*, *libido*, and *crudelitas*, which represented the most characteristic vices of tyranny.[2] Roman

N.B. I would like to thank Professor Philip Lockhart of Dickinson College who first recommended this topic to me, Professor Robert E. A. Palmer of the University of Pennsylvania whose suggestions contributed substantially to the final form of this study, and Professor William C. McDermott of the University of Pennsylvania who corrected errors of style and interpretation. I, of course, take full responsibility for any errors and for the views expressed in this paper.

[1] *Libertas as a Political Idea at Rome During the Late Republic and Early Principate* (Cambridge 1950) 64.

[2] Wirszubski mentions *superbia* and *libido* along with *dominatio* as characteristic invective of first century B.C. oratory (p. 40). He does not, however, develop the relationship of these terms.

orators employed these terms of invective to portray their political enemies as tyrants. This article will attempt to show how these terms were used in political invective of the late Republic and that their use was based on the stereotype of the Greek tyrant.

What should be first noticed about the charge of tyranny is that the Greek loan words *tyrannus*, *tyrannis*, and *tyrannicus* are used interchangeably with the Latin words *rex*, *dominus*, *regnum*, *dominatio*, *dominatus*, *regnare*, *dominari*, *regius*, and *regie* to refer to a Roman "despot."[3] *Rex* as a term of abuse recalled to the Roman mind the title of Tarquinius Superbus, the last king of Rome, whose tyrannical reign according to tradition brought about the eventual expulsion of monarchy from Rome. *Dominus*, the common Latin word for the master of a slave, appropriately became synonymous with *rex*. However, the Greek loan word *tyrannus* represents another tradition, that of the Greek tyrant.

Historically, the Greek tyrant was a usurper who seized power in times of political upheaval and ruled as a monarch. Originally the word *tyrannos* was the title of a ruler who had gained power by usurpation and did not necessarily signify that the ruler was oppressive. In fact tyrants such as the Corinthian Cypselus and the Athenian Peisistratus led popular movements in their respective city states and ruled beneficently. However, due to the oppressive rule of other Greek tyrants, e.g. Peisistratus' son Hippias, the word *tyrannos* gradually acquired a very odious connotation and almost universally came to mean an evil despot.

Herodotus is no doubt presenting the popular Greek view of the tyrant when, through the Persian Otanes, he defines the tyrant as a

[3] *Rex*: Cic. *Verr.* 2.3.71, 77; *Leg. Agr.* 2.15, 29, 33, 43; *Pis.* 23; *Phil.* 2.34, 80, 87. *Regnum*: *Verr.* 1.35; 2.3.200; *Leg. Agr.* 1.24; 2.8, 24, 35, 43, 75; *Cat.* 3.9; *Sull.* 21; *Har. Resp.* 54; *Phil.* 1.4; 2.34; 5.17; 8.12. *Regius*: *Verr.* 2.5.175; *Leg. Agr.* 2.20, 32, 35; *Phil.* 5.40. *Regie*: *Verr.* 2.3.115; *Cat.* 1.30. *Regnare*: *Cat.* 4.12; *Sull.* 21; *Phil.* 2.29, 35, 108; 3.9; 5.44. *Dominus*: *Verr.* 2.1.58; 2.3.31, 71; *Leg. Agr.* 2.15, 21, 43, 61; *Pis.* 86; *Sest.* 127; *Phil.* 8.12. *Dominatio*: *Verr.* 1.35; 2.3.155, 228; 2.5.175; *Rosc. Amer.* 140; *Leg. Agr.* 1.19, 21; 2.8, 81; 3.13; *Cat.* 2.19; *Phil.* 3.34; 8.12. *Dominatus*: *Har. Resp.* 54; *Dom.* 68, 110, 141; *Phil.* 1.34; 2.27; 3.29; 5.45. *Dominari*: *Div. Caec.* 24; *Mil.* 78; *Phil.* 2.108, 117; 13.18. *Tyrannus*: *Verr.* 2.1.82; 2.3.25, 31; 2.4.51; 2.5.103, 117; *Leg. Agr.* 2.32; 3.5; *Cat.* 2.14; *Red. Sen.* 12; *Dom.* 75, 94; *Sest.* 32, 109; *Vat.* 23; *Pis.* 18, 24; *Mil.* 35, 80; *Deiot.* 33, 34; *Phil.* 2.90, 96, 110, 117; 13.17–18; 14.15. *Tyrannicus*: *Verr.* 2.5.21; *Dom.* 110. *Tyrannice*: *Verr.* 2.3.115.

ruler who destroys the established order, rapes women, and puts men to death without trial (3.80.5). Euripides in his *Supplices* has Theseus give a similar description of the tyrant as a ruler who keeps the law in his sole possession, kills the leading young men in the state, and imposes his lust upon young girls (426–55). Both Herodotus and Euripides define the tyrant not only in terms of his autocratic power but also in terms of his injustice and oppressive sexual dominion. Here we see that for the Greeks the concept of tyranny signified much more than autocracy. It signified a characteristic psychology of personality, a typical manner of behavior marked by a total lack of morality. This view of the tyrant underwent further refinement in Platonic philosophy. In the *Republic*, as E. Barker puts it:

> The psychological basis of tyranny is . . . the appetite . . . it is brutal and lawless appetite—the lust of the flesh and the pride of power—which man has in common with beasts. Appetite of this kind, when it is once engendered, is the tyrant of all other appetites; and every passion is henceforth made to serve the purposes of a lust for self-gratification and self-assertion.[4]

The stereotype of the tyrant as described above attracted the attention of the Athenian tragedians, who used the tyrant as a model dramatic villain. The tyrant very quickly became a typical character of tragedy. Zeus[5] and Aegisthus in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* and *Agamemnon*, Oedipus[6] and Creon[7] in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone*, and Lycus and Pentheus[8] in Euripides' *Heracles Furens* and *Bacchae* are all examples of the tragedy-tyrant. A composite description of these would present a ruler who uses force, threatens and sometimes imposes death on his subjects, and demonstrates a propensity for *hybris*, rape, and impiety.[9]

It was probably through the medium of tragedy that the Romans first became acquainted with the type of the Greek tyrant. The city

[4] *Greek Political Theory* (London 1918) 300.

