LACERATIO FAMAE: INVECTIVE AS FACEWORK
IN CICERO’S IN PISONEM

by

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ABSTRACT

Recent discussions of Cicero’s *In Pisonem* have approached the functioning of invective in the speech mainly in terms of the orator’s ability to fashion rhetorical weapons from the audience’s social biases and, consequently, have focused on evidence of his success in injuring his opponent’s reputation and dignity.¹ That Piso, his opponent, had an equal opportunity and success in fighting back against Cicero’s attacks is, as I will argue, a crucial factor in determining the possible outcomes of this contest.

I argue that when the *In Pisonem* is viewed as a 'character contest', the conflict between Piso and Cicero appears to have been both unavoidable and yet inconclusive, despite evidence of Cicero’s victory in the speech itself. While Cicero's attack on Piso displays superior rhetorical skill, humour and poise, the fact that Piso responded to the publication of the *In Pisonem* by publishing his own speech demonstrates that he was able to continue his side of the battle beyond Cicero's apparent victory. Although Cicero can claim a victory as the 'manifest outcome' of the Senate debate, it is clear that 'interpretological outcomes' came into play on both sides. Piso's persistence in the quarrel permits him a secondary claim to victory when Cicero, believing he has already won, decides not to respond. Comparison with Cicero's handling of Clodius' victory in the *Bona Dea* scandal, reinforces the importance of interpretation in determining the outcomes of invective contests. Win or lose, Roman orators will put the best face on their

performance and emerge relatively unscathed from the 'character contests' in which their careers seem to hang in the balance. Piso's success in the conflict is seen as well in his continuation as Caesar's father-in-law, a role that Cicero clearly attempted to put in jeopardy in his attack. In this regard, Goffman's account of 'character contest' proves a reliable guide to understanding the grey areas which obscure the outcome of the conflict.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editions and Abbreviations</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1: Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1: Chapter Summary</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2: Methodology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: The Conflict between Piso and Cicero</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Invective as Contest</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: Praise and Blame: Positive and Negative Aspects of 'Face'</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1: Face as Positive Social Attributes</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2: verecundia and contumelia</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: Facework and Invective</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1: Poise and Embarrassment</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2: Avoidance Processes</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3: Corrective Processes</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: Conclusions</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EDITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Except where otherwise noted, all Latin text is taken from the most recent Oxford editions. All Latin translations are my own, unless otherwise noted. English translations from Greek texts of Plutarch, Arrian and Aristotle are taken from the most recent Loeb Classical Library editions. The following abbreviations are used, with commentaries cited by the authors name only below.

Ad. Q. fr. (Letters to His Brother Quintus)

De orat. (On the Orator)

P. red. in sen. (To the Senate on His Return from Exile)

Pis. (Against Piso)

Prov. (On the Consular Provinces)

Sen. (On Old Age)

Sest. (On behalf of Sestius)


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I am personally indebted to my supervisor, Dr. Siobhan McElduff, firstly, for her generous involvement in this project during her sabbatical year, but above all, for her wisdom in suggesting the *In Pisonem* as a fruitful field for my graduate research into Roman oratory. The pleasures I have derived from the study of this oration more than outweigh the pains I have taken to complete this dissertation.

I owe a profound debt of gratitude to Dr. Mark Vessey, as well, whose involvement in my studies began many years ago when he acted as supervisor for my graduating essay (Medieval Studies, B.A.). His generous involvement in my current thesis has afforded me a valuable opportunity to advance my own scholarship.
DEDICATION

To Amy
1. Introduction

Cicero's *In Pisonem* holds an important place in the history of Late Republican invective. Written and delivered in the Senate in the fall of 56 BCE with his opponent Lucius Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus present in the audience, both the text and its context offer rich evidence of the social interactions and strategies which informed the orator's use of invective as a political weapon. At a time crucial both for the re-establishment of Cicero's career and for the Triumvirate's consolidation of their power-sharing arrangement, Cicero's attack on Julius Caesar's father-in-law is both iconoclastic and iconic as a text in which Cicero offers his audience one of his most virulent attacks on an important aristocratic senatorial individual alongside one of his most compelling self-portraits of his accomplishments and achievements as a savior of the Republic and as a *novus homo*.

In this thesis, I argue for a reading the *In Pisonem* and its literary and social contexts within Erving Goffman's framework of face theory. I believe that this methodology, which was first successfully applied to the study of the oratory of the Second Sophistic in work by Maude Gleason (1995) and more recently to the study of social interaction in the Homeric epics by Ruth Scodel (2008), will yield important insights into the social processes underlying Cicero's contest with Piso specifically, and contribute to a clear understanding of the workings of invective as a contest in the *In Pisonem*. The focus of this study is not the role of face in the history of emotions, though the history of emotions
will inform my approach to the particulars of Roman cultural competition. Rather, it is on the grey areas that surround seemingly clear-cut outcomes, and the processes through which orators manage outcomes through their responses to face-threatening situations. It is Goffman’s account of these moves and the framework he provides for understanding the underlying scripts, that will most inform and enable my reading of facework in the *In Pisonem*. While this study draws on the social history of the Late Republican political scene of the 60’s and 50’s BCE, the outcomes I am concerned with here are ideas, the ideas Cicero and Piso entertained about themselves and each other, rather than facts. In applying Goffman’s framework to the study of invective, it is hoped that we will be able to add to our understanding of the purposes, workings, and risks invective entailed as a vehicle for elite Roman competition.

1.1: Chapter summary

In the methodology I will establish the grounds for examining the social dynamics of invective within the framework of Goffman’s concept of face and facework. In Chapter two I provide a historical background for the conflict between Cicero and Piso, and then I will analyze aspects of the conflict which help situate it within the various venues available to the Roman orator. From here, I will contrast Goffman's concept of the 'character contest' with current approaches to invective as a zero-sum game to argue that Goffman's elaboration of non-zero sum aspects of character contest offers important insights into the outcome of invective contests. In Chapter three I firstly situate Goffman’s concept of face within its Roman context by examining how face as an image
of positive social attributes serves both as target and weapon in the contest. I will then turn to the role of *verecundia* as a constraint on both target and attacker in Cicero’s use of abusive animal epithets. In Chapter four I analyse the forms of facework (poise/embarassment, avoidance/corrective processes) that occur in speech, examining how each is used aggressively and defensively on both sides to score points against their opponent.

1.2: Methodology

Invective can be viewed as a zero-sum competition for *auctoritas*, but the complexities of social interaction both within the social world of the orator and in the nature of invective as a face-to-face interaction introduce complicating factors and allow leeway for interpretation that could offset losses and blur even the manifest results of the orator’s victory beyond the limitations of zero-sum restrictions. Ruth Scodel has recently demonstrated how epic heroes bring other considerations into the zero-sum game of honor they play to arrive at nuanced, dynamic outcomes that reflect the complexities of their social world.

Goffman’s framework for understanding face-to-face interactions was developed in part from ethnographic observations of 1950’s and ’60’s American society, a much different world from the ancient societies I will discuss here. Where modern Western societies are

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2 Riggsby (1997). “Status is a relative game, so one recovers one’s own by knocking one’s opponent down” 247.

3 Scodel (2008). Drawing on the work of Erving Goffman and Levinson and Brown, Scodel is able to show how competition for the social goods of ‘time’, ‘kleos’ and ‘kudos’, is regulated by considerations of ‘face’ in social interactions.
generally characterized by democratic values that protect the equality of individuals from discrimination based on gender, race, and class, the ancient social milieu of the Roman orator is exclusively male, and subordinates the claims of the individual to those of a collective and very public social order. Furthermore, where the sheer scale of modern professional life offers very different rewards and risks for social competition, and novel opportunities for re-invention give individuals greater scope in searching out their proper place in society, the social constraints imposed by the tiny aristocratic community of the Roman Senate, were absolute and all-binding: you were either in or out. Nonetheless, the honour of Roman senators like Cicero most often proved to be durable under attack and even exile could be a temporary setback.\(^4\) The risks entailed by not defending one’s rightful place in the Roman Senate were far greater, just as the advantages to be gained through overt competition for status brought greater danger when one lost.

The issue of cultural bias raises barriers for the study of ancient societies, some of which would have seemed insurmountable even within the past few decades in which researchers have predominantly focused on the ‘other-ness’ of ancient societies.\(^5\) While Goffman’s framework does not offer a truly universal account of facework, it stands at the centre of an important field of research which has arguably demonstrated the viability

\[\begin{align*}
4 & \text{Kelly (2006). Exile seems to have functioned in the Republic as a safety valve, affording the political system a non-violent means of removing the opposition from the scene. Those who went into exile voluntarily to avoid a political trial stood a fair chance of being restored by a Roman voting assembling once the danger had passed. 15. Cicero compares himself to Metellus Numidicus as a voluntary exile (Sest. 37; Pis. 20) but complains privately when people expect him to follow Numidicus’ example and show complacency and contrition as a restored exile (ad fam.i.9).} \\
5 & \text{Cairns (2011) 24-41. The limitations of this ‘outsider’ approach to the field of emotions in ancient societies have recently been re-examined by one of its foremost practitioners, Douglas Cairns, whose work on ‘Aidos’ (Cairns, 1993) situated the concepts of shame and honor within a distinctly Mediterranean cultural milieu.}
\end{align*}\]
of ‘face’ as a cross-cultural theory. The cross-cultural assumption that, beneath differences of language and culture, people everywhere are similar in certain ways, places Classicists, as researchers trained to seek out the differences and particularities that set the ancient world apart from our own, in a much different role. In exploring the general similarities between Goffman’s face concept and the Roman concept of face, we must not lose sight of the particularities of language, culture and ideals which define face in the Roman world. But we should also be prepared to embrace an ‘insider’ perspective, one that allows us to recognize that Roman concern for face is something that we too live with and are able to approach from the inside. Ruth Scodel’s study of facework in Homer exemplifies how Goffman’s framework can be successfully applied, once the particular values have been worked out, to reveal a richer, more dynamic, and inclusive view of social interaction in ancient society.

In applying the concept of ‘face-work’ to Cicero’s text and Roman culture generally, I have had to summarize and paraphrase the complex ideas of Erving Goffmann, adapting them as I saw fit for the purpose of illuminating a fascinating aspect of ancient invective. To the extent that this approach has met with success, it is due to the strengths of

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6 Bargiela-Chiappini (2006) gives a concise summary of recent progress in the field of politeness research in her entry “Face” in the *Concise Encyclopedia of Pragmatics.*

7 Cairns (2011) 29. Cairns exemplifies this change in posture: “This has implications for the study of honour in other cultures and in past societies: concern for honour and shame is not a phenomenon that we should approach from the outside looking in. Though honour-words are clearly attached to different ideals in different societies, and though honour (and its analogues) may take on specific senses at different periods and in different contexts, still there is a general sense in which what mattered to (for example) Homer’s heroes is a reflex of something that still matters to us.”

8 Scodel (2008) cites Goffman directly in support of her cross-cultural study of facework in Homer, “As Goffman says, however, different cultures draw their face-saving habits from ‘single logically coherent framework of possible practices’. The human repertory of problems in interaction is limited and so are the varieties of solution that can be found for them” x.
Goffmann’s work as an analyst of face-to-face interactions. Whatever distortions of
Goffmann’s ideas may have resulted from my attempts to unravel the workings of face-
to-face encounters represented in the speech, are mine alone and reflect the limitations
and habits of a text-historian who was determined, as Cicero remarks of Piso’s
Epicureanism, *retinere quod acceperat* (to hang onto what he had received)
Cicero’s conflict with Piso began in 58 when the consuls Piso and Aulus Gabinius struck a bargain with one of the tribunes for that year, Publius Clodius Pulcher, to support an attack on Cicero’s handling of the Catilinarian conspiracy in 63. His lack of cooperation with the First Triumvirate formed by Caesar, Crassus and Pompey in 59 left Cicero open to the suspicions and precautionary measures by what was now the most powerful faction on the Roman political scene. The alliance had urgent business to take care of in the year of Caesar’s consulship: Pompey needed a land-reform bill to resettle his soldiers in Asia Minor; Crassus had promised the tax farmers new contracts; and Caesar had his sights set on Gallic conquests needed to demonstrate his military prowess. But it was the extraordinary power wielded by his enemy Clodius Pulcher as tribune in 58, which saw the beginnings of hostility between Cicero and the consuls when they colluded with Clodius’ attack on Cicero in exchange for lucrative provinces. The attack took the form of a bill, called the *de capitate civis Romani*, which denied fire and water to anyone who had executed a Roman citizen without fair trial. This was tied to a second bill assigning the provinces of Macedonia and Cilicia (later changed to Syria) to the consuls of 58.

Piso’s support for Clodius’ bill came as a complete surprise to Cicero. Piso had

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9 Baldson (1962). Tax contracts were offered every five years to the company with the highest bid. The group of equites who bought the Asiatic tax contracts in 61 soon discovered that the contracts had been overvalued and requested compensation in the form of a new contract from the Senate. With the help of Crassus and others, the price was eventually reduced by one third in 59 during Caesar’s consulship after the company agreed to a merger with their competitors. While Crassus had no financial interest in the original company, the merger opened up a tremendous investment opportunity for him when his own clients swooped in and with Crassus’ financial backing forced the original owners into a partnership, 135-137.
previously praised Cicero’s consulship and Cicero’s relationship to the Pisones generally had been thus far close and cordial.\textsuperscript{10} Indeed, as the father-in-law of C. Piso, who was distantly related to the consul, Cicero had welcomed him as a family friend and potential ally in the Senate, although Piso’s success in the elections seems to have come as a surprise. In a letter to Atticus in 59, Cicero does not even mention Piso as a possible candidate for the consulship (\textit{Att.} 2. 5. 2).

