

Glossary of Roman Cultural and Political Terms

Magistracies (in order of prestige rather than alphabetical)

Not all the terms are used in the speech. Some are also used in the Introduction and Notes and others are added for general interest and completeness. Reference is made to this Glossary in the Introduction and Notes.

censor: the magistracy that took care of the public building works and the funding allocated to them. The censors were also responsible for removing senators whose conduct was deemed unfitting to their status or whose fortunes fell below the required level.

consul (consulship): the chief magistracy in Rome. There were two consuls elected annually. This in theory avoided one man having too much power. By Cicero's time, consuls normally remained in Rome for their year in office and left to govern a province with an army in the following year, when they were **proconsuls**.

praetor: the dictator Sulla increased the number of praetors to 8. Praetors presided over the courts and could also govern provinces.



curule aedile: they carried out repairs ordered by the censors, provided markets, controlled the distribution of grain, and organised certain public games, including the *ludi Megalenses*.

This was the position held by Clodius at the time of the speech.

quaestor: their role was primarily financial. Quaestors were custodians of the public treasury and each governor of a province would be assigned a quaestor to handle any revenues and funds. Sulla raised the number of quaestors to twenty and the quaestors gained automatic entry into the senate.

tribunus plebis: the tribunes may not have been the most prestigious office, but one could argue, given their right to introduce legislation independently and to veto measures they deemed not to be in the people's interests, they were potentially the most powerful. They were created in the fifth century as the people's magistrates, who were supposed to guard the interests of the common people against the senatorial elite and higher magistracies. At §34, Cicero refers to Clodia's ancestor Claudia the Vestal who prevented a hostile tribune from obstructing her father's military triumph.



General Political/Cultural Terms

equites: by Cicero's day, the title of *eques* had come to denote a financial qualification. They were normally wealthy and many, like Cicero and Caelius, aspired to and achieved a political career.

imperator: the title for a general at the head of an army. Cicero uses a 'feminised' version (*imperatrix*: §66) to refer to Clodia, mocking her alleged heroics in the plan to trap Licinius in the baths with the poison.

nobilis: the term is not to be confused with the patrician. A nobilis referred to someone whose family had a history of holding the consulship. Possibly, the office had to be held within the previous three generations. Cicero refers to the noble status of Clodia's family several times in the speech.

novus homo: Cicero and Caelius were both *novi homines*. They were from wealthy families and, thus, of equestrian status, but they were not from Rome's noble families with long traditions of holding the top offices. They had to start from scratch.

optimates: the optimates were a clique of noble families within the senate, who also supported the senate as the central power in Rome under the Republic, rather than the popular assemblies. Cicero yearned to be part of this inner group, but as a *novus homo*, the best he could hope for were political and social ties and friendships.



patrician: a narrow clique of nobles, who claimed their status and name could be traced back to the original nobility at the time of the kings. One can find the patricians treated as if they were the same as the senate. This is not correct.

plebeian: the term refers simply to someone who was not a noble (see above). *Plebs* denotes the common people.

popularis: there are two sides to this term. Firstly, the term describes those who courted the people for their support rather than the senate. Secondly, there were those *populares* who proposed measures that directly appealed to the poorer people, arguably mostly as a support-winning drive, but there may have been more altruistic agents. Clodius, the aggressive former tribune brother of Clodia, was perhaps the most famous *popularis* of the Republic.

tirocinium fori : induction into public life.

transitio ad plebem: the term for Clodius' adoption from his patrician birth family, the Claudians, into a family of plebeian status, so that he could run for the tribunate, which was barred to patricians.

triumphator: a triumphator was (normally) a magistrate who had been awarded a triumph for a significant military victory. The victorious general, wearing a red toga, would lead a



procession of his troops, spoils, and any captives taken. The spectacle went right through Rome up to the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus.

Vestal Virgins: they were an important group of priestesses, who guarded the eternal flame of Rome and prevented it going out. Vesta was the goddess of the hearth, but at Rome she was also an increasingly important public goddess. She was goddess of Rome's hearth. There were six of them and they were expected to serve, maintaining their chastity, for thirty years (minimum).

Roman Values

auctoritas: *auctoritas* was not derived from any particular position of superiority, like the English ‘authority’, but referred to the personal influence that a figure developed from his public esteem and reputation. ‘Superior influence’ can be a good translation.

dignitas referred to the personal standing of an individual accumulated both through his own personal achievement and that of his family and the reputation and esteem they enjoyed publicly (§34). It could also denote a man’s rank or office.

gloria referred mainly to the glory achieved by an individual in service to the Republic. Military service was viewed as the prestigious way to achieve this. Military service was a prerequisite for a political career, and during this period constituted a huge reputation boost for the aspiring politician.

gravitas: At §33, Cicero refers to Appius Claudius Caecus’ *gravitas (illa sua gravitate censoria)*. He is referring to his importance due to his high office and achievement. It denotes a solemn importance and power that is closely linked to his *auctoritas*.

honos: ‘honour’, ‘public esteem/repute.’ In connection with this sense, *honos* also came to be the term for political office and the esteem both derived from and confirmed by election. Election to office was an ‘honour’ bestowed by one’s fellow citizens.

virtus: ‘courage’. The term can be translated as ‘manliness’, but when referring to the achievements of Metellus Celer (§34), it is best translated as ‘courage’ (also at §39, in the



B L O O M S B U R Y

phrase *indole virtutis* and at §63 in Cicero's sarcastic reference to the 'courage' of the witnesses planted in the baths). In the plural, 'qualities', specifically 'good qualities' is the essential meaning.