[5] For a discussion of Zeus as a tragedy-tyrant see G. Murray, *Aeschylus* (Oxford 1940) 88, 103–5.

[6] Oedipus as a tragedy-tyrant: R. Lattimore, *The Poetry of Greek Tragedy* (Baltimore 1958) 85, 95–96.

[7] Creon as a tragedy-tyrant: Sir M. Bowra, *Sophoclean Tragedy* (Oxford 1944) 72–78.

[8] Pentheus as a tragedy-tyrant: Lattimore (above, note 6) 130.

[9] For the tyrant as a ruler who is characteristically guilty of the impiety of plundering temples, see Xen. *Hiero* 4.11; Pl. *Resp.* 574D, 575B.

of Rome was first introduced to the dramatic literature of Greece by Livius Andronicus with his adaptations of a Greek tragedy and comedy at the Ludi Romani of 240 B.C. During the second century these Greek plays became increasingly popular and numerous adaptations by Roman dramatists were presented on the Roman stage.

The earliest extant use of the Greek loan word *tyrannus* in Latin appears in the play *Atreus* by Accius (170–ca. 85) (Non. Lindsay p. 670; 415.25–27). The stage tyrant Atreus in the same play (probably based on a now lost play of the same name by Sophocles) was a favorite character of Roman audiences. Atreus' famous line *oderint dum metuant* was still being received with great applause late in Cicero's lifetime (Cic. *Off.* 1.97). Cicero praised this line because its tyrannical sentiment so well suited the tyrannical character of Atreus. Ennius in a much earlier play on the same theme, *Thyestes*, had Atreus speak a similar line, *quem metuont oderunt* (Cic. *Off.* 2.23). Accius also wrote a *Prometheus* and a *Bacchae* in which the tragedy-tyrants, Zeus and Pentheus, must have had prominent roles in accordance with the Greek originals by Aeschylus and Euripides.

Unfortunately, because of the scattered fragments that remain to us of Roman Republican tragedy we cannot examine in detail any Roman dramatist's treatment of a tyrant from the period of the Republic. However, Seneca can give us an example of how one Roman dramatist represented the tyrant of Greek tragedy.

Seneca's *Hercules Furens*, based on the Euripidean play, provides an excellent example of the tragedy-tyrant, Lycus, the usurper of the Theban throne. Lycus identifies himself as a tyrant when he maintains that a usurper like himself without any other proof of legitimacy must use force of arms in order to hold the supreme power in the state against the will of the citizens (341–44). Lycus' behavior marked by *hybris* causes Megara, the wife of Hercules, to warn him that an avenging god pursues the arrogant (*superbos*) (385). When Megara refuses to marry the usurper in order to give some legitimacy to his rule, Lycus says that he as king will assert the same sexual rights which Jove exercised over Alcmena, the mother of Hercules (489–90). If Megara should still refuse, Lycus threatens rape in order to beget noble heirs (494). Finally, Lycus impiously defies the gods when he warns Megara and her children that he will burn down the temple in which they are

embracing an altar, thus violating the sacred rights of the suppliants (503–8). In Lycus the typical characteristics of the Greek tragedy-tyrant, such as the use of force, *hybris*, threats of death, rape, and impiety, are quite evident.[10]

Roman audiences were in the habit of reading parallels to the current political situation at Rome into these tragedies, particularly in the matter of tyranny. In 59 B.C., during the performance of a tragedy at the Apollinarian games, a great disturbance was caused by the line, "nostra miseria tu es magnus," which the audience applied to Pompey because of his position as triumvir and his cognomen Magnus (Cic. *Att.* 2.19.3). Ribbeck conjectured that this line was from Accius' *Prometheus* and that the audience was comparing Pompey to the divine tyrant Zeus.[11] However, whatever the actual title of the play might have been, it seems clear that the audience was using a tragedy-tyrant as a point of comparison in order to protest Pompey's tyrannical power as a triumvir. The line clearly describes a man who has reached a position of power through the suffering of others, an excellent description of the tyrant. Finally, in 44 B.C. after Caesar's assassination, an audience at a performance of Accius' *Tereus*, aroused by references made in the play to tyranny, applauded M. Brutus as a tyrannicide (Cic. *Att.* 16.2.3; *Phil.* 1.36).

Although all this evidence is rather late for our purpose of showing how the Greek tyrant was introduced into Roman political invective of the late Republic, it does show how these tragedies with their typically Greek emphasis on political theory, particularly in the matter of tyranny, lent themselves to the practicalities of the Roman political arena. As J. W. Duff wrote:

> They [the Roman aristocracy] found something congenial to the existing order of things in such political thought as tragedy admitted—for the

[10] It must be noted here that Seneca's treatment of the tyrant Lycus probably owes as much if not more to the rhetorical tradition of the tyrant as to the dramatic tradition. The tyrant was also a stock villain in the *controversia* which was so popular as a teaching device in the rhetorical schools of the Empire (cf. Petron. *Sat.* 1). Seneca as a product of these schools could not help but be influenced by the rhetorical tyrant in his characterization of Lycus. This influence is perhaps discernible in the greater villainy which Seneca's Lycus seems to be capable of (e.g. the threat of rape) in comparison with his Euripidean counterpart.

[11] O. Ribbeck, *Die römische Tragödie in Zeitalter der Republik* (Leipzig 1875) 545–46.