The marriage of Piso’s daughter with Caesar brought Piso into the network of alliances that underlay the Triumvirate, but the suggestion that the Triumvirate and Caesar in particular might have actively sought Cicero’s exile has decisively been laid to rest by Erich Gruen.\textsuperscript{11} Certainly, the Triumvirate had taken pains in 59 to insure that the consulships and tribuneships of the following year would be filled by men who would look after their interests, but in giving support to Clodius Pulcher they soon found themselves seriously out-maneuvered. Alarmed by Cicero’s outspoken criticisms of the Triumvirate during the defense of his co-consul for 63, Gaius Hybrida Antonius,\textsuperscript{12} in the spring of 59, Caesar swiftly passed a bill transferring Clodius from the patrician to the plebian ranks, thereby making a known enemy of Cicero eligible to run for the tribuneship.\textsuperscript{13} Although Clodius had supported Cicero during the Catilinarian conspiracy, enmity between the two arose from the fall-out of the \textit{Bona Dea} scandal of 62. Clodius,

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{10} Nisbet (1961) vi.
\item\textsuperscript{11} Gruen (1995) details the rise of Clodius’ influence over Caesar and Pompey and lays the blame on the enmity between Cicero and Clodius, 293-295.
\item\textsuperscript{12} Crawford (1988) 97- 98. The speech was never published. Crawford assembles the references to \textit{Pro C. Antonio Collega in Senatu} and offers Pompey’s dislike of Antonius and Antonius’ unfriendliness towards Cicero as likely explanations for not publishing.
\item\textsuperscript{13} Gruen (1966), 122.
\end{itemize}
dressed as a woman, had infiltrated Caesar’s house while the ceremonies of the *Bona Dea* (limited to the participation of women only) were being held.\(^{14}\) The Vestal Virgins had to repeat the ceremony and the Senate held an investigation and a trial, at which Cicero reluctantly gave testimony which broke Clodius’ alibi; Clodius, however, was acquitted. If Caesar’s support of Clodius was intended to keep Cicero in check, he was soon faced with Clodius’ threats to rescind his own legislation which had resettled Pompey’s veterans and prepared for Caesar’s campaigns in Gaul.\(^{15}\) Thus, once Clodius became tribune in December of 59, he was in a position to threaten both the Triumvirs and Cicero. Caesar’s alliance with Piso was intended as a counter-balance against the fact that the Pompeian Gabinius was now consul, but an irregularity in Senate procedure left the new consuls open to Clodius’ manipulations.\(^{16}\) The Senate had failed to allocate provinces in the usual manner in 59, fearing that the new consuls would be too closely influenced by Pompey and Caesar;\(^{17}\) and this situation gave the opportunistic and powerful Clodius a unique device for winning the consuls over to his side.

Once the *de capite civis Romani* passed in late January or early February of 58, it proved difficult for Pompey and Caesar to live up to their promises to protect Cicero from Clodius’ threats of persecution since the Caesarian legislation of 59 was threatened by the

\(^{14}\) Cic. *Att*. 1.13.3; 14.1-5; 15.1-6. Clodius’ motives in intruding upon the religious rites of the *Bona Dea* are a matter of speculation. Tatum (1999) 85-86, summarizes two modern theories which attribute Clodius’ motives to either simple curiosity about religious rites introduced by his ancestors or prurient curiosity aroused by fantasies of risqué costumes and promiscuous female behaviour.

\(^{15}\) Cic. *Att*. 2.12.2.

\(^{16}\) Gruen (1968) 165-6: The Pisones of the late Republic have been generally shown by Gruen to pursue anti-Pompeian political alliances with the exception of M. Pupius Piso who served in Pompey’s army.

\(^{17}\) Nisbet (1961) vi; 72, n. 12.21.
same tribune. In passing the two bills which led to Cicero’s exile, the consuls and the tribune acted out of self-interest and quite independently of their Triumvirate backers. Although we cannot say that Clodius was Caesar’s tool, the bargain Clodius struck with Piso and Gabinius had unexpectedly made them Clodius’ tools. The subsequent actions of the consuls did not show any signs of misgivings they may have had about cooperating with Clodius: a consular edict was passed forbidding the Senate to wear the mourning garb they had adopted as a show of support for Cicero; Gabinius ordered that the demonstrations\textsuperscript{18} by the equites could only be held 200 miles from Rome; and both reaffirmed their approval of the \textit{de capite civis Romani} at a contio convened outside the pomerium so that Caesar, now with his legions, could attend.

With none of his former friends in a position to protect or help him, Cicero fled into exile in March of 58. Clodius passed another bill against Cicero, \textit{de exilio Ciceronis}, which accused Cicero by name of executing Roman citizens without trial and ordered the confiscation of his property and sent his collegia to confiscate Cicero’s property and ordered the site of Cicero’s (now razed and looted) villa to be consecrated as a temple to Liberty.\textsuperscript{19} Cicero blamed Piso for failing to prevent this final insult. Nonetheless, the possibility and timing of Cicero’s return from exile were now in the hands of the Triumvirs, and Piso could have done little to undo Clodius’ work without their approval. While Cicero felt betrayed by Pompey and Caesar, their efforts to bring about his recall in 57 and their power kept him from publicly voicing any misgivings he still felt after his

\textsuperscript{18} L. Aelius Lamia led the demonstrations by the equites in support of Cicero in 58. (\textit{Pis}. 23, 63; \textit{Sest}. 41).

\textsuperscript{19} Nisbet (1961) xi.
triumphant return on September 4th.

Piso and Gabinius, now stationed in their respective provinces, became easy targets for Cicero’s justifiable desire for revenge since they were not present to defend themselves against his attacks or to attempt to reconcile with him. In June of 56, Cicero charged both proconsuls with misconduct in the *de provinciis consularibus* and successfully brought about their recall. The shoe was now on the other foot, and Piso, forced back to Rome, delivered an invective against Cicero challenging him to prosecute. From what we are able to reconstruct of Piso’s attack from Cicero and Asconius, it appears that Piso mocked Cicero’s flight from Rome and his egocentric verses in his poem *On his consulship* which seemed to contain a slight against Pompey. Piso also pointed the finger at Caesar and Pompey in his speech, disingenuously suggesting that Cicero should have felt more hostility towards the Triumvirs than the consuls of 58. The subject of this thesis, the invective *in Pisonem*, was Cicero’s response in the Senate, although we are neither sure of the exact date it was delivered nor the relation between the surviving text and the speech as it was delivered.

### 2.1: Invective as Contest

In August of 55 BCE, the Macedonian proconsul, Lucius Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus,

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20 *Pis.* 72-3 Cicero gives Piso a poetry lesson on the proper reading of the verses, *cedant arma togae* (arms to the toga must yield).

21 Nisbet (1961) xiv: Nisbet regards Piso’s remarks on Caesar and Pompey’s culpability as ‘correct’ but Gruen’s (1966) analysis of the Ciceronian evidence shows that Cicero was aware of the independence of Clodius’s attack, a point that would clearly influence his view of the responsibility of Clodius’s consular collaborators as well.
returned to claim his rightful place in the Roman Senate only to find himself publicly harangued in one of Cicero’s most powerful invective orations. Modern readers of the In Pisonem will inevitably feel that they are receiving a one-sided image of its aristocratic target. Piso’s spectral figure, imprisoned in the “dense fog of Cicero’s oratory”, offers us tantalizing glimpses into the values of the society that Cicero sought to distance him from—Piso’s hypocritical appearances help expose an ancient physiognomic ideology that linked moral worth with physical attributes, and his refusal of a triumph makes manifest the importance of triumphal values to the policing of Roman aristocratic ambition—but the crushed Piso remains a hapless protagonist in Cicero’s “masterpiece of misrepresentation”.

In this view, Cicero, the master orator, holds all the cards, and wins even when he doesn’t cheat. Nonetheless, Piso continued as Caesar’s father-in-law after the attack and was soon elected censor in 50 BCE with Appius Claudius Pulcher. The fact that Piso remained a powerful figure in the aristocratic community throughout the 50’s and 40’s, suggests that the Cicero’s victory was not necessarily as clear-cut as the communal values he upheld.

What rhetorical and sociological analyses of the speech have yet to provide is a robust understanding of Piso as an equal and very capable player in a game far older than the

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22 Mary Beard’s phrase, the “fog of Cicero’s oratory” (216) and R.G.M. Nisbet’s, “masterpiece of misrepresentation” (xvi) typify this view of Cicero's omnipotent capacity to misrepresent his opponent. For the relevance of Cicero’s depictions of Piso as a hypocrite who hides his crimes beneath his respectable appearances to the larger ideology of physiognomy as an index of moral worth, see Corbeill (1996) 169-173. The social impact of Piso’s alleged disdain of a triumph is explored in Beard (2007) at 216-218.

23 Cram (1940) 101; Caes. B. C. I 3.6; Tac. Ann. VI 10; Invect. in Sall. 16; Dio XL 63.2; Cic. Fam. 10. 3.
law-courts he sought to escape. Reviling and complaining about one’s opponent had their place in the *ad hominem* attacks that occur regularly in judicial and deliberative oratory, but scoring points against a personal rival was not supposed to be the main purpose of such speeches. Audiences in law-courts and Senate debates expected probative and plausible arguments and orators consequently limited the frequency of their use of insult for the sake of attaining their higher goals. Moreover, where judicial and deliberative oratory relied on audiences (judges or senators) to determine the outcome of their respective contests by formally casting their votes, invective contests such as the one that arose between Piso and Cicero in 56 had no formal procedure for determining a winner.

Every contest in oratory is ultimately about who is the best orator. Since oratory was fundamentally concerned with the production and dissemination of codes of elite masculine comportment and behaviour, to fail in oratory was to fail as a man. In this view, Piso's contest with Cicero was a complete failure and we should be inclined to accept Cicero's image of Piso at *Pis. 99* as the final outcome of the contest. The passage has been cited by Anthony Corbeill as an illustration of how invective disables the

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24 Nisbet offers the following instances of invective in early Roman culture: unflattering proper names, insulting curses forbidden by the Twelve Tables, ribald songs at weddings and triumphs, the *difixiones*, and the abusive epithets of Plautus and Lucilius, 193. Huizinga (1944) illustrates the survival of ancient play-elements in the modern lawsuit with references to the slanging-matches of the Greek *iambos* and the Eskimo drumming matches, which were both festal occasions for vituperative contests and public criticism, 76-88.

25 Craig (2007). Craig’s analysis of the frequency of established and easily recognized invective *loci* in Cicero’s speeches suggests that audiences expected *ad hominem* attacks to be based on fact. Too much invective in a judicial or deliberative speech would have led audiences to regard the speech as a literary exercise rather than an important contribution to a legal or political argument, 336.
victim, “marking him as unfit for human society”.\textsuperscript{26}

Numquam ego sanguinem expetivi tuum, numquam illud extremum quod posset esse improbis et probis commune supplicium legis ac iudici, sed abiectum, contemptum, despectum a ceteris, a te ipso desperatum et relictum, circumspectantem omnia, quicquid increpuisset pertimescentem, diffidentem tuis rebus, sine voce, sine libertate, sine auctoritate, sine ulla specie consulari, horrendem, trementem, adulantem omnis videre te volui; vidi. (Pís. 99)

I never sought your blood, I never sought the ultimate punishment of the law and judges, a punishment that can be shared by the good and evil alike. Instead I wanted to see you shunned, rejected, and mocked by everyone else while forsaken and abandoned by yourself. I wanted to see you looking around at everything, frightened by the smallest noise, with no confidence in your own resources as you have lost voice, freedom, authority, and any resemblance of a person of consular rank. I wanted to see you shivering, trembling, and supplicating everyone and this is what I have seen.

Cicero’s dominating language and imagery of Piso’s complete loss of community support lives up to the overwhelming impact of the military tactic invective takes its name from: the full charge of cavalry that overcomes all resistance through speed and force (OLD

\textsuperscript{26} Corbeill (1996) 19.
Here we have what looks like a decisive outcome: criminality has been cast out, and ridicule has effected an extreme form of social isolation, comparable to the force of a censor’s judgment and of the *flagitium* curses of old.