> Greek 'tyrannophobia' was shared by the optimates of Rome. They could draw from its grave rhetoric hints for the practical needs of public speaking.[12]

Roman orators no doubt quickly saw the advantage of attacking their political enemies by appealing to the type of the tragedy-tyrant, who was not only a politically oppressive ruler but also an evil man. Thus the Roman orator by applying this stereotype of the tragedy-tyrant could put a political enemy in a bad light both politically and personally in his attempt to arouse an audience against him.[13] Because of the popularity of these adapted Greek tragedies, the orator in addressing his audience—whether the senate or the people—could rely on being understood when he called a political opponent a tyrant and charged him with behavior characteristic of the tyrant. Thus the Roman adaptations of Greek tragedies must be considered as the most decisive factor in making the Greek tyrant a familiar stock character at Rome and introducing him into Roman political invective of the late Republic.

Roman aversion for despotism, however, was not entirely a borrowing from the Greeks. There existed at Rome a hatred of the title *rex* which stemmed from a native Roman, not a Greek tradition (Livy 27.19.4). The Roman monarchy representing an Etruscan domination through Tarquinius Superbus and its termination by a violent *coup d'état* are essentially historical[14] and thus make intelligible the odious connotation of the word *rex* without enlisting the aid of Greek political theory. The word *rex* must have been detested by the Romans from the earliest days of the Republic. The charge of *rex* therefore antedated the parallel charge of *tyrannus* and, although the evidence is rather meager, seems to have been preferred to the charge of *tyrannus* in Roman political invective during the years immediately following the Second Punic War.

The great political predominance which Scipio Africanus Major attained at Rome after the battle of Zama caused talk of a Scipionic

[12] *A Literary History of Rome from the Origins to the Close of the Golden Age*, 3rd ed. by A. M. Duff (New York 1960) 168.

[13] A practical demonstration of this application can be found in Cicero's *Philippics* (1.34) where he uses the tragedy-tyrant Atreus to point out Antony's tyranny and give Antony a warning: "quod [metui] videmus etiam in fabula illi ipsi qui 'oderint, dum metuant' dixerit perniciosum fuisse."

[14] R. M. Ogilvie, *A Commentary on Livy: Books 1–5* (Oxford 1965) 194; H. Last, "Kings of Rome," *CAH* 7.394.

"monarchy" among the conservative nobles. The vocabulary of these charges against Scipio as presented by Livy consists of only the Latin words *regius* and *regnum* (28.42.22; 38.54.6). This preference for Latin over Greek might be attributed to the probability that at this relatively early date the stereotype of the Greek tyrant was not yet well enough known to have become a commonplace of political invective.

D. C. Earl contends that the charge of *regnum* may properly belong to the jargon of post-Sullan politics.[15] If his contention is correct, Livy's attribution of this charge to the anti-Scipionic faction would be therefore anachronistic, a practice not without precedent in Livy. However, there is primary evidence that these charges are not necessarily anachronistic. Early in the second century B.C., M. Porcius Cato Major made an accusation of tyranny against Q. Minucius Thermus, a protégé of Scipio, for having ten Ligurian commissioners beaten: "quis hoc imperium, quis hanc servitutem ferre potest? nemo hoc rex ausus est facere" (Cato, Malcovati *ORF*², 6.58). Cato, although he does not directly call Thermus a *rex*, uses this term of abuse in essentially the same manner as orators of the late Republic, i.e. to indicate the arbitrary nature of a political enemy's act. This fragment dates from approximately the same period as the accusations of *regnum* against Scipio reported by Livy.

The charge of *regnum* is probably as old as the Republic itself. Tradition links three names with an attempted restoration of the monarchy during the days of the early Republic: "itaque et Spurius Cassius et M. Manlius et Spurius Maelius regnum occupare dicti sunt" (Cic. *Rep.* 2.49). *Occupare regnum* is the oldest known phrase used by Latin authors to denote an attempted restoration of the monarchy. In extant Latin literature this phrase can be traced back to the Third Punic War. Servius (*ad Aen.* 1.56) quotes the historian L. Cassius Hemina, who wrote in the middle of the second century B.C.: "ne quis regnum occuparet, si plebs nostra fremere imperia coepisset."[16] *Occupare regnum* may have been a modernization of part of an ancient legal formula which made it a capital offense to attempt a restoration of the monarchy at Rome.[17] Any such attempt in the early Republic

[15] *Tiberius Gracchus* = *Collection Latomus* 66 (1963) 107.
[16] H. Peter, *HRR*² vol. 1, p. 106, 22.
[17] Last (above, note 14) 395.

was represented by tradition as a crime which was punishable by death. Livy says that Sp. Cassius and M. Manlius were brought to trial and executed (2.41.10–12; 6.20.10–16). Sp. Maelius was killed when he resisted arrest (4.14.6). Livy also refers to a charge of kingship (*crimen regni*) which was brought against Sp. Maelius (4.15.1) and M. Manlius (6.20.4).

This legal charge of kingship was no doubt the ancestor of the charge of *regnum* used in political invective: it enabled Roman orators to play upon the real fears of kingship that plagued Romans to the detriment of a political opponent. The fear of monarchy was so much a political reality at Rome even as late as the first century B.C. that the anonymous author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* warned politicians against statements of this kind: "It is better to be subject to kings than to bad laws." Such an assertion, even if made for the purpose of exaggeration, will cause a vicious suspicion to arise, i.e. that the speaker is aiming at monarchy (2.40).

This Roman tradition of despotism did not remain solely Roman after the invasion of Hellenism. The Roman king and the Greek tyrant began to represent one stereotype to the Roman mind from the time Rome first became acquainted with the Greek tyrant. R. M. Ogilvie has shown that the despotic reign of Tarquinius Superbus, to which Romans ascribed the origin of their hatred of the title *rex* (Cic. *Rep.* 1.62), as described in Livy (1.49–60) represents the result of a Hellenizing process begun by the earliest Roman historians and completed by the middle of the second century B.C. Livy's Tarquinius is really a Greek tyrant in Roman dress.[18]

It is quite to be expected that this merger of the types of the Greek tyrant and Roman king was dominated by the Greek tyrant. The word *rex* before being colored by the tradition of the Greek tyrant referred only to a politically oppressive monarch; it said nothing about the ruler's personality. On the other hand, the Greek tyrant had a colorfully evil personality imbued with immorality. Tarquinius Superbus probably would not have survived as a memorable character in Livy without the help of the type of the Greek tyrant.

The identification of the Roman king with the Greek tyrant in political invective is first evident in accusations made against Tiberius

[18] Ogilvie (above, note 14) 194–97.

Gracchus during his tribunate in 133 B.C. Plutarch records that a charge was made against the tribune that a certain Eudemus gave a royal diadem and purple robe, the trappings of a Hellenistic monarch, to Gracchus whom he felt was destined to be king (*basileuein = regnare*) of Rome (*Ti. Gracch.* 14.3). Plutarch also reports that Scipio Nasica called Gracchus a tyrant (*Ti. Gracch.* 19.3). The word used by Plutarch in this accusation is *tyrannos*, suggesting that the Latin *tyrannus* was the word actually employed by Nasica. Both these charges are used as political invective to designate the same thing: Gracchus' domination of Roman politics in his agitation for agrarian reform.

Both Cicero and Sallust confirm that Tiberius Gracchus was accused of aiming at kingship (*Rep.* 2.49; *Iug.* 31.7). The charge of *tyrannus*, although not supported by other sources nearer to the fact, seems reasonable in the historical context of 133 B.C. Gracchus as leader of a popular movement against an established aristocracy might suggest a Greek tyrant like Peisistratus or Cypselus who rose to power through the support of the people in defiance of the aristocracy. Certainly by this time Roman nobles were well enough acquainted with Greek history to know the circumstances of the rise to power of tyrants like Peisistratus and Cypselus and could be expected to apply this knowledge to their own political situation. If this assumption is correct, both *rex* and *tyrannus* were being used interchangeably in political invective at least by the second half of the second century B.C.

Of the four characteristic vices of the tyrant—*vis*, *superbia*, *libido*, and *crudelitas*—*superbia* and perhaps *libido* can be traced as political charges as far back as the time of Cato the Elder. In 167 B.C. Cato defended the people of Rhodes against a charge of *superbia* made against them in the senate because of their alleged arrogance in offering themselves as mediators between Perseus and Rome.[19] Cicero in his *De senectute* has Cato tell of his removal of L. Flamininus from the senate for his arbitrary act of murdering a prisoner of war to please a prostitute (42). Cato gives as his reason for this action: "notandam putavi libidinem." *Libido* here describes the wanton capriciousness of Flamininus' crime and *notare* refers to the censor's act of censure. Cato a few lines later again uses *libido* to describe Flamininus' act. Cicero's attribution of the charge of *libido* to Cato in this case might

[19] Peter (above, note 16) vol. 1, p. 88, 95g.

possibly be based upon Cato's speech against Flamininus which is mentioned in Livy (39.42.6–7). Livy in narrating this incident also employs *libido* and adds *crudelitas* (39.43.1). On more certain grounds we know that *libido* was used by C. Gracchus as a term of political abuse to denounce a young nobleman's tyrannical act of having a Venusian farmer flogged to death for making a joke about the litter in which the young man was being carried (C. Gracchus, *ORF*² 49).

In the second decade of the first century B.C. we find the tyrannical vices of *vis* and *crudelitas* (in its adjectival form) recommended along with the charge of *tyrannus* (also in its adjectival form) as effective terms of invective in two almost identical passages from the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and Cicero's *De inventione* (2.49; 1.102):

> septimus locus est quo ostendimus taetrum facinus, *crudele*, nefarium, *tyrannicum* esse; quod genus iniuria mulierum. . . .

> septimus locus est per quem indignamur quod taetrum, *crudele*, nefarium, *tyrannicum* factum esse dicamus, per *vim*, manum, opulentiam.

The use of the adjective *nefarius* ("impious," "sacrilegious") in both passages recalls the tragedy-tyrant's tendency toward impiety.[20] Also reminiscent of the type of the tyrant is the addition in the *Rhetorica* of rape (*iniuria mulierum*) as typical of the crimes being denounced. Finally, in another part of the *Rhetorica*, *superbia*, *crudelitas* (in their adverbial forms), and *vis* are presented as effective terms of abuse in anti-Optimate invective (1.8).

In the following discussion of the type of the tyrant in Roman political invective, first Cicero's speeches will be examined and then whatever indirect evidence there is of the practice of other orators.

Perhaps the most fully delineated example of the type of the tyrant in Roman political invective is contained in Cicero's prosecution of Verres for extortion in the province of Sicily. Verres, as a Roman provincial governor, ruled over his province with the absolute power of a monarch. Cicero charges Verres with the abuse of this absolute power, i.e. with acting like a tyrant. In order to arouse the indignation of the jury against the defendant, Cicero sought in his *Verrine Orations* to picture Verres as an evil tyrant. The prosecutor was aided in this

[20] Cf. Hor. *Ars. P.* 186: Horace uses *nefarius* to describe Atreus, Rome's favorite tragedy-tyrant.

purpose by the fact that Sicily had a long history of tyrants, e.g. Phalaris, tyrant of Acragas, Gelon, tyrant of Gela and later of Syracuse, Dionysius I and II, both tyrants of Syracuse. Cicero could then point to Verres as another in a long line of tyrants, although worse than any of his predecessors (2.3.20–21; 2.4.123; 2.5.145). Every opportunity is seized upon by the prosecutor to link Verres with the tyrants of Sicily's past (cf. 2.5.68–69; 2.5.143).

Cicero in charging Verres with tyranny employs the terms *rex*, *dominus*, and *tyrannus* (2.1.82; 2.3.71,77; 2.5.103). According to Cicero, Verres exhibited various tyrannical vices, not only in his treatment of the Sicilians, but also in his oppression of Roman citizens in Sicily like those whom a certain L. Suettius as a witness swore were doomed by Verres to die in the terrible quarries of Syracuse (2.2.9; 1.56; 2.1.14):

> sed cum perferre non possent luxuriem, *crudelitatem*, avaritiam, *superbiam*, cum omnia sua commoda, iura, beneficia senatus populique Romani unius scelere ac *libidine* perdidissent. . . .
>
> . . . cum multa *libidinose*, multa *crudeliter* in civis Romanos . . . [Verres] fecerit. . . .
>
> . . . L. Suettius . . . qui iuratus apud vos dixit multos civis Romanos in latumiis istius imperio *crudelissime* per *vim* morte esse multatos.