The problem with this reading of the *Pis.* 99 is that the Piso who is supposed to have completely lost his voice and his audience actually responded to the publication of the *In Pisonem* by publishing a speech of his own which has been lost. In a letter to Quintus in 54, Cicero reacts with amazement at the suggestion he should write a rebuttal to Piso’s second attack: *alterum est de Calventi Mari oratione quod scribis; miror tibi placere me ad eam rescribere, praesertim cum illam nemo lecturus sit si ego nihil rescripsero, meam in illum pueri omnes tamquam dictata perdiscant;* (The next thing is about the speech of Calventius "Marius". I am surprised at your saying that you think I ought to answer it, particularly as, while no one is likely to read that speech, unless I write an answer to it, every schoolboy learns mine against him as an exercise, *Q.f.* 3.1.11). According to Cicero, the *In Pisonem* was already a school text and no-one would bother to read Piso’s speech if he doesn’t respond. One could choose not to respond because one regards the debate as over with oneself as the winner. Cicero won’t even say whether he bothered to read Piso’s reply, it’s really of so little importance to him now that the *pueri* are on his side. But outside of Cicero’s circles, where the letters between Piso and his supporters circulated before being lost forever, one can easily imagine how things might look different.
According to Goffman, contests like the one Piso and Cicero are read by their audiences as a display of strong or weak character. However, once the character contest has begun, the “characterological implications” are not necessarily zero-sum. One person can be clearly defeated, both parties can maintain honour, or both parties can lose.\(^\text{27}\) In a mismatched contest, a weaker opponent can win honor by courageously resisting his inevitable defeat, just as a stronger opponent can acquire the character of a bully even when he wins. Similarly, when an evenly matched contest is won by an opponent who cheats, the loser maintains honor for his dedication to the rules. Differing interpretations of outcomes of hostile encounters undercut zero-sum competition by introducing complicating factors that allow both sides to maintain alternate views of the result.\(^\text{28}\)

The law-courts provide an example of how zero-sum outcomes can be re-interpreted by political rivals in Roman society. When Clodius was acquitted by a jury after the inquiry into the *Bona Dea* scandal, Cicero admitted to Atticus that his side had lost. But the manifest outcome of thirty-one votes to twenty-five was not the end of the story. Clodius had bribed the juror with money, girls and social favours. Wasn’t Catiline also twice acquitted? A clear-cut victory is tarnished by speculations and the interpretological outcome is the opposite of the manifest result or, at least, according to Cicero. Cicero decries the outcome in a set speech and then wins a series of exchanges will be examined below. The subject of the *altercatio* is the characterological interpretation of the outcome of Clodius’s recent acquittal. The fact that everyone believes that Clodius has bribed the

\(^{27}\) Goffman (1967) 241-244.

\(^{28}\) Goffman (1967) 245.
jurors has tarnished the aristocrat’s victory.

Quintus’ request that Cicero write a response to Piso’s pamphlet draws attention to the turn-based structure of invective contest. Cicero’s words may wound Piso, but they cannot prevent him from having his turn, no matter what outcome Cicero writes for himself. Cicero’s indifference to Piso’s second attack reveals the element of consent in this sort of contest. The goal of Piso’s speech must have surely been the same as Cicero’s, but instead of taking up the insult and publicly acting out its narrative of humiliation, he feels he can safely ignore it and can expect others to do the same. Furthermore, in ignoring Piso’s reprisals, he still feels entitled to regard himself as the winner even while giving up the last word. Cicero’s literary pre-eminence gives him certain advantages in this contest, but his claim does not preclude Piso from regarding himself as the winner as well.

The impression that Cicero’s attack succeeds where Piso’s has failed is partly an accident of the textual tradition and a legacy of Romans such as Asconius as well, who preserved the speeches of Cicero but not those of Piso, Clodius and Gabinius or any of the Triumvirs for that matter. This imbalance limits the extent to which we can reconstruct the content of the contest, and has also permitted more extensive scholarly analysis for the biases underlying Cicero’s attack than for the assumptions underlying Piso’s attack. Nonetheless, it is clear that if Cicero’s success depends on the orator’s capacity to speak as the voice of the moral community, and in a situation where the target responds, that the
counter-charges made will also represent an attempt to speak with same communal authority. Faced with two rival voices of communal values, the audience be complicit in the moral denigration of both speakers. Furthermore, although humour is the main weapon employed, the audience’s disposition towards the entertainment factor present in this sort of contest should not be overlooked: if the listeners are ready to enjoy a laugh at the expense of one side, we can expect them to be just as eager to continue the fun by hearing the comeback. Or, conversely, they may tire of the whole exercise and become unresponsive and withhold laughter, effectively isolating both sides in the hopes that the combatants will simply give up on a tiresome contest.

The nature of invective as a contest is reciprocal, but the goal of lowering the opponent's status has to be worked out according to the target's peculiar strengths and weaknesses. On Piso's side, his aim is to portray Cicero as a sore loser who ran afoul of the Triumvirs whom he now claims as his friends, who was too cowardly to remain in Rome to defend himself (Pis 31, 34) and is now seeking revenge on the consuls of 58 because he is too cowardly to face his real enemies (Pis 78). All of this culminates in Piso's challenge to prosecute and Piso wins his version of the contest when Cicero refuses to take the bait (Pis 82, 94). Cicero's reluctance to undertake prosecutions in his later career is well-known, and Piso seems to have correctly accessed the situation when he made the challenge.²⁹ It is an appropriate strategy for Piso, who has Caesar's backing, although he does run the risk that Cicero might have been able to find a young advocate willing to

take on the job of prosecuting him on his behalf. In Goffman's terms, this strategy represents a contest-contest: a series of provocations intended to either bait the opponent into a more serious contest, in this case a legal challenge, or if the contest is declined, to demonstrate that the opponent does not have the courage to oppose him. It is a powerful argument and one that clearly demonstrates an awareness of the limits of rhetoric on the Late Republican political scene.
3. Praise and Blame: Positive and Negative Aspects of 'Face'

Cicero believed that the social life of the individual was motivated by two basic drives: firstly, the desire to win praise for himself, and secondly, the desire to avoid blame. In Goffman's terms, this can be understood as the individuals desire to 'win face' and to avoid 'losing face'. In aggressive facework, rivalry introduces a complicating factor, since individuals who have won praise and face for themselves can now be upstaged by an opponent who feels, rightfully or not, that he deserves more praise and more face. Cicero's contest with Piso is in large part such a rivalry: Cicero feels that he is a superior consul and senator, and he is willing to stand up and defend his claim, as I will show in the first section of this chapter. The second aspect of face, the individual's sensitivity to the negative opinions and evaluations of others, can be similarly complicated by the efforts of an aggressor who is intent on showing that his opponent actually has no desire to avoid blame. This strategy will be examined in the second section, where I examine Cicero's use of animal insults in his contumelia against Piso is coupled with the claim that Piso is lacking in verecundia, an emotion which plays a central role in Cicero's concept of the emergence of social order and civilization from the bestial conditions of the pre-historic world.

3.1: Face as Positive Social Attribute

Although Cicero had previously attacked Piso’s consular record for 58-57, Piso's positive social attributes—his illustrious name, imposing bearing and his impressive social

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30 Rep 5. frag. iv; see discussion below at 42.
contacts— made him a hard target to assail. I will begin by looking at Cicero's appraisal of Piso's positive attributes in *Sest.* 19, before turning to similar evaluations in the *In Pisonem* where Cicero directly challenges the role of Piso's physical appearances in gaining a positive image for himself.

In *Sest.* 19, a defense speech for Publius Sestius, who as tribune in 56 had effectively routed Clodius' gangs with his own thugs and now faced charges of violence, we find Cicero’s appraisal of the positive face sustained by Piso in his public appearances as consul elect:

> alter, o di boni, quam taeter incedebat, quam truculentus, quam terribilis aspectu!
> unum aliquem te ex barbatis illis, exemplum imperi veteris, imaginem antiquitatis, columnen rei publicae diceres intueri. vestitus aspere nostra hac purpura plebeia ac paene fusca, capillo ita horrido ut Capua, in qua ipsa tum imaginis ornandae causa duumviratum gerebat, Seplasiam sublaturus videretur. nam quid ego de supercilio dicam, quod tum hominibus non supercilium, sed pignus rei publicae videbatur? tanta erat gravitas in oculo, tanta contractio frontis, ut illo supercilio annus ille niti tamquam vade videretur. (*Sest.* 19)

The other [Piso], O you good gods! how horrible was his approach, how savage, how terrible in appearance! You would say you were gazing upon one of those bearded men, a paragon of the old order, a picture of antiquity, a pillar of the
republic! His clothes were rough, made of this purple worn by our common people here and nearly brown, with hair so rough that at Capua, where he, when for the sake of decorating his ancestral mask, was serving as a decemvir, seemed as if he would require the whole Seplasia to subdue it. Why need I speak of his eyebrow, which at that time did not seem to men to be an ordinary brow, but a pledge of the safety of the republic? For such great gravity was in his eye, such a contraction was there of his forehead, that the whole year appeared to be resting on that shining brow.

Looking at Piso, Cicero is struck by his physical resemblance to the great men of the old order - the intimidating stride, the rough brownish purple toga, wild hair, and eyebrows-and on the basis of these resemblances, Piso is assumed to possess other positive traits which make him a "pillar of the republic" and a "pledge" of its safety. The underlying attributes Piso projects are surely those Cicero lists as the ideal attributes of a consul at Pis. 23-24 (even though Cicero denies Piso ever possessed any of them): species (countenance); dignitas (dignity); maiestas (majesty); animus (energy); consilium (acumen); fides (trust-worthiness); gravitas (gravity); vigilantia (watchfulness); and cura (concern). That all of this can be conveyed through the visible image of the body and in particular the face, points to the importance of appearances in conveying mores in senatorial culture.

The Roman elite lived very competitive political lives, forging their reputations and
gaining status in the contests of the Senate, law-courts, public contiones, and above all, in their military campaigns. These contests and their outcomes were highly visible, but the individual's visible attributes were also expected to accord with their known qualities. Closely connected to facies, the persona had a mask-like quality which conveyed one’s reputation (existimatio, honor, fama), maintained by masculine energy (virtus) and constrained by an extreme sensitivity to shame (pudor).^31^ Recent discussion of the etymology and meaning of existimatio as a socially significant assessment of good or bad conduct suggest that this term stands in close proximity to Goffman’s notion of ‘face’ as a view one believes others to have of oneself.\(^32\) In the Roman world, existimatio serves as the hub around which the aristocratic individual’s view of himself meets with the many attributes that make up his reputation. Originally a commercial assessment, the verb existimare came to mean the act of appraising an individual according to the social standards like bonus, honestus, and amplissime.\(^33\) Here too, come into play the evaluations and self-criticisms which enforced adherence to ancestral custom, the mos maiorum, through exemplum of good and bad social standards. As an exemplum imperi veteris (an exemplar of the old order), Piso physically embodies values that convey a good existimatio.

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\(^{31}\) Barton (2000): “The persona and the role expressed by it were the very boundary and definition of one’s being, the sine qua non of existence”, 57.


\(^{33}\) Habinék (1998) 45-59. The simplex of the verb was aestimare and “refers to the establishing of a relationship between aes or money and other forms of property.” Exemplum, according to Habinék’s etymological source, Emile Benveniste, Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes (1968), vol 1 85– 86 is “something ‘taken out of’ (eximo) a group in order to serve as a standard by which other instances of the type can be evaluated (existimare). Thus it would seem that existimatio implies both evaluation according to a standard and the possibility of conversion from one system of value to another”, 46. On the etymology of existimare, see A. Ernout and A. Meillet, Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine, 4e éd. (1979) 13, and Benveniste, vol 2 122-28.
In Zvi Yavetz’s analysis, *existimatio* is largely interchangeable with *fama* and is closer to the modern concept of ‘public opinion’. According to Thomas Habinek, however, the crucial difference between *existimatio* and *fama* as judgments of an individual’s reputation, is that where *fama* has to do with what others are saying about a person, *existimatio* is concerned with how others judge a person according to social standards. While one may not know what others may actually say, and the question of truthfulness makes their words subjective, the kind of social judgments that go into forming *existimatio* are based on shared values. Thus one is supposed to be able to assess one’s *existimatio* from the inside. Piso’s lack of concern for *existimatio* is one of the charges Cicero will bring against his opponent in his invective. On the other hand, the association of *fama* and the verb *pendere* can bring similar concepts of weighing and judging into play, as in Cicero’s declaration that *in sententiis omnium civium famam nostram fortunamque pendere,* (our reputation and future success hangs on public opinion) *Pis.* 98. Clearly the usages of *fama* and *existimatio* overlap, but both concepts bring us closer to seeing Roman orators in terms of Goffman’s self-regulating individuals who must exercise a perceptive vigilance of their own and other’s reputations if they are to successfully discover an acceptable face.

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34 Habinek (1998) 185 argues contra Yavetz (1976) that the concepts of *fama* and *existimatio* retain their etymological force well into the classical period, “with *fama* being what people say (*fari*) about you and *existimatio* being their evaluation (*ex+aestimare*).

35 *Pis* 65. Piso is invited to test the negative public opinion against him by going to Pompey’s games. As an Epicurean, he is supposed to regard *existimatio, dedecus, infamia, turpitudo* as empty words, but he still will not dare to go, as Cicero says, because he is presumably already aware of his *existimatio*. 

24
Foremost among the approved attributes which pertain to the Roman orator is the cultivation and display of auctoritas. In the Roman Senate, auctoritas refers to the Senate's function in government, while potestas belongs to the people. The sanction of the Senate by majority vote gave laws the status of senatus consultum. The auctoritas of the Senate was in practice shared by all senators, with greater auctoritas fixed to the senior senators who spoke earlier in the debate. In the interval between elections and January 1 the consuls designate spoke first, then the consulars (Cicero boasts of being third in line among consulares in 58: “I who was called as third advisor in the Senate”; quem in senatu sententiam rogabas tertium, Pis. 11), then praetors-elect, praetors, and finally the praetorii. Even though the auctoritas of senior senators was expected to win success for their consilium in the debates, losing a debate entailed a loss of dignitas or existimatio rather than auctoritas. Flexible forms of authority like dignitas, and existimatio, pertain to an individual’s merits if they have demonstrated a supremacy in the law courts, Senate, or in the army. In Roman political life, the tension between fixed and flexible forms of authority was exacerbated by the short duration of public office, and the fear of prosecution which accompanied the end of one’s official tenure in the provinces. Similarly, the period before taking office could also bring this contrast into high relief. For example, at Pis. 8, Cicero extols the actions of Lucius Metellus who was able to block a tribune’s motion as consul designatus before taking office, on the strength of his personal auctoritas. In the Late Republic, this ideal was closely connected with the

36 Baldson (1960) 43.
37 Baldson (1960) 44.
38 Baldson (1960) 43.
projection of charisma: those who had *auctoritas* could influence decisions and outcomes through highly idiosyncratic expressions of will. According to Cicero, a single word or gesture from imposing authoritative individuals, like Lucius Caecilius Metellus, Attilius Calatinus, Publius Crassus and Scipio Africanus Maior, was enough to end debate and signal the desired course of events.\(^{39}\)

The end point for all of this face-making emerges in the aristocratic tradition of the ancestral mask, *imaginis*, where one's accomplishments meet the visible surface of the face at the end of one's life. As the exclusive right of noble families who had a minimum of one consular ancestor, the masks made at death record a final version of the face in which accomplishments can be read and a final *existimatio* established.\(^{40}\) Thus when Piso sets out to serve as duumvir in Capua he does so for the sake of *ipsa ornandae imaginis*; “adorning his own ancestral mask” (*Sest.*19). Where Piso could boast of having three consulars in his direct family line, the consuls of 180, 148, and 112,\(^{41}\) Cicero, as a *homo novus*, could not present such credentials. Instead, he pursues lasting memory and fame through literary works, which contain a truer likeness of the inner man than the wax records of the outer appearance.