The presence of Verres in the forum of Syracuse meant nothing but injustice for those subject to his judgment (2.5.31): ". . . *vis* et *crudelitas* et bonorum acerba et indigna direptio." Even before his propraetorship in Sicily Verres had acted like a tyrant during his tribunate when he flogged a Roman citizen (2.1.122–23):

> in plebem vero Romanam utrum *superbiam* prius commemorem an *crudelitatem*? sine dubio *crudelitas* gravior est atque atrocior. . . . *superbia* vero quae fuerit quis ignorat?

Cicero also charges Verres with imposing his lust upon the children and wives of the Sicilians (1.14):

> in stupris vero et flagitiis nefarias eius *libidines* commemorare pudore deterreor; simul illorum calamitatem commemorando augere nolo quibus liberos coniugesque suas integras ab istius petulantia conservare non licitum est.

In every Sicilian town which Verres visited for any length of time a family of high station had to provide him with a woman to satisfy

his lust (2.5.28): "... quo in oppido non isti ex aliqua familia non ignobili delecta ad *libidinem* mulier esset." Verres raped free born girls and matrons (2.4.116): "mitto adhibitam *vim* ingenuis, matres familias violatas." Cicero makes a similar charge against Verres for crimes of rape committed while he was legate under Cn. Dolabella (2.1.62): "quam multis istum ingenuis, quam multis matribus familias in illa taetra atque impura legatione *vim* attulisse existimatis?" Also during his service as legate Verres' alleged attempt to rape the beautiful daughter of Philodamus, a citizen of Lampsacus, causes Cicero to call Verres "a lustful and cruel tyrant" (*tyrannum libidinosum crudelemque*) (2.1.82).[21]

Cicero also draws upon the characteristic impiety of the Greek tyrant to represent Verres as an irreligious despot.[22] Verres is a defiler of religion and plunderer of temples (2.1.7; 1.56; 1.14):

> religiones vero caerimoniaeque omnium sacrorum fanorumque violatae, simulacraque deorum, quae non modo ex suis templis ablata sunt sed etiam iacent in tenebris ab isto retrusa atque abdita, consistere eius animum sine furore atque amentia non sinunt.
>
> ... multa in deos ... nefarie fecerit.
>
> ... delubra omnia sanctissimis religionibus consecrata depeculatus est.

Verres had already been a violator of things sacred during his quaestorship. As a legate in Asia and Pamphylia he robbed every temple (1.11). Verres' adulterous nocturnal visits to a woman at Rome after he had left for his province with the *imperium* were in sacrilegious defiance of all that is right (2.5.34):

> ... noctu stupri causa lectica in urbem introferri solitus est ad mulierem ... contra fas, contra auspicia, contra omnis divinas atque humanas religiones.[23]

[21] Other references to Verres' violence (*vis*): *Verr.* 2.1.49, 65, 68, 96; 2.2.88, 150; 2.3.73, 91, 143, 153; 2.4.89, 121, 140; arrogance (*superbia*): 2.2.192; 2.4.89; caprice and lust (*libido*): 2.1.63, 64, 78, 81; 2.2.134, 192; 2.3.5, 23, 60, 77; 2.4.39, 112, 115; 2.5.30; cruelty (*crudelitas*): 2.1.9, 34; 2.2.77, 80, 82, 91, 95, 109, 115, 117, 192; 2.3.24, 52, 126, 129, 130; 2.4.87; 2.5.21, 112–13.

[22] See also poets' use of the irreligious tyrant: Mezentius, Verg. *Aen.* 8.7, 483; Lycaeus, Ov. *Met.* 1.218–23.

[23] Other references to Verres' impiety and temple-robbing: *Div. Caec.* 3, 11, 19; *Verr.* 2.1.9, 11, 45, 49–50, 53–54; 2.3.6, 23; 2.4.18, 75, 88, 93, 95–110, 122–23, 127–28.

P. Clodius, Cicero's bitterest political enemy, was often accused by the orator of behaving tyrannically. Cicero uses *dominus* twice (*Sest.* 125, 127) and *tyrannus* twice, once in an indirect manner, to refer to Clodius (*Mil.* 80, 89). After Clodius' death Cicero says that if he were alive to lord it over (*dominari*) Rome, private property would not be safe (*Mil.* 78). There would be oppression everywhere; Clodius would possess all power; the republic would no longer exist (*Mil.* 89). Here Clodius is likened to the Greek tyrant who in taking power destroys all law (cf. *Leg. Agr.* 3.5).

Clodius' destruction of Cicero's house is proof of his most cruel domination (*Dom.* 110): "indicium crudelissimi tui dominatus." Clodius' bill exiling Cicero is tyrannical (*Dom.* 110): "privilegiis tyrannicis." If Clodius had ever gained the *imperium* he would never have refrained from imposing his unbridled lusts (*libidines*) on the children and wives of Roman citizens (*Mil.* 76).[24]

Clodius is also described by Cicero in terms of the irreligious tyrant. Clodius irreligiously destroyed Cicero's house in the name of religion, thus shaking the very foundations of the Roman state religion (*Dom.* 109). Cicero points out how ironical it is that Clodius who is guilty of so many tyrannical acts has set up a statue of the goddess *Libertas* on the site of Cicero's demolished house (*Dom.* 110). Cicero charges that Clodius has committed an act of impiety in setting up this statue ("imaginem . . . a sacrilego conlocatum") which is really a symbol of his tyranny: "haec victrix adflictae civitatis . . . indicium oppressi senatus" (*Dom.* 112). All things sacred to Romans are subject to the caprice (*libidini*) of a tribune (Clodius) (*Dom.* 106). In the Bona Dea incident Clodius, inflamed by shameful lust, violated religion and chastity (*Prov. Cons.* 24).[25]

L. Calpurnius Piso and A. Gabinius, consuls in 58 B.C., had incurred Cicero's wrath for their cooperation with Clodius in getting the orator exiled. Cicero accuses Piso of being sole master (*dominus*) of his province of Macedonia (*Pis.* 86). If Piso and Gabinius are consuls,

[24] Other references to Clodius' violence: *Dom.* 76, 107; *Vat.* 33; *Har. Resp.* 58; *Mil.* 30, 38, 52; caprice and lust: *Dom.* 25; *Phil.* 8.16; cruelty: *Dom.* 43, 59, 60, 62, 93; *Mil.* 89.