Goffman's usage of the term face is derived from the Chinese concept of face as a social

\(^{39}\) *Sen.* 61. While Cicero's conception of the *auctoritas* of great men is based on an idealized past rather than his first hand experience of Late-Republican political life, his emphasis on the impact of physical gestures and terse speech in the *De Senectute* reflects an important feature of the contemporary orator's performance.

\(^{40}\) Dugan (2001) 50-51.

\(^{41}\) Gruen (1968) 163.
good which can be given, saved, or lost.\textsuperscript{42} It stands apart from the ordinary meaning of face as a body part which houses the eyes, mouth, ears and nose. When an individual enters into a social encounter with others, his actions, words, and visible and known attributes will be read as expressions of how he views himself and his co-participants.\textsuperscript{43} Clearly, the physical face, as a focal point for spoken interaction, will have an important influence on how others see an individual, but it is only one part of the expressive order and will be balanced against other qualities. Goffman gives the term ‘face’ to this expressive line and defines it as an image of self, “delineated in terms of approved social attributes”, which the individual is expected to display attachment to and concern for throughout the duration of the encounter.\textsuperscript{44} It is up to the individual to exercise perceptiveness when presenting a particular face for if it does not accord with the view others have of him, he will be subjected to signs of disapproval from the other participants in any interaction until he arrives at an expressive line that is appropriate to the situation.

In a face-to-face society like that of Late Republican Romans, we frequently meet with the belief and expectation that the physical face and body itself can reveal a vast range of

\textsuperscript{42} Goffman (1967) 5, Goffman acknowledges his debt to Hsien Chin Hu, “The Chinese Concept of Face” American Anthropologist, 1944, 46: 45-64.
\textsuperscript{43} The concept of ‘facework’ and the categories utilized in this study are derived mainly from Goffman’s (1967) essay “On Facework: An Analysis of Ritual Elements in Social Interaction”, Interaction Ritual, 5-45. In my application of Goffman’s concepts to the content of the in Pisonem, I have found it expedient to mainly follow the order in which Goffman presents his analysis of face-to-face interactions. References will be provided when new concepts are introduced at the beginning of each section, but in the discussion which follows, unless otherwise noted, the reader is assumed to recognize the source of recurring concepts.
\textsuperscript{44} Goffman (1967) 5.
social attributes. Cicero's evaluation of Piso begins with the physical face, the eyes and eyebrows, forehead, even his teeth and hairy cheeks, *Pis.* 1. The face is the mirror of the soul: Nature formed the human face (*speciem oris*), eyes (*oculi*), and countenance (*vultus*) in such a way that they reveal the character (*mores*) hidden within. In Cicero's attack on Piso, we find that the two faces are at odds: the physical face as an index of character affords Piso a better image of self than his reputation deserves. In pursuing this line of attack, Cicero follows the well-known rhetorical stratagem of making a seemingly upright and otherwise blameless opponent appear hypocritical by suggesting that their good reputation in fact hides a multitude of crimes. Such a stratagem attempts to harness the social dynamics of credibility. According to Goffman, individuals are generally accepted in their social roles on the basis of a limited number of visible and known positive attributes. On the strength of these positive traits they are assumed to bear a countless number of qualities, most of which their social contacts are unaware of until something occurs which definitively demonstrates that the individual lacks one of these unexamined attributes. At this moment, the individual is seen as having misrepresented

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45 Images of modern politicians are subjected to the same sort of scrutiny. Sidney Kraus (1996) reviews the influence of image on the outcome of modern political debates which first came to light in the results of a poll taken after the 1960 presidential debate between Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy. Those who had heard the debate on radio judged Nixon to be the winner, while those who watched the debate on television choose Kennedy on the basis of their contrasting appearances. According to the anecdotal evidence, Nixon, refusing to wear make-up and recovering from a exhausting flight, appeared old and sickly, while Kennedy, properly made up for the camera and looking tanned and fresh after a beach holiday won the viewers over with his youthful appearance, 79-84.

46 Cic. *Leg.* 1.27. *tum [natura] speciem ita formavit oris, ut in ea penitus reconditos mores effingeret: nam et oculi nimis arguti, quem ad modum animo affecti simus, loquuntur, et is, qui appellatur vultus, qui nullo in animante esse praeter hominem potest, indicat mores.* (“Then it [Nature] shaped the appearance of his face so as to portray in it the character hidden within. For the expressive eyes say beyond measure how we have been affected in the mind, and what is called the countenance, which can exist in no animate being besides man, indicates character”).

47 Nisbet, (1961) 195; Cic. *de inventione* 2.34 *nam eum ante celasse, nunc manifesto teneri; rhet.ad.Her.*2.5 *illum ante occultasse sua flagitia.*
themselves all along, and the visible attributes are interpreted as a deliberate sham.\textsuperscript{48}

As Cicero often lamented, it was far easier for the Romans of noble birth (\textit{Verr. 2.5.180}) to advance in their careers on the basis of their family names and known attributes.\textsuperscript{49} He was keenly aware that as a \textit{homo novus} he had to rely on his own merits, industry, and vigilance to maintain his reputation.\textsuperscript{50} For Cicero to successfully carry out his stratagem against Piso, he needs to present compelling evidence that something has indeed occurred which requires a complete re-evaluation of Piso's accepted status.

With the formidable image of Piso once again in his sights in 55, when the consular returned home from Macedon to the Senate, Cicero is determined to undermine all of Piso's positive social attributes, beginning with his physical face. With this in mind, he begins his attack on Piso by peering deep beneath the shadow of his brow, individuating each of his faults, and bringing them up to the surface for his audience to inspect:

\begin{verbatim}
Iamne vides, belua, iamne sentis quae sit hominum querela frontis tuae? Nemo queritur Syrum nescio quem de grege noviciorum factum esse consulem. Non enim nos color iste servilis, non pilosae genae, non dentes putridi deceperunt;
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{48} Goffman (1967) 7.
\textsuperscript{49} In \textit{Pis. 1-3}, it is clear that Cicero begrudges Piso the advantages that his positive attributes have brought him in his political career, contrasting them with his own rise as a \textit{novus homo} through merit and hard work. Here Cicero employs what Goffman (1969) calls a schoolboy model of social order: “if a person wishes to sustain a particular image of himself and trust his feelings to it, he must work hard for the credits that will buy this self-enhancement for him; should he try to obtain ends by improper means, by cheating or theft, he will be punished, disqualified from the race, or at least made to start all over again” 42.
\textsuperscript{50} Yavetz (1974) 53.
oculi, supercilia, frons, voltus denique totus, qui sermo quidam tacitus mentis est, 
hic in fraudem homines impulit, hic eos quibus erat ignotus decepit, fefellit, 
induxit. Pauci ista tua lutulenta vitia noramus, pauci tarditatem ingenii, stuporem 
debilitatemque linguæ. Numquam erat audita vox in foro, numquam periculum 
factum consili, nullum non modo inlustre sed ne notum quidem factum aut 
militiae aut domi. obsrepsisti ad honores errore hominum, commendatione 
fumosarum imaginum, quarum simile habes nihil praeter colorem. (Pis 1.)

Do you not see now, do you not feel, O you beast, what complaints men make of 
your brow? No one complains that a Syrian, that a man whom nobody knows, that 
some one of that crowd of recently freed slaves, was made consul. For it was not 
your slavish complexion, nor hairy cheeks, nor discoloured teeth, that deceived 
us: your eyes, your eyebrows, your brow, in short, your whole countenance, 
which is, as it were, a sort of silent language of the mind, that led men into error, 
this it was which tricked, deceived and defrauded those to whom this man was 
unknown. There were but few of us who were acquainted with those foul vices of 
yours; few of us who knew the deficiency of your abilities, your stolid manner, 
and your embarrassed way of speaking. Your voice had never been heard in the 
forum; no one had had any experience of your wisdom in counsel: you had not 
only never performed any, I will not say illustrious exploits, but any action at all 
that was known of either in war or at home. You crept into honours through men's 
blunders, by the recommendation of your smokey ancestral masks, with which
you have nothing in common except your colour.

Piso in 55 is no longer presented as the promising consul elect described in *Sest.* 19. Now, Piso's reputation is being drastically re-evaluated not only by Cicero but by all men. Piso's physical face has allowed him to claim too much face for himself, and he is now subjected to signs of disapproval, *iamne sentis quae sit hominum querela frontis tuae?* The complaints Cicero voices are familiar enough in modern life: a powerful family is often enough to raise a person of no particular ability to an enviable position. Ideally one should look the part one plays and actually have the record to back it up. But look at the list of things that the face is supposed to reveal about *mores*: it's an index of class (*novicius*); morality (*lutulenta*); eloquence (*tarditas ingeni*); delivery and poise (*stuporem delilitatemque linguae*); political authority (*factum consili*); domestic and military experience (*factum aut militae aut domi*); and worthiness relative to one's lineage (*commendatione imaginum*). That is quite a lot of character to read or not from a man's physical face. The perception that appearances can be at odds with one's reputation and status rests on an underlying contrast between the concepts Latin attaches to the word *facies*, which serves as a term for both the physical form of the face and for the person’s character, the image that the individual is able to make (*facere*) for themselves. Piso's face is not perfect: his skin is darker than the typical Roman and he has bad teeth, but his impressive eyebrows and his will to deceive project a powerful illusion of upright

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51 Cicero allows no positive mention of Piso to enter into his attack, but it would make sense rhetorically if something like the description offered in *Sest.* 19. had originally been included in the lost portion of the speech, directly before what is now *Pis* 1, as a set-up for the stratagem of treating Piso's appearances as hypocritical.

appearances.

The linkage between visible attributes and morality is well established in Roman physiognomic literature, but *mores* does not seem to stop there, where the soul might reveal its unchangeable secrets according to Nature's mysterious fashioning of eyes and brows and face. No-one is born with their record in the forum, or Senate, or wars stamped upon their brow, but Romans seem to have expected that status updates in all fields of characterological endeavour should be somehow be made visible.

In the context of face-work, the self-presentation of positive social attributes by one’s opponent is also seen as aggressive. Here the distribution of social goods is often at issue, as in *Pis* 2, where we find Cicero complaining that Piso has been boasting about his own political career in his speech to the Senate:

> Is mihi etiam gloriabatur se omnis magistratus sine repulsa adsecutum? Mihi ista licet de me vera cum gloria praedicare; omnis enim honores populus Romanus mihi ipsi homini detulit. Nam tu cum quaestor es factus, etiam qui te numquam viderant, tamen illum honorem nomini mandabant tuo. Aedilis es factus; Piso est a populo Romano factus, non iste Piso. Praetura item maioribus delata est tuis.

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53 Corbeill (1996) explores the correspondence between internal nature and external appearances in Cicero’s *On the Laws*. Where Cicero saw the individual's inner nature as a direct influence on their outer appearances, so that bad character was expected to surface as ugliness, Aristotle in his *Politics* did not view the individual morally responsible for physical deformities, 30-35.
Noti erant illi mortui, te vivum nondum noverat quisquam. Me cum quaestorem in primis, aedilem priorem, praetorem primum cunctis suffragiis populus Romanus faciebat, homini ille honorem non generi, moribus non maioribus meis, virtuti perspectae non auditae nobilitati deferebat. (Pis. 2)

Will he also boast to me that he obtained ever magistracy without any rejection? I am able to make that boast concerning myself with true pride; for the Roman people conferred all its honours on me in that way-on me, a new man. But when you were made quaestor, even men who had never seen you gave that honour to your name. You were made aedile. A Piso was elected by the Roman people; but not the Piso that you are. The praetorship also was conferred in reality on your ancestors. They, though dead, were well known; but no one had as yet known anything of you, though you were alive. When the Roman people made me quaestor among the first of the candidates, and first aedile, and first praetor, as they did by a unanimous vote, they were paying that compliment to me on my own account and not to my family,—to my habits of life, not to my ancestors,—to my proved virtue, and not to any nobleness of birth of which they had heard.

Cicero cannot bear to hear his enemy praising himself without feeling that he is losing some of his own prestige. In Cicero's presentation gloria is a merit-based good: the greater the accomplishment, the greater the prestige. The gloria Piso claims for himself is clearly of a lesser order and not intended by the Roman people to be seen as his personal
possession, since Piso has simply benefited from the name, honor, excellence, and reputation of his noble family while Cicero has had to win elections on the basis of his own record.