[25] Other references to Clodius' impiety: *Dom.* 104, 109, 137, 140; *Har. Resp.* 4, 5, 28, 37, 43; *Mil.* 85, 87.

who can be called tyrants (*tyranni*) (*Pis.* 24)? Piso stopped the senators from carrying out their edict of senatorial public mourning for Cicero's exile, something which no tyrant (*tyrannus*) ever did (*Red. Sen.* 12). What tyrant (*tyrannus*) ever forbade the wretched to mourn (*Sest.* 32; *Pis.* 18)?

Cicero charges that Piso's lust (*libido*) caused the suicides of girls who suffered dishonor at his hand (*Prov. Cons.* 6). He later makes the same charge, adding two others of arrogance and cruelty (*superbia, crudelitas, libido*) (*Prov. Cons.* 8). These same three characteristics of the tyrant are used by Cicero to describe Piso in the *In Pisonem* (66). Piso with most cruel and arrogant words turned away Cicero's daughter Tullia and her husband who were pleading in Cicero's behalf (*superbissimis et crudelissimis verbis*) (*Red. Sen.* 17). Gabinius is accused of ruining the publicans in his province of Syria with his arrogance and cruelty (*superbia, crudelitas*) (*Prov. Cons.* 11).[26]

In the *Philippics* Cicero attacks Antony's most cruel domination (*crudelissimus dominatus*) (3.29). He later describes it as cruel and arrogant: (*crudelem superbamque dominationem*) (3.34). Cicero also denounced the force (*vis*) which Antony employed to have a law passed conferring upon himself the provinces of Cisalpine Gaul and Gallia Comata instead of Macedonia which had been designated in Caesar's will (5.10; 6.3; 7.15; 13.5). Two of Antony's predominant vices are his lust (*libido*) and cruelty (*crudelitas*) (3.28).[27]

Cicero also charges Antony with openly possessing an armed bodyguard to intimidate the senate (2.8, 15, 19). Not even despots like Cinna, Sulla, and Caesar had done such a thing (5.17–18). Cicero here is appealing to one of the oldest traditions of tyranny, the seizing of power through an armed bodyguard. The armed bodyguard had been a symbol of tyranny since Peisistratus' seizure of Athens through this means in the sixth century B.C. (Hdt. 1.59). Aegisthus as a tragedy-tyrant in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* used an armed bodyguard to enforce his tyranny (1650).

[26] Other references to the tyrannical behavior of Piso and Gabinius: *Pis.* 11, 15, 18, 31, 64, 66, 67, 85, 86; *Red. Sen.* 11, 13, 14, 15; *Red. Quir.* 13; *Dom.* 23, 126, 146; *Prov. Cons.* 2, 3, 10; *Sest.* 22, 26, 32.

[27] Other references to Antony's tyrannical behavior: *Phil.* 1.36; 2.62, 71, 99, 107; 3.3–5, 8–10, 23; 4.3, 12, 14; 5.21–22, 42, 44; 7.27; 8.12; 12.12; 13.18–19; 14.9, 25.

The use of these charges of *regnum*, *tyrannis*, *dominatio*, *vis*, *superbia*, *libido*, and *crudelitas* is by no means peculiar to Cicero. This invective employing the type of the tyrant was characteristic of the period, not just of one orator. The *populares* accused the consul Cicero of acting like a tyrant because he ordered the execution of the arrested Catilinarian conspirators without giving them the benefit of a trial. In the *First Catilinarian* Cicero had already predicted that, if any punishment were administered to Catiline, he would be charged with behaving like a cruel king: "crudeliter et regie factum esse dicerent" (30). Cicero says that the followers of Catiline accused him of capricious behavior and cruelty (*libido*, *crudelitas*) and of being a cruel tyrant (*crudelis tyrannus*) (*Dom.* 75, 93–94; cf. *Fam.* 7.24.1). The author of the pseudo-Sallustian *In M. Tullium Ciceronem* added the charge of *libido*. He describes the year of Cicero's consulship as one in which the courts and the laws were subject to a consul's caprice (3.5). Sallust in his *Catilinae coniuratio* has Caesar warn the senate not to be capricious (*lubido*) in deciding the punishment of the conspirators (51.3) and predicts that senators involved will be charged with arrogance and cruelty (*superbia*, *crudelitas*) if the conspirators are executed (51.14). Caesar in the same speech also uses *lubido* to describe the thirty tyrants of Athens as capricious murderers (51.30).

Cicero reports that similar charges were made by his friends against the *populares* both when he was exiled and later. Pompey publicly denounced the force and cruelty (*vis*, *crudelitas*) of the bill exiling Cicero (*Red. Sen.* 29). L. Cotta said that Cicero was banished by, among other things, the force of arms (*vis*) and a new domination (*dominatus*) (*Dom.* 68). After Caesar's assassination, C. Cassius in a letter to Cicero described Antony and Dolabella as cruel tyrants (*Fam.* 12.12.2).