In the extended comparison which follows, Cicero turns the tables on Piso and boasts of his accomplishments, his *gloria* and *honor*. Cicero delineates his own positive social attributes in terms of his known accomplishments as consul: at *Pis. 4.* he gives examples of his successful *consilium*, his defeat of Rullus' *Lex Agaria*; his *cura* of the Sullan constitution which he saw would be threatened if the sons of proscribed senators that Sulla had debarred from holding public office were allowed to stand for election; at *Pis. 5.*, he offers instances of *patientia* and *obsequium*, in transferring his allotted province of Gaul to his co-consul, Antonius; *vigilantia*, in uncovering the plot of Lucius Catilina and driving him out of the city before he could massacre the Senate; and at 6, *dignitas*, in being named named *parentum patriae*, given unprecedented thanksgivings in honour of his victory over the Catilinarian conspirators; and receiving a bronze statue at Capua after putting down a revolt in 63, at 25. When Cicero details the ideal qualities of a consul one may rightfully suspect that Cicero regards himself as the greatest exemplar: *animo consulem esse oportet, consilio, fide, gravitate, vigilantia, cura, toto denique munere consulatus omni officio tuendo, maximeque, id quod vis nominis ipsa praescribit, rei*

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54 Character testimony in forensic and deliberative speeches regularly employed epideictic when praising their subject’s accomplishments, appearances and character (*Rhet. Her.* 3.15; *Cic. de Oratione* 2.341, 349; Quint. *Inst.* 3.7.2.). Responding to an attack on one’s defendant by emphasizing positive attributes represents a major part of the orator’s ethical strategy. Riggsby (2004) reviews Cicero’s character presentation in the criminal trials in an appendix, 182-5; cf. *Font. 5*, 37-40; *Clu. 19*, 133, 167, 196-8; *Rab. Post. 7-9*; *Mur. 11-14*; *Sul. 1*, 69, 72-5, 78-80; *Flac. 6-8*; *Sest. 7-13*; *Cael. 42*, 48; *Planc. 27-31*, 33-35, 61.
publicae consulendo; “A consul should declare himself in spirit, in discretion, in the careful performance of the functions and duties of his office, and above all, as the name of his title indicates, in consulting the interests of the republic”. Pис 23; magnum nomen est, magna species, magna dignitas, magna maiestas consulis; “Great is the name, great the dignity, great the honour, great the majesty of a consul”, Pис. 24. As a vehicle for Cicero's own self-presentation, the speech will also be subject to the sort of evaluation Cicero directs his audience to make of Piso. Those who tired of Cicero's self-praise and self-glorifications would be likely to find that it was Cicero who claimed too much face for himself. 55

So far, we have concerned ourselves only with the image of self the Roman orator could claim for himself and the necessity of adjusting this face-claim to the expectations of his social counterparts. The physical face was an essential medium through which the Roman orator gave expression to his views of himself, and these expressions, which Cicero calls a sermo, provided a much broader range of personal information than has been generally recognized. 56 As expressions of persona, Piso's physical attributes convey a positive

55 Plutarch, Cic. 24: "At this time, then, Cicero had become the most powerful man in Rome. However, he made himself obnoxious to a number of people, not because of anything which he did wrong but because people grew tired of hearing him continually praising himself and magnifying his achievements. One could attend neither the Senate nor a public meeting nor a session of the law courts without have to listen to endless repetitions of the story of Catiline and Lentulus. He went on to fill his books and writings with these praises of himself and made his style of speaking, which was in itself so very pleasant and so exceedingly charming, boring and tedious to listen to, since this unpleasing habit clung to him like fate.” (trans. by Rex Warner)

56 Anthony Corbeil (1996) 14-55 reveals the philosophical underpinnings which informed Cicero's equation of moral and physical appearances as a natural principle. In Cicero's oratory, however, we can see that mores goes well beyond what we would ordinarily regard as good or bad character. Carlin Barton's (2001) 72-73 linking of persona and existimatio is more responsive to the way Cicero reads Piso's face and body in the speech.
image of consular authority in *Sest.* 19, where he and his fellow Romans find all the consular attributes rolled up into the contractions of Piso's brow. But in *Pis.* 1, Piso is unmasked. The face of authority belies an obvious lack of ability and experience, and the *sermo* that falsely conveyed consular attributes is seen as the deception of a hypocrite who clearly lacks *eloquentia, concilium,* and *factum domi aut militae.* It is the illustrious family name that has carried Piso through the intervals of his *cursus honorum, sine replusa,* not his actual accomplishments or abilities.

Certainly, Cicero as a *homo novus* had no chance of succeeding without such demonstrated merits, but as a Roman of noble birth, Piso has enjoyed an easier path. Backed by the *imagines* of his consular ancestors, he could accentuate the dignity of his ancient family by presenting a studied resemblance to the old order in his demeanour, dress and walk and expect to be supported in this image by his social counterparts. As for Cicero, his positive face will be welcome to most, and tiresome to others who have heard the tale of Catiline one too many times. In the context of invective, positive social attributes figure both as weapon and target. One can make points by extolling one’s achievements and social status relative to one’s opponent, as well as by directly attacking your opponent’s positive claims.

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57 Ernst Badian (1959) 87-88, details how patrician privilege could put an aristocratic career on a fast-track, allowing them to stand for consulships without completing a praetor or quaestorship or to advance more quickly through shorter intervals between offices, bypassing the biennium between quaestorship and standing for consul allowed exceptional patricians to advance to senior offices at an earlier age than their plebian or equestrian counterparts.
3.2: verecundia and contumelia

When the Senate invited Cicero to respond to Piso's attack, he immediately launched his harangue with loads of malicious contumelia or abusive language. Of the estimated 130 lines missing from the beginning of the speech, 19 fragments survive, one of which has been identified by Quintilian and Diomedes as the opening line: *pro di inmortales! qui huc inluxit dies, mihi quidem, patres conscripti, peroptatus, ut hoc portentum huius loci, monstrum urbis, prodigium civitatis viderem!* (For the sake of the immortal gods! That this day --which I have hoped for so greatly-- has finally dawned, conscript fathers, so that I may again see this ill-omen of the Senate, the monster of the city, and freak of the town! *Pis.* frag. i.) Cicero glosses his many attacks on Piso with the ironic *peroptatus* and counterbalances the genitives implying the privileges of the sentate (*loci*), social life (*urbis*) and citizenship (*civitatis*) with insulting accusatives that clearly deny Piso a status worthy of these social benefits: *portentum, monstrum, prodigium.* These are words that any member of the Roman elite would clearly see as “fighting words.” The use of such words, according to Goffman, is meant to test the recipient’s honour and provoke a character contest.58 Having abused Piso’s reputation while he was away in the provinces, Cicero is quite prepared to be even nastier in the Senate.

While *contumelia* is a regular feature of invective, Cicero acknowledges that abusive language can sound angry and disturbed rather than level-headed and dignified. Cicero warns against crossing this line even in rebuking one’s worst enemies at *Off.*1.137:

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58 Goffman (1967), 254.
Magnam autem partem clementi castigatione licet uti, gravitate tamen adiuncta, ut et severitas adhibeat et contumelia repellatur, atque etiam illud ipsum, quod acerbitate habet obiurgatio, significandum est ipsius id causa, qui obiurgetur, esse susceptum. Rectum est autem in illis contentionibus, quae cum inimicissimis fiunt, etiam si nobis indigna audiamus, tamen gravitatem retinere, iracundiam pellere; quae enim cum aliqua perturbatione fiunt, ea nec constanter fieri possunt neque is, qui adsunt, probari. (Off. 1.137)

In most cases, we may apply a mild reproof, so combined, however, with earnestness, that, while severity is shown, offensive language is avoided. Moreover, we must show clearly that even that very harshness which goes with our reproof is designed for the good of the person reproved. The right course, furthermore, even in our differences with our bitterest enemies, is to maintain our dignity and to repress our anger, even though we are treated outrageously. For what is done under some degree of excitement cannot be done with perfect self-respect or the approval of those who witness it.

Cicero distinguishes between the act of assigning blame (castigatio, objurgatio, and vituperation) and the language used in fault-finding, which should convey severitas and gravitas rather than contumelia and iracundia. The judgement of the others present is the fundamental constraint on the language one can employ in delivering a rebuke, even when an enemy has attacked one’s reputation in an unworthy way. When Cicero reports
comments Piso makes about Gabinius behind his back at 13, he expresses *verecundia* in reporting Piso’s remarks, *atque haec dicere vix audeo* (...and I scarcely dare to speak of these things), and is disgusted by his filthy language and behaviour, *unde tu nos cum improbissime respondendo, tum turpissime ructando eitectisti* (... until at length you drove us away by your impudent replies and your completely revolting belching) *Pis.* 13. In 55, Cicero regarded the Senate among his strongest supporters. He praises them at 31 as audience to Piso’s speech for the outcry raised against Piso’s use of *contumelia* and *maledicta* when he ridiculed Cicero’s undignified escape from Rome in 58, and at the same time lambasts Piso as a ‘most horrible and filthy monster’: *tune etiam, immanissimum ac foedissimum monstrum, ausus es meum discessum illum testem sceleris et crudelitatis tuae in maledicti et contumeliae loco ponere?* (And did you, you foul and inhuman monster, even dare to speak of my departure as a matter for your slander and abuse, a fact which proves your own wicked cruelty?) *Pis.* 31.

One has to admire the cheek of someone who can use abusive language to complain about another’s insults. On the other hand, it is difficult to avoid the impression that Cicero at times allows himself to cross the line between *serveritas* and *iracundia*, by putting abusive epithets into the vocative for maximum impact, and indulging in angry tirades which are replete with *contumelia*. While a display of anger which proceeded from the orator's *perturbatio* would likely lose him the respect of his audience, strong emotions could heighten the power of his words to sway his audience and overwhelm his opponents.
The isolating effect of Cicero's application of abusive epithets bears further scrutiny in the context of the social dynamics of invective. The lower animals whose names are hurled at Piso, belua (1,8), maialis (19), pecus (frag. xiv, 19), canis (23), volturius (38), admissarius (69), and asinus (73), figure collectively in Cicero's philosophical writings as bestia. In the De officiis, we find that men are different from the lower animals because they can look to their fellow men for help. It is thanks to the social bonds between men that the bestia can profitably be domesticated and commodified, while those that are too dangerous for human use can be killed off for the safety of the community (14). Mutual aid and mastery of the arts that have raised human life far above the lower animals: nisi tam multae nobis artes ministrarent quibus rebus exculta hominum vita tantum distat a victu et cultu bestiarum: “In all these respects the civilized life of man is far removed from the standard of the comforts and wants of the lower animals”(15). Without the aqueducts, irrigation, canals, medicine, houses, and the arts that provide comfort to civilized men, life would scarcely be worth living at all. The association of men (hominum coetus), which made the building and populating of cities possible, depends on the social constraints of laws and customs (leges moresque), but also on concern for the feelings of others (verecundia) (15).

To rebuke someone as belua is to gesture towards their violation of these underlying bonds and constraints which make organized social life possible.59 Robert Kaster’s

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59 Piso is belua at 1, because he has deliberately used his upright appearances to win political offices for his own gain. A person who has verecundia would not be capable of deceiving others because his own
analysis of *verecundia* reveal strong similarities with Goffman’s concept of face. Like a person who shows concern for face, one who feels *verecundia* is primarily concerned with what others think. This emotion allows the individual to be self-regulating in his interactions with others since it enables him to form a picture of how others view his actions and image of self.\(^{60}\) Moreover, just as one can feel concern for the face of others, so too do Romans feel sensitive to the *verecundia* of others and do their best to protect them from embarrassment. Furthermore, Kaster makes a useful distinction between dispositional and incidental forms of *verecundia*: those which apply to the permanent character of a person, the degree to which their disposition exhibits concern for others, is dispositional, while the concern they feel or fail to feel in a given situation, is termed incidental.\(^{61}\)

According to Cicero, Nature gave men *verecundia* so that they would be naturally driven to seek praise and honor and avoid ill-repute and dishonor. It is not fear of the punishment of the laws but fear of just censure which motivates the best men:

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\textit{<civitatis, in quibus expetunt laudem optumi et decus, ignominiam fugiunt ae}
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\(^{60}\) Kaster (2005) 15.

\(^{61}\) Kaster (2005) 16.
dedecus. nec vero tam metu poenaque terrentur, quae est constituta legibus, quam verecundia, quam natura homini dedit quasi quendam vituperationis non iniustae timorem. (Rep. 5. frag. iv)

...states in which the best men seek praise and glory, and avoid disgrace and dishonour. Nor indeed are they deterred from crime so much by the fear of the penalties ordained by law as by the sense of shame which Nature has given to man in the form of a certain fear of justified censure.

When Cicero claims that Piso's mother believes that she has given birth not to man but to a pecus in Pis. frag. xiv, he is indicating a defect in dispositional verecundia. This defect is the reason that the education he receives with Philodemus, a talented and civilized (humanus) teacher, fails to develop Piso's social capacity. In the Republica, Cicero advises that the wise ruler will attempt to strengthen and increase verecundia through public opinion, and education:

hanc ille rector rerum publicarum auxit opinionibus, perfecitque institutis et disciplinis. ut pudor civis non minus a delictis arceret quam metus. (Rep. 5. frag. iv.)

The governing statesman strengthens this feeling in commonwealths by the force of public opinion and perfects it by the inculcation of principles and by systematic
training, so that shame deters the citizens from crime no less effectively than fear.

In Piso’s case, according to Cicero, his education in Epicurean philosophy has had the opposite effect. Instead of reinforcing social constraints, Piso’s limited understanding of the principles he has been given encourages greater self-indulgence and bestial behaviour:

itaque admissarius iste, simul atque audivit voluptatem a philosopho tanto opere laudari, nihil expiscatus est, sic suos sensus voluptarios omnis incitavit, sic ad illius hanc orationem adhinnivit. (Pis. 69)

Thus, that stallion, the moment that he heard that pleasure was so exceedingly praised by a philosopher, fished for nothing else, and not only were all his senses were inflamed by pleasure, he even whinnied on hearing this statement.

Under hostile evaluation, all incidental flaws naturally become dispositional flaws. The bestial insults mark the boundary between those who can claim face and those who cannot. Those who are labelled as beasts are deemed to be inherently lacking in the basic human emotion of shame which makes civilized life possible and are thus judged to be unworthy of the benefits and protection of society.
4. Facework and Invective

The practices and processes through which individuals deal with face-threats are collectively designated 'facework'. Firstly, if one is to avoid threatening one's own face one must possess a high degree of self-control in social encounters, which Goffman terms 'poise'. Skill in speaking, elegance in manner, and control of one's emotions under trying circumstances were of the upmost importance to the Roman orator as well. In the first section of this chapter I will examine some trying moments in the *In Pisonem* and in the broader context of Late Republican oratory where loss of poise frequently results in public embarrassment. From here I will argue that avoidance procedures constitute a very import part of Cicero's attack on Piso as well as in his own self-presentation in the speech. Avoidance procedures will be discussed in greater detail in the second section of this chapter, but it is worth briefly explaining that these are the principle practices through which individuals can avoid threats to face by physically withdrawing, by overlooking the significance of threat, and by using go-betweens in their dealings with threatening individuals. The final section in this chapter deals with the role of apology and corrective procedures in the speech. I will argue that although Roman senators, like the Homeric heroes, did not offer complete apologies in the modern sense, corrective processes still offer a crucial insight into the rhetorical strategies employed by both Piso and Cicero.

4.1: Poise and Embarrassment

Piso's challenge to prosecute was his strongest point against Cicero since he knew that
Caesar would never permit Cicero to take his father-in-law to court. If Cicero had succeeded in finding a younger prosecutor among his supporters, he probably would have been pressured into defending his enemy at the trial. In Cicero’s version, however, we find that the resounding authority of the challenge has been reduced to a whimper by Cicero’s vivid suggestion that Piso was trembling as he made the challenge: *cum a me trementibus omnino labris sed tamen cur tibi nomen non deferrem requirebas*; “when you asked me with your lips positively trembling but still you asked why did I not subpoena you for trial?” *Pis.* 82. Cicero's opponent's are often depicted as visibly shaken, turning pale, and generally fearful, a rhetorical stratagem that Harold Gotoff has termed Cicero's art of illusion.  

If face consists of a set of positive attributes which can be challenged through aggressive facework, maintaining face involves a set of protective and defensive skills. Upon entering into a social interaction, participants are responsible for insuring that the communications they contribute are consistent with the line that their audience believes they have taken in previous encounters. Failure to integrate the messages produced into the line that others have made available for him will result in a person appearing out-of-face. Similarly, a participant may have difficulties filling the role that has been offered to him by contact with others, and may be seen to fluster and struggle to produce acceptable messages.  

We will begin by looking at how the most basic of these skills, which Goffman terms ‘poise’, enabled the Roman orator to fill his public role without

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63 Goffman (1967) 9.
succumbing to embarrassment.

Simply filling the role expected of a public speaker could be overwhelming even for the best orators. Plutarch reports that at many trials Cicero was nervous at the beginning of his speeches and often could be seen “quivering and trembling even when he had really got going and was at the height of his eloquence”. Indeed, the sight of the spears of Pompey’s soldiers stationed in the forum at Milo’s trial for the murder of Clodius in 52 caused Cicero to lose his nerve entirely with the result that “his body trembled and his voice choked”. According to Asconius’ commentary on the Pro Milone, the hostility of the audience was another factor that weakened Cicero’s delivery on this occasion: Cicero cum inciperet dicere, exceptus est acclamatione Clodianorum, qui se continere ne metu quidem circumstantium militum potuerunt; itaque non ea qua solitus erat constantia dixit; “When Cicero began to speak, he was interrupted by the catcalls of the Clodian faction who were unable to be silenced, not even by fear of the soldiers standing around. And so he spoke without the firmness which was his habit” (Asc. 42C). While Plutarch suggests that Cicero did not lose face as a result of his timidity at Milo’s trial, loss of poise is clearly a major threat to an orator.

Despite Cicero’s vulnerabilities in delivery on the occasion of the Pro Milone, he prided himself on his ability to overwhelm his opponents with the emotional intensity of his

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64 Plut. Cic. 35. Translated by Rex Warner.
65 ibid 35.
The goal of the orator’s attack was to leave an opponent in embarrassed silence. In 46 BC, Cicero took stock of his rhetorical strengths in the *Orator*:

> quo genere nos mediocres aut Latino etiam minus, sed magno semper usi impetu saepe adversarios de statu omni deiecimus. Nobis pro familiari reo summus orator non respondit Hortensius; a nobis homo audacissimus Catilina in senatu accusatus obmutuit; nobis privata in causa magna et gravi cum coepisset Curio pater respondere, subito assedit, cum sibi venenis ereptam memoriam diceret. (Or. 129)

My ability is mediocre or even less than that, but I have always used a vigorous style, and by this kind of oratory I have often dislodged opponents. Hortensius, a consummate orator, made no reply in defense of his friend whom I brought to trial; the brazen Catiline was arraigned by me in the Senate and was struck dumb; the elder Curio began his reply to me in a private case of grave importance, and suddenly sat down, alleging that magical potions had robbed him of his memory.

It is not difficult to appreciate the satisfaction of silencing one’s opponent in an argument. Overwhelmed by the force and passion of Cicero’s fiery words, even the great orator Hortensius cannot find the words to defend his friend Verres. Cicero is not being ironic when he praises Hortensius here: Hortensius is still *summus orator* even when he

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66 Cerutti (1996). Cicero's pronounced preference for speaking last on the defense team is a reflection of his awareness of the emotional power of his delivery. Patrons who spoke first were saddled with the task of presenting the technical details of the case. Speaking last accommodated emotional appeals and humour more effectively because the audience would already be informed of the basic information and issues at hand (7).
loses face. A direct attack on Catiline in the Senate silences him completely, and Curio claims that a magic potion has caused him to forget his lines. These are the highlights of Cicero’s fiercest attacks, exemplars of his innate talents for overwhelming his audience with emotion which cannot even be illustrated by specimens outside his own corpus, because according to Cicero, nothing of the kind exists.  

Disabling an opponent by shaking his poise was an important goal in rhetorical competition both by orators and by hostile audience members. Nonetheless, orators who held it together during such verbal onslaughts were regarded as particularly courageous. In February of 56, Clodius as an aedile had managed to bring Milo to trial for his involvement in street violence. Writing to Quintus, Cicero describes the difficulties Pompey faced in addressing the forum:

A. d. viii Id. Febr. Milo, adfuit. dixit Pompeius sive voluit; nam, ut surrexit, operae Clodianae clamorem sustulerunt, idque ei perpetua oratione contigit non modo ut acclamatione sed ut convicio et maledictis impediretur. qui ut peroravit (nam in eo sane fortis fuit; non est deterritis; dixit omnia atque interdum etiam silentio, cum auctoritate †peregerat†) sed ut peroravit, surrexit Clodius. ei tanta clamor a nostris (placuerat enim referre gratiam) ut neque mente nec lingua neque ore consisteret. (Q Fr. 2.3.2)

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67 Or. 133.
On the 7th Milo appeared. Pompey spoke, or rather wished to speak. For as soon as he got up Clodius' ruffians raised a shout, and throughout his whole speech he was interrupted, not only by hostile cries, but by personal abuse and insulting remarks. However, when he had finished his speech—for he showed great courage in these circumstances, he was not shaken, he said all he had to say, and at times had by his commanding presence even secured silence for his words — when he had finished, Clodius rose. Our party received him with such a shout—for they had determined to pay him back—that he lost all presence of mind, power of speech, or control over his countenance.

Clearly, speaking under hostile conditions in Rome required a great deal of poise. In the case of Pompey, his courage and authority allow him to proceed in the face of personal abuse (convicio) and insulting remarks (maledictis), and even to silence the outcry with his commanding presence (auctoritas). Failing to maintain control over mental, facial, and spoken expressions result in an embarrassing collapse, such as Clodius suffers when Cicero’s party raises the outcry against his speech. Under these circumstances, one saves face by showing that one is not deterritus, and one loses face when showing fear and embarrassment.

Cicero presents a similar episode at Pis.31 when he thanks the senators for the outcry they raised at Piso’s attempts to lampoon how he fled Rome into exile:
Tune etiam, immanissimum ac foedissimum monstrum, ausus es meum discessum illum testem sceleris et crudelitatis tuae in maledicti et contumelii loco ponere? Quo quidem tempore cepi, patres conscripti, fructum immortalem vestri in me et amoris et iudici; qui non admurmuratione sed voce et clamore abiecti hominis ac semivivi furorem petulantiamque fregistis. (Pis. 31)

Did you, O you most horrible and foul monster, dare also to speak of that departure of mine, that evidence of your wickedness and cruelty, as if it were a subject for your abuse and insult? And when you did so, then, O conscript fathers, I received an immortal reward of your attachment to and favourable opinion of me, when you crushed the frenzy and insolence of that abject and frightened man, not only with a murmur, but with a loud and indignant outcry.

Although Piso presumably recovered his poise and completed his address to the Senate, he is depicted as an interactant who has visibly lost control over his composure and appears *abiectus* and *semivivus* rather than *non timidus*. In Cicero's representation Piso’s derision of the manner of Cicero’s departure has been quashed by the supportive anger of the Senate who share a face with Cicero and are unwilling to see him insulted. The Senate put on mourning garb immediately upon learning of Cicero’s departure, a supportive gesture which was outlawed by the consuls (*Pis. 17*). Having recalled Cicero with the help of Lentullus and Metullus, it is not surprising that they would be prepared to make an uproar on his behalf.
Cicero was renowned for his quick-wittedness and this talent allowed him to out-poise his opponents in verbal duels. A brief examination of a Senate exchange between Cicero and Clodius provides a useful template for the role of poise and aggressive facework in invective generally. In Att. 1.16.10 Cicero recounts an *altercatio* which took place in the Senate in 61 between himself and Clodius following Clodius’ acquittal in the *Bona Dea* trial. The *altercatio* has two basic elements which can be identified with Goffman’s analysis of aggressive facework: firstly, the introduction of information and expressions that are meant to contradict the face that the participants can support; and secondly, the face that both commit to the outcome of the contest. The person who ventures to make the first remark displays an assumption of superiority in their ability to handle themselves in a battle of wits, which will result in a loss of face when this assumption is proven false by successful parries on the part of their target. As in any spoken interchange, the risk in making a remark includes the possibility of an affront if a person pays no attention to what is said or regards a remark as foolish, or offensive. Once a statement has been accepted, it may be countered, or altered or reinterpreted by the acknowledging remark. This process of exchanging messages is marked by lulls in ordinary conversation and divides the interaction into smaller moves. In the context of aggressive facework, these lulls register as cracks in the expressive flow if they seem too long, and the person responsible for them loses points for having nothing ready to contribute. In the end, the impression that one cannot handle oneself as well as one’s opponent may be more

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69 ibid, 25.
damaging than the content of an opponent's ripostes.

Cicero presents what appears to be a continuous exchange between himself and Clodius in which Clodius first rises to attack Cicero in the Senate, goes a few rounds in the contest before he returns to his seat, crushed by the clamorous disapproval of the Senate. Nonetheless, Cicero does give himself license to remove material which he deems to have lost its relevance when detached from its original context. From the point of view of poise, it is best to regard these as a set of exchanges rather than as a continuous flow of expressions.

The *altercatio* breaks down into several units, the first beginning when Clodius taunts Cicero for frequenting Baiae, a resort town for revellers: *surgit pulchellus puer, obicit mihi ad Baias fuisse. falsum, sed tamen quid hoc? simile est inquam quasi in operto dicas fuisse* (up gets our young dandy, and throws in my teeth my having been at Baiae. It wasn't true, but what did that matter to him? "It is as though you were to say," replied I, "that I had been in disguise!"). The taunt Clodius makes at the outset of Cicero’s version seems an unlikely place for this to begin. It appears to have the character of a joke, of the

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70 Clodium praesentem fregi in senatu cum oratione perpetua plenissima gravitatis tum altercatione huius modi; ex qua licet pausa degustes; nam cetera non possunt habere eandem neque vim neque venustatem remoto illo studio contentionis quem ἀγῶνα vos appellatis. (I overwhelmed Clodius in the Senate to his face, both in a set speech, very weighty and serious, and also in an interchange of repartees, of which I append a specimen for your delectation. The rest lose all point and grace without the excitement of the contest, or, as you Greeks call it, the ἀγών.) *Att.* 1.16.8.