Many of these charges of tyrannical behavior made by Cicero against Verres, Clodius, Piso, Gabinius, and Antony, along with the charges made against Cicero by his political enemies, no doubt had some basis in fact. Certainly Verres was a scoundrel, perhaps even a virtuoso among many grasping Roman provincial governors who took advantage of the power of their position. Clodius was a Roman gangster whose stock in trade was violence. Antony undoubtedly sought to become heir to Caesar's political domination. Cicero had denied the

right of trial to the arrested Catilinarian conspirators. The accusations of impiety made by Cicero against Verres and Clodius also had some basis in fact. Verres no doubt had plundered temples in Sicily and certainly Clodius was guilty of violating the rites of the Bona Dea.

However, the sameness of vocabulary (*vis, superbia, libido, crudelitas*) and the frequency of its use in these charges of tyannical behavior made against political opponents show that the authors of this invective are dealing in shibboleths and are more concerned with arousing the indignation of their audience than being completely truthful. The extravagant libels which these charges often represent are another reason to suspect their complete accuracy.[28]

Many of these charges of tyranny are the result of political prejudice combined with personal antagonism. Cicero charged Antony with openly possessing an armed guard for the purpose of intimidating the senate. Antony had accused Cicero of the same thing. He charged that the orator had lined the Capitoline hill with an armed guard of slaves[29] during the height of the crisis caused by the Catilinarian conspiracy (*Phil.* 2.16). Cicero could claim that this guard was necessary for the protection of the consul in a time of national emergency. However, Antony could also claim quite legitimately that his armed escort was needed to protect the life of a consul during the tense months following Caesar's assassination.

Cicero's charge of tyrannical impiety against Clodius for destroying his house and dedicating the site to the goddess *Libertas* represents only Cicero's view of the affair. Clodius' action had the support of an old Republican tradition of punishment for potential monarchs that dated back to the fifth century B.C. The houses of Sp. Cassius, Sp. Maelius, and M. Manlius had been destroyed because of their crime of having sought a monarchy (*Dom.* 101). Clodius no doubt claimed that he was acting according to this tradition when he destroyed the house of a consul who had acted like a despot in denying a trial to the conspirators.

An example of oratorical exaggeration can be seen in the great

[28] Cf. R. G. M. Nisbet's edition of Cicero's *In Pisonem* (Oxford 1961) 192–97.

[29] Antony no doubt erred deliberately in saying that the armed guard consisted of slaves, in order to insult Cicero. As Cicero pointed out, the guard was made up of knights and young nobles.

number of sexual attacks upon persons subject to his power which Cicero ascribes to Verres. Similar charges made against Piso seem to have been almost entirely due to Cicero's animosity toward the proconsul of Macedonia.[30] Cicero's extravagant charges that Verres imposed his lust on the children and wives of his Sicilian subjects (*Verr.* 1.14) and that Clodius in a position of power would have exercised sexual dominion over the women and children of Rome (*Mil.* 76) are purely and simply a commonplace of tyrannical behavior, as can be seen from Livy's quite similar description of the tyranny of the decemvir Appius Claudius (3.45.8; cf. Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 11.41.4; Sall. *Cat.* 51.9): "ideo in liberos quoque nostros coniugesque regnum vestrae libidini datum est."[31]

As for the charge of impiety against Verres, there was a legal point involved in Cicero's accusations of temple-robbing. Verres was on trial for extortion and the Sicilians upon Verres' conviction could probably expect to demand the statues back or recompense for them. However, besides making the improbable charge that Verres had robbed every temple in Sicily (*Verr.* 1.14), Cicero expanded his accusation to include Verres' temple-robbing as quaestor and legate, which was legally irrelevant to the trial at hand, although certainly not emotionally irrelevant in its effect on the jury. Moreover, the emphasis in Cicero's charges is not so much on the stealing of the statues but on Verres' impiety as demonstrated by this activity, a charge which was also irrelevant to an extortion trial. Cicero sometimes denounces his impiety without reference to his temple-robbing (e.g. 2.5.34).

The reason for these prejudiced interpretations of behavior, exaggerations, and irrelevant charges is that the orator had no intention of presenting plain facts relevant to the case at hand, but was seeking rather to arouse the indignation of his audience against a political opponent by representing him as a tyrant. For this purpose rhetorical invention and coloring has much more effect than unadorned truth.

When an orator tried to make a political enemy over into a tyrant in the eyes of his audience, he had to fulfill certain expectations of the

[30] See R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford 1939) 135, 149–50; and R. G. M. Nisbet's Introduction (above, note 28) xv–xvi.

[31] This is not to infer that Verres and Clodius were necessarily altogether innocent in this regard. But certainly Cicero's exaggeration indicates that he was employing a rhetorical commonplace rather than making a serious charge.

audience. *Vis*, *superbia*, *libido*, and *crudelitas* as terms of abuse in political invective had their roots in the stereotype of the tyrant and represented various aspects of the tyrant's characteristic behavior. These terms also served as vague charges which could be adapted to fit the circumstances at hand to describe a political opponent's alleged acts as tyrannical.

Vis denotes the force which a tyrant must employ to gain and hold power. Tarquinius Superbus, according to Livy, had no right to the kingship beyond the force which he employed (1.49.3). Cicero in his *De officiis* includes force as an essential part of his definition of a despot (2.24).

The charge of *superbia* harked back to the traditional cognomen of Rome's last king, Tarquinius Superbus.[32] Cicero says that the Roman monarchy came to be hated by the Romans because of the insolence and arrogance (*superbia*) of Tarquinius alone (*Rep.* 1.62; cf. *Rep.* 2.46; *Rab. Perd.* 13; *Phil.* 3.9). *Superbia* as a vice of the tyrant no doubt had its ultimate origin in the Greek concept of *hybris*, the wanton self-assertion which was so characteristic of the Greek tyrant.

Libido as a term of political invective is more complex in meaning. It refers to a despotic caprice which characterizes rule according to the desire of one man. This rule by whim also includes a capricious sexual dominion of the ruler over his subjects.