71 Following Elaine Fantham (2004) 200. Pertinent to the question of how Cicero may be altering his account to fit the letter form, Lintott (2008) 19 suggests that Cicero likely mentioned the jury-tampering in his set speech, but decided to hold it back to add spontaneity to the humour of remarks in the letter. These suspicions are aired in the beginning of the letter at *Att.* 1.16.2 along with Cato’s remarks, so adding them again as part of his own speech quoted at 1.16.9 would have the effect of stealing the punchline from the account of the *altercatio* which follows.
kind Cicero himself was famous for offering unsuspecting victims in the course of his
daily conversations. Whether or not the *altercatio* actually began with a “taunt”, it is
clear that it was not an unmotivated attack and that the points that Clodius will make in
the course of these interchanges more clearly reflect his underlying purpose of defending
his victory in the courts against Cicero’s attacks. For Cicero to deny the charge outright
would have the effect of ratifying Clodius’s communication as an official threat to face.
He enters instead into the contest with the phrase ‘*in operto*’ to slyly remind his hearers
that Clodius was caught in a secret place in the *Bona Dea* scandal. Affronted by this
come-back, Clodius tries to squelch this with a snub, but Cicero closes the first
interchange with a come-back that re-interprets the remark as a compliment to the waters
of Arpina and numbers Clodius’s patron, Curio, among those seeking out property in the
area: *quid inquit homini Arpinati cum aquis calidis? narra inquam patrono tuo qui
Arpinatis aquas concupavit; nosti enim Marianas* (*"What business has an Arpinate with
hot baths?" "Say that to your patron,” I said, "who coveted the watering-place of an
Arpinate." For you know about the marine villa). Here the first crack appears. Clodius
makes a direct appeal to the audience for support: *quousque inquit hunc regem feremus?*
(How long are we to put up with this King?). Only to be answered by Cicero: *Regem
appellas inquam cum Rex tui mentionem nullam fecerit?; ille autem Regis hereditatem
spe devorarat.* (“You’re calling me a King”, I replied, “when the King made no mention

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72 *Plut. Cic.* 26-27 provides examples where Cicero successfully ventured to make remarks along
with Plutarch’s assessment of the resulting reputation “No doubt it is part of the business of a lawyer to
employ these rather cruel jokes at the expense of his enemies and his legal opponents. But Cicero’s
propensity to attack anyone for the sake of raising a laugh aroused a good deal of ill-feeling against him”
(trans. by Rex Warner). On the possible implications of the taunt about Baiae, see Thomas Alan Dorey
(1958) 180 who believes that some sort of humiliating experience may have befallen Cicero at the resort. In
this case, Cicero’s *falsum* would have to be taken as a denial of whatever rumours might have reached
Atticus through other sources.
of you?” That man had squandered King’s inheritance in his hopes of it.) The Senate is not prepared to take sides on this one yet. Goffman notes that aggressive facework requires an audience but that the successful adversary has to insure that his remarks do not contradict that audience’s expressed lines.73 The pattern established in the first interchange repeats: Clodius offers a challenge that borders on a request for remedial action which Cicero meets with a comeback, and Clodius either finds a come-back that Cicero then beats with one of his own or resorts to bringing up a fresh challenge. This time Clodius is bested again by Cicero’s brilliant punning, which does seem to get a little lost in translation. The allusion to Clodius’s wealthy brother-in-law Quintus Marcius Rex who left Clodius out of his will casts Clodius as prodigal and deflects the threatening expression suggested by the rex-insult.74

We get another lull as Clodius finds his come-back, only to be topped again: domum inquit emisti. putes inquam dicere: iudices emisti. (“You bought a mansion”, he declared. “What you meant to say was that you bought the judges”, I replied.) iuranti inquit tibi non crediderunt. mihi vero inquam xxv iudices crediderunt, xxxi, quoniam nummos ante acceperunt, tibi nihil crediderunt. (“The judges didn’t believe you”, he said. “Actually, twenty-five judges believed me, and thirty-one believed nothing of you since they had taken their pay up front.”) magnis clamoribus adflictus conticuit and concidit. (overwhelmed by great uproar he fell silent and sat back down). Cicero gets the last word as the audience raises a great supportive outcry which shuts Clodius up and returns him

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to his seat. Clodius’s flat-footedness belies the seriousness of the threats he makes to Cicero’s face, just as the Senate’s deciding clamour in favour of Cicero, belies the support Clodius will win from the Triumvirs, populace and the consuls of 58, to act on the implications of the challenges he makes in this exchange. Nonetheless, in Cicero’s version, it is clear that Cicero has out-poised Clodius.

4.2: Avoidance Processes

Piso's status as Caesar's father-in-law gave him a clear perception of the limits of Cicero's *post-reditum* oratory:

> Nam paulo ante dixisti me cum eis conflagere, quos despicerem; non attingere eos, qui plus possent, quibus iratus esse deberem. *Pis. 77.*

For a short while ago you [Piso] said that I was attacking those men whom I despised, while I leaving those men untouched, who could have done more and with whom I ought to be furious.

Cicero avoids blaming the Triumvirs Pompey and Caesar for their part in the events that led to his flight from Rome. Certainly, he did feel some gratitude for their help in bringing him back in 57, but he had also agreed to Caesar's condition not to attack the Triumvirate in his oratory. Asconius reports that Piso attacked Cicero with Caesar's full support: *et in eum invectus, fiducia maxime Caesaris generi* “and he railed against him
with the complete support of his son-in-law, Caesar” (Asc. 2 KS).⑦⑤ Cicero's about face on the issue of the Campanian land question had recently demonstrated the contingent nature of Cicero's reconciliation with Caesar and Pompey: in exchange for permitting him to return from exile, he had to avoid offending the Triumvirs.⑦⑥ This arrangement clearly compromised Cicero's ability to function as an independent statesman in the Senate and also eventually forced him to undertake the defense of his former enemies in the law-courts. According to Goffman, under normal conditions participants co-operate to protect one another from face-threats by avoiding or overlooking threatening information and helping each other accommodate face-threats into the positive image they are attempting to project. Cicero's praise of Pompey and Caesar in the post-reditum speeches casts the Triumvirs in the role of saviours of the republic and protectors of Cicero's reputation against the rogue attacks of Clodius and his consular allies. Piso's allegation that Cicero has avoided blaming Caesar and Pompey aggressively draws attention to the dubious nature of Cicero's face-work and forces Cicero to respond directly to their lack of assistance in 58.

If poise was essential to the orator’s self-presentation and enabled him to protect the image of his positive social attributes by avoiding embarrassment in public speaking,

⑦⑤ Caesar's treatment of Piso during this period suggests that there were also limits to his support of his Father-in-law. Timothy Wiseman (1966) argues that Caesar must have given Cicero carte blanche to attack Piso in his De Consularibus Provinciis and in his In Pisonem, since threats alone would not have sufficed to keep Cicero muzzled on the land reform question. The Triumvirs were losing their hold on power in the months prior to the Luca conference, and offering Cicero freedom to attack his enemies would have appealed to Cicero's desire to repair his dignitas 115. This argument seems more valid in the case of the speech on the provinces, since Caesar needed to free up a proconsulship for himself. It does not seem quite as likely that Cicero would have needed permission to attack Piso in the In Pisonem because, as it happened, Piso attacked first and Cicero could plausibly claim to be defending himself.

⑦⑥ Nisbet (1961) xvi.
maintaining face required other defensive moves which Goffman terms ‘facework’. Facework consists of the efforts an individual makes to maintain and protect his face. These processes are termed avoidance processes and are defensive when his efforts protect his own face from threats, and protective when he shows consideration for the face of others and makes efforts to protect them. Avoidance processes can take other forms as well, such as over-looking, pretending not to see, and avoidance relationships.\(^\text{77}\) When threats to face occur they are seen not merely as threats to an individual’s claim on social worth but as a disruption to the ritual order that supports social interaction. The ritual order consist of the formal acts, expressions, and syntactical elements that structure interaction between individuals which Goffman regards as ‘traffic signals’.\(^\text{78}\) It is this ritual order that establishes an equilibrium between interactants for the duration of a given encounter.\(^\text{79}\) Under normal circumstances, individuals will spontaneously co-operate to help others maintain face and avoid threats to that face by overlooking, and making excuses on another’s behalf when an incident arises. In doing so, they are able to preserve not only the face of the participants but also the purposes of their current encounter and the integrity of the social relationships which link this encounter to a larger social order.\(^\text{80}\)

Goffman outlines four basic forms that the avoidance process can take when interactants perceive that a specific encounter contains a threat to face: withdrawing, avoidance

\(^{77}\) Goffman (1967) 15.
\(^{78}\) ibid, 12.
\(^{79}\) ibid, 9.
\(^{80}\) ibid, 18.
relationships, defensive/protective measures and overlooking/concealing. Cicero points out Piso’s use of avoidance processes in various scenarios and events which precede the date of the *In Pisonem* (examples of this include the reassurance Piso offers Cicero there was no need to seek the protection of the consuls *Pis*.12; and the incident when Cicero encounters Piso stumbling drunkenly out of a dingy drinking spot, *Pis*.13). By including these maneuvers in an invective attacking the social worth of his enemy, Cicero is now in a position to ratify these incidents as offenses to the current expressive order regardless of their effect when they originally occurred.

The invective itself is a face-to-face interaction on a large scale and its participants comprise an audience which will meet offenses to the ritual order with appropriate responses. To illustrate this point, we will begin by examining an instance of overlooking which Cicero handily converts into an official challenge to Piso’s expressed social worth. At *Pis*.13, Cicero asks Piso to recall an encounter between Cicero, Caius Piso and himself:

Meministinse, caenum, cum ad te quinta fere hora cum C. Pisone venissem, nescio quo e gurgustio te prodire involuto capite soleatum, et, cum isto ore foetido taeterrimam nobis popinam inhalasses, excusatione te uti valetudinis, quod diceres vinulentis te quibusdam medicaminibus solere curari? Quam nos causam cum accepissemus—quid enim facere poteramus?—paulisper stetimus in illo ganearum tuarum nidore atque fumo; unde tu nos cum improbisimse
respondendo, tum turpissime ructando eiecisti. (Pis.13)

Do you recollect you infamous fellow, when about the fifth hour of the day I came to you with Caius Piso, that you came out of some hovel or other with your head wrapped up, and in slippers? And after you, with that fetid breath of yours, had filled us with the odour of that vile cookshop, you made the excuse of your health, because you said that you were compelled to have recourse to some vinous remedies? And when we had admitted the pretense, (for what could we do?), we stood a little while amid the fumes and smell of your gluttony, till you drove us away by filthy language and still more filthy behaviour?

At the level of the street encounter, the current situation involves two offensive incidents which threaten Piso’s face and are met with supportive facework on the part of his co-participants, Cicero and his son-in-law, Caius Piso. The image Piso presents emerging drunk from the hovel contradicts judgments of his social worth. However, Piso tactfully deals with the event by openly acknowledging his inebriated state while discounting its threatening character: he’s drinking for health, rather than pleasure. In taking this course, Piso leans dangerously on the forbearance of Caius Piso and Cicero, who nonetheless accept the excuse and overlook the threatening character of the expression. In the ensuing conversation, Piso again fails to maintain face when he loses control over his language
and behaviour. Caius Piso and Cicero protectively turn away from this second incident by withdrawing without challenging Piso or ratifying the incident as an offense which he must answer for before normal relations can continue. At the level of the invective itself, Piso and Cicero are once again engaged in a face-to-face encounter, but the current situation is that Piso and Cicero are in a state of open hostility. Having no wish to maintain normal relations with Piso, Cicero’s forbearance is now at an end, and he is free to add the incident to the long list of challenges Piso must somehow address in order to restore his image of social worth before the Senate.

The best way to avoid threats to face is to simply avoid encounters where challenges are likely to occur. By far the most colourful instance of an unsuccessful withdrawal in the speech occurs at Pis. 92-93 when Piso finds himself short on cash to pay the troops recently disbanded in Macedonia who have tracked him to Dyrrachium to collect their wages.

Quibus cum iuratus adfirmasset se quae deberentur postero die persoluturum, domum se abdidit; inde nocte intempesta crepidatus veste servili navem conscendit Brundisiumque vitavit et ultimas Hadriani maris oras petivit, cum interim Dyrachii milites domum in qua istum esse arbitrabantur obsidere coeperunt et, cum latere hominem putarent, ignis circumdederunt. Quo metu commoti Dyrachini profugisse noctu crepidatum imperatorem indicaverunt. (Pis.

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81 It seems likely that the contents of this conversation correspond with the dialogue at Pis. 12 containing Piso views on his colleague Gabinius and his unwillingness to help Cicero in his troubles with Clodius.
And when he had assured them with an oath that he would pay them the next day all that was due to them, he hid himself at home; then on a very stormy night, in slippers and in the garb of a slave, he embarked on board a ship, and avoided Brundisium and sailed towards the furthest part of the coast of the Adriatic Sea; while, in the meantime, the soldiers at Dyrrachium began to besiege the house in which they thought that he was, and as they thought that he was hiding himself there, they began to set fire to it. And the people of Dyrrachium, being alarmed at that proceeding, told them that their “Imperator” had fled away by night in his slippers. (Pis. 92-3)

Confronted with an impossible demand, Piso takes a line that will prove impossible to maintain and promises to pay under oath even though he doesn’t have the money. In offering to pay, he is able to show the proper degree of considerateness in the encounter while maintaining his own dignity and poise under considerable duress. Rather than risk a second encounter with the soldiers in which he would clearly appear wrong-faced when he failed to fulfill his promise, he chooses to physically withdraw from the scene. At this stage, however, Piso proves incapable of finding an acceptable pretext to make a dignified exit, and escapes in the middle of the night in his slippers and the garb of a slave. Notwithstanding the fertility of Cicero’s imagination for humiliating details, a lack of concern for self-respect and a willingness to endure demeaning situations is
characteristic of interactions where the interdependence between the current situation and the wider social order are limited by the unlikeliness of future encounters between the participants. Piso is willing to take this risk to his face because he thinks there is a good chance that he will never meet this particular audience again. The nameless soldiers and the people of Dyrrachium belong to social groupings that Piso, journeying home to Italy as a proconsul, can safely hope to exclude from his future face-to-face interactions. Still Piso’s escape from this provincial scene of judgment is not complete since the soldiers manage to deface his statue in the town square and through Cicero’s sources, enough salient details have followed Piso back to Rome to allow Cicero to recreate and reconfigure this event in his speech. Rank, ethnicity and geographical distance are no barriers to Cicero’s traffic in compromising anecdotes and so Piso is forced to relive the whole thing before a Senate audience.