To the Roman mind *libido* represented everything that was opposed to the principle of republican government. The opposite of *libido* was *lex*, i.e. the law which formed the basis of republican government. Law represented an objective and impersonal set of standards to which every citizen could equally appeal in questions of justice. However, subject to the caprice of an autocracy, under which the state was no longer a *res publica*, i.e. a public concern, the individual citizen was at the mercy of an autocrat's whims. The opposition of *lex* and *libido* can be seen in two passages from the *Verrine Orations* in which Cicero accuses Verres of seeking to substitute his caprice for the law (2.3.82, 117). Sallust has Memmius (tribune 111 B.C.) charge that the caprice of the *nobiles*, not the law, brought about the deaths of the Gracchi (*Iug.* 31.7).[33]

[32] Cf. H. Haffter, "Superbia Innenpolitisch," *SIFC* 27–28 (1956) 136.

[33] Cf. ps.-Sallust, *Epistulae ad Caesarem* 1.3.6; Livy 2.3.1–5.

As we have seen in the examples of invective already presented, *libido* at times can be translated as sexual lust. Rape was one of the most typical acts of the tyrant. Tarquinius Superbus, although not guilty of rape himself, was not able to control the lusts (*libidines*) of his family, particularly those of Sextus, who raped Lucretia (*Rep.* 2.45).[34] The close relationship of tyranny and *libido* as sexual lust can be seen in a passage from Cicero's *Philippics* which refers to the gossip about the young Antony's homosexual relations with the younger Curio: "... eius [Antony's] pueritia pertulerat libidines eorum qui erant in eum tyranni" (13.17).

Cruelty (*crudelitas*) is probably the most characteristic vice of the tyrant. The adjective *crudelis* is used by Cicero and others as a standard epithet of *tyrannus*.[35] Besides its most common reference to any act of an alleged tyrant which is considered arbitrary and ruthless by the accuser, *crudelitas* also has a more specific meaning, i.e. political murder. As we saw in Herodotus and Euripides, the Greek tyrant solidified his position by the killing of political enemies. Cinna and Sulla who were Roman tyrants in everything but name used the device of political murder for the same purposes. Their cruelty in the matter of political murder was proverbial.[36]

Caesar as son-in-law of Cinna was fully expected to initiate a policy of political murder after his victory over Pompey. Cicero was uncertain whether Caesar would prove to be a Phalaris or a Peisistratus (*Att.* 7.20.2). Phalaris, the Sicilian tyrant who burnt live victims in a brazen bull, was an excellent example of a cruel tyrant. If Caesar should prove to be a Peisistratus, there would be no proscription but a more tolerable and permissive tyranny in the manner of the Athenian tyrant. Caesar knew that his fellow-citizens were asking this question about him. He wrote to Cicero to assure him that

[34] A similar example of a rape committed by the son of a king, which was no doubt encouraged by the security guaranteed by his father's despotic power, can be found in very early Biblical times. Dinah, a daughter of Jacob, was raped by Shecham, son of King Hamor the Hivite (*Genesis* 34: 1–3).

[35] *Verr.* 2.1.82; 2.4.73; 2.5.143, 145; *Cat.* 2.14; *Dom.* 75, 94; *Phil.* 13.18; *Rep.* 1.44; *Fam.* 12.12.2.

[36] Cinna: Cic. *Cat.* 3.24; *Phil.* 1.34; 11.1; *Nat. D.* 3.81; *Att.* 8.9.4. Sulla: *Dom.* 43; *Fin.* 3.75; *Off.* 2.27; *Att.* 9.14.2. Sulla and Cinna: *Att.* 9.10.3.

nothing is further from his mind than cruelty (*crudelitas*), i.e. political murder (*Att.* 9.16.2).

Perhaps the final question to ask is why the type of the tyrant was so popular with Roman orators as an instrument of invective. One answer is that the tyrant must have been psychologically effective in arousing the indignation of an audience. The tyrant had a very real existence as an archvillain in the imagination of the Romans. The orator could rely upon the audience transferring some of its hatred for the tyrant to the person he was portraying.

Not only the behavior of the tyrant but also his typical attire and facial expression were well known to the Romans. The tyrant's characteristic dress was a purple robe and crown (Plut. *Ti. Gracch.* 14.2).[37] Most Romans considered this attire perfectly suitable for a Hellenistic monarch but utterly loathsome if worn by a Roman magistrate. A charge of dressing like a tyrant was not regularly a part of Roman political invective (except for the accusation made against Tiberius Gracchus noted above), but charges of tyranny and tyrannical behavior must have aroused such associated images in the minds of an audience.

The charge of tyranny probably also suggested the image of the tyrant's typical facial expression. Horace seems to be referring to something which is commonly known when he mentions "the face of a threatening tyrant" (*Carm.* 3.3.3): *vultus instantis*[38] *tyranni.* This typical facial expression is very probably derived from the mask of the tragedy-tyrant. As G. Norwood tells us, the tyrant's mask in Greek tragedy wore a frown.[39] There is no reason to doubt that the Romans in taking over the tragedy-tyrant as a typical character also preserved the convention of his mask. An even more colorful description of the tyrant's countenance can be found in the following representation of Verres by Cicero (2.5.161): "ipse inflammatus scelere et furore in forum venit; ardebant oculi, toto ex ore crudelitas eminebat." This was perhaps the standard rhetorical image of the tyrant, since we have an almost identical description of Scipio Nasica in the act of murdering

[37] Attire played an important part in the Greek concept of the tyrant. See Thuc. 1.130.1; Polyb. 6.7.7.

[38] Cicero used the verb *instare* to describe Clodius' tyrannical activity (*Mil.* 87).

[39] *Greek Tragedy* (New York 1960) 69.

Tiberius Gracchus from an anti-Optimate declamation presented in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (4.68): "[Nasica] sudans, oculis ardentibus . . . spumans ex ore scelus, anhelans ex infimo pectore crudelitatem. . . ."

To the Romans, personalities always were more important than political programs. For this reason it was politically more expedient to defame the character of a political opponent than to attack his political principles. Political acts were touched upon in invective but only as evidence of the inner corruption of their author. For these personal attacks the stereotype of the evil tyrant provided a practical mold into which one could cast a political enemy.