Important relationships could also call for physical withdrawal as a desperate measure against threats to face. Pompey’s withdrawal from contact with Cicero in 58 occasions a similarly humiliating episode in Plutarch’s account of Cicero’s failed embassy to Pompey’s splendid villa in the Alban hills outside Rome at Cic. 31.2. Hearing that Cicero is on his doorstep, Pompey

could not face seeing him. He was bitterly ashamed when he remembered how in the past Cicero had fought his battles on many important occasions and had often taken a particular line in politics for his sake; but he was Caesar's son-in-law, and
at Caesar's request he proved false to the obligations of the past. He slipped out of
the house by another door and so avoided the interview. (Cic. 31.2; trans. by R.
Warner.)

Pompey’s conflicting obligations have placed him in an impossible situation and he is
forced to save face by physically withdrawing even though he lacks a suitable pretext for
doing so. Cicero’s account of his strained relations with Pompey in 58 illustrate a second
mode of avoidance practices in the speech. When a threatening incident does occur, the
participants can resort to defensive maneuvers which protect the equilibrium of the
expressive order by discounting the significance of the event. They can choose to over-
look the offensive expression in various ways, by intentionally failing to notice the event,
by making excuses on the person’s behalf, or by accepting explanations offered by the
offender. At Pis.76, Cicero contrives to shift the blame from Pompey who “has always
considered me entirely worthy of his intimacy” (semper sua coniunctione dignissimum
iudicavit), onto the consuls Gabinius and Piso, whose “desires of provinces caused me to
be excluded from his house, and all the men who were anxious for the preservation of his
glory, and of the republic, to be cut off from all conversation with and access to him”
(vestrae cupiditates provinciarum effecerunt, ut ego excluderem, omnesque, qui me, qui
illis gloriam, qui rem publicam salvam esse cupiebant, sermone atque aditu
prohiberentur). Such a claim can readily be discredited by those who are in a position to
introduce contradictory information into the encounter in the manner of Plutarch’s
account of the incident or as seen in Cicero’s handling of Piso’s flight from Dyrrachium.
In the context of invective, a challenge to defensive forms of avoidance is inevitable. Piso’s remarks concerning Cicero's misdirected anger at *Pis.*78 reveal his anticipation of Cicero’s recourse to such transparently defensive devices. The pretext Cicero offers for Pompey’s withdrawal and the self-presentation it is meant to support are tenable in the current situation only for those whose feelings are bound up in the condition of Cicero’s face and who are consequently willing to accept and perform supportive facework on his behalf to protect his and their own feelings. Here the interaction between the current situation and the larger social order is paramount: reconciliation with Pompey and with Caesar, mentioned at 82, both necessitates Cicero’s defensive maneuvers on their behalf and guarantees support from those who wish to maintain this particular sector of the ritual order from the threats presented in Cicero’s encounter with Piso. Cicero appeals directly to the value of his reconciliation with Caesar to the larger social order at *Pis.* 82: *Sed cum me expetat, diligat, omni laude dignum putet, tu me a tuis inimicitiis ad simultatem veterem vocabis, sic tuis sceleribus rei publicae praeterita fata refricabis?* (But as hecourts me, and loves me, and thinks me worthy of every sort of praise, will you call me off from my enmity against you to a quarrel with him? Will you thus reopen the past wounds of the republic by your enormities?) Cicero’s identification of the larger social order with the republic further undermines the validity of attempts to discredit his defensive facework, since it will be construed as a threat to the highest level of social order in the Roman state.

Piso’s exposure to Cicero’s hostility stems in part from his involvement in another type
of avoidance process, namely the go-between or avoidance relationship, which prevails in situations where face-to-face contact between individuals is mutually regarded as too risky. While Cicero had enjoyed easy access to Pompey and Caesar in the past, the political climate in 58, once Cicero signaled his opposition to their new pact with Crassus establishing the Triumvirate as the de facto government in Rome, distanced him from their active support in his conflicts with Clodius. At Pis. 79, we learn of a second envoy to the Alban hills undertaken by Cicero’s go-betweens, Lucius Lentulus, Quintus Sanga, Lucius Torquatus and Marcus Lucullus, to entreat Pompey to save Cicero whose fortune “was bound up with the safety of the republic”. Pompey, in a more favourable mood towards Cicero, claims he is now ready to take up arms against the tribune Clodius, provided that both consuls agree and a motion is submitted to the Senate, and sends Cicero’s go-betweens off to visit Piso and Gabinius (Pis.79). In formulating his offer of assistance as contingent on the support of the consuls, Pompey is posturing as an independent statesman who has decided to help Cicero out of the goodness of his heart. In reality, as Triumvir he has simply sent Cicero’s go-betweens off to negotiate with the go-between and father-in-law of his Triumviral colleague, Caius Caesar, a position which is revealed in Piso’s polite refusal of the embassy when Piso at Pis.78 says that “neither he, his son-in-law nor his colleague would desert the tribune of the people” (neque se neque generum neque conlegam suum tribuno plebis defuturum). In quoting Piso’s response, Cicero has let slip his own perception of the dual nature of Piso’s role as consul/Triumvirate go-between but refuses to assign any of the blame to Caesar and

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82 Goffman (1967), 15.
Pompey. Without skipping a beat, in the next line he concludes his account of the failed envoy with the challenge “And now, you enemy and traitor, do you say that I ought to be a more determined enemy to any one else than to you?” (*Hic tu, hostis ac proditor, aliis me inimiciorem quam tibi debere esse dicis?*)

Avoiding threats to face by withdrawal and staying away from difficult encounters comes at a price. The person who over-indulges in the safety of avoidance may come to be seen as a faulty interactant who cannot be relied upon to carry off his role in social interaction. Cicero casts Piso in the role of the great avoider in the *In Pisonem*: Piso avoids Cicero (10); avoids Brundisium (92); avoids the triumphal gate (55); avoids his friends, sends away lectors (88); and refuses to meet military tribunes (88). He is challenged to face the crowds at Pompey’s games, but no doubt he will avoid them too (65). He avoids writing letters (97), and when his friends do receive them, they avoid reading them in the Senate out of embarrassment (39). He wraps his head when returns from his favourite drinking house, to avoid being recognized (13). And in turn he is avoided by his friends, by the candidates who were pressed to meet him on his return to Rome (55), by his lieutenants who stayed home even when they heard of his arrival, one of whom even preferred Cicero’s company to that of his former “Imperator” (54). His invitations to speak are avoided by the senators he calls upon as consul in the Senate (26). He is challenged to meet with his son-in-law, who will probably avoid him (60). After his inglorious return from Macedonia, Piso’s friends and military colleagues are represented as avoiding all social interaction with him (96). Cicero concludes the catalogue at *Pis. 96* with the
pointed question “For who is there who thinks you deserving of a visit; or of any compliment or even of an ordinary salutation?” (*Quis enim te aditu, quis ullo honore, quis denique communi salutatione dignum putet?*)

In the Roman Senate, where the casting of a vote could compromise one’s face if it was too obviously in conflict with the image you presented on previous occasions, a statesman could save face simply by finding some excuse to not show up. On the day the *comitia centuriata* voted on Lentulus’ resolution permitting his return to Rome, Cicero remarks *Pis*. 36 that “no pretext was admitted in the case of anyone whatever as sufficiently reasonable to excuse him from being present” (*nemini civi uillum quo minus adesset satis iustam excusationem esse visam*), and that, as a result, there was never a more numerous number of men assembled in any previous *comitia*. Cicero was especially honoured by the high turnout at the meeting because he felt that the men assembled had willingly done something that “[they] avoid doing under the plea of [their] age, or of [their] rank when the honours of [their] own relations are at stake” (*quod in honoribus vestrorum propinquorum non facitis vel aetatis excusatione vel honoris*), *Pis*. 36. In this contrast, the face shared by members of the Senate is held to be of a higher social order than the face shared by members of a family. Here we have a sly jab at Piso, whose son-in-law failed to protect him from the Senate motion to recall the consuls in *De Consularibus Provinciis*.

Cicero’s own avoidance processes attempt to conceal the extent of his weakness in Rome
during the events leading up to his exile in 58. Styling himself as a Metellus Numidicus, the senator who preferred to go into exile in 100 BCE than to swear the oath Marius had imposed on the Senate to abide by the lex agaria, Cicero presents his departure from the city at Pis. 20 as a voluntary withdrawal from the threat of armed conflict. The consuls Piso, “a sort of barbarian Epicurus”, and Gabinius, “a mere hut-boy of Catiline”, fall short of the great Marius as worthy adversaries (Pis. 20). Marius was a gallant general, seven times consul and leader of invincible legions; by avoiding a contest with Marius, Metellus equals the glory of the immortal gods (Pis. 20). But armed conflict in 58 would first have involved a contest with Clodius’ gangsters, who had taken over the Temple of Castor, and turned it into a fortified lair which Cicero describes as the tomb of Catiline (Pis. 16). In Sest. 43, Cicero painted a picture of the sequence of events that would have led to a battle with the consuls:

scio enim tum non mihi vestrum studium, sed meum prope vestro defuisse.
contenderem contra tribunum plebis privatus armis? vicissent improbos boni,
fortes inertis; interfectus esset is qui hac una medicina sola potuit a rei publicae peste depelli. quid deinde? quis reliqua praestaret? cui denique erat dubium quin ille sanguis tribunicius, nullo praesertim publico consilio profusus, consules ultores et defensores esset habiturus? cum quidam in contione dixisset aut mihi semel pereundum aut bis esse vincendum. quid erat bis vincere? id profecto, ut, (si) cum amentissimo tribuno plebis decertassem, cum consulibus ceterisque eius ultoribus dimicarem. (Sest.42-43)
For I know well that at that time it was not your [the jurors’] zeal that was wanting to me, but more nearly my energy that was wanting to second your zeal. Was I, a private individual, to struggle in arms against a tribune of the people? No doubt the good would have defeated the wicked, the brave would have defeated the inactive; he would have been slain who could by no other remedy be prevented from being the ruin of the republic. What would have happened next? What would have become of the remains of his party? What would have been the end? Was there any doubt that the blood of the tribune especially when not shed in consequence of any public resolution would have had the consuls for its avengers? Especially when we recollect that that fellow had said in the public assembly that I must either perish once or be victorious twice. What was the meaning of my having to conquer twice? Why no doubt that after I had struggled against that most senseless tribune of the people, I should have to struggle with the consuls and with all those who would avenge him.

While Cicero’s imagery focuses on the physical and social risks of an armed contest, being present at a large-scale interaction would inevitably expose Cicero to threats to face according to his ability to maintain face with the expressive order of a contio convened by his enemies.

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83 Cicero gives this line to Pompey in Pis.78.
Plutarch adds Caesar to the roster of speakers at the *contio* held in the Circus Flaminius (mentioned at *Post Red*. 13, and *Pis*. 14,) and tantalizingly mentions that Cicero, too, was called upon to speak on his own behalf:

Caesar also turned Pompey completely against Cicero and then in a speech which he made himself to a meeting of the people declared that in his view it was neither right nor lawful for men to be put to death without a trial, as had happened in the cases of Lentulus, Cethegus, and their party. For this was the accusation against Cicero and this was the charge that he was being called upon to meet.

(Plut. *Cic*. 30.2) trans. by R. Warner

When we read Clodius’ challenge that Cicero must conquer twice or perish once at *Sest*. 43 against this summons, we can understand not as an invitation to armed conflict, but for Cicero to clear his name by winning a second contest of oratory and to successfully defend his victory over the Catilinarians. Cicero’s perception that he was being threatened with arms and not with legitimate discussion, trial, or legal process is no doubt an accurate assessment of his plight. Nor was the climate of these assemblies at all favourable to his cause. Nonetheless, by declining to take part in an official discussion of his record as consul he is forced to disrupt the ritual order of the *contio* in the Circus Flaminus and to withdraw at the moment that he has been ratified as a full-participant.

84 *Sest*. 42–43.
The pairing of the consuls and the physiognomic imagery of the passage at *Pis.* 20 suggests that Cicero is defensively admitting to a deliberate avoidance of a face-to-face contest of oratory:

Neque hercule ego supercilium tuum neque conlegae tui cymbala fugi neque tam fui timidus ut, qui in maximis turbinibus ac fluctibus rei publicae navem gubernassem salvamque in portu conlocassem, frontis tuae nubeculam aut conlegae tui contaminatum spiritum pertimescerem. (*Pis.*20)

I did not flee your supercilious looks, or the cymbals and castanets of your colleague; nor was I so nervous, after having guided the vessel of the state amid the most terrible storms and billows of the republic, and placed it safe in harbour, as to fear the little cloud which gathered on your brow, or the polluted breath of your colleague.

The adjective *timidus* resonates strongly with accounts of the exceptionally vociferous climate that prevailed in the rhetorical scene during the years of Clodius’ career. The imagery of a face-to-face encounter is unmistakable and immediately recalls the pretentious eyebrow raise at 14. Comparing his own departure from the city with Marius’, Cicero is able to conceal what appears to have been a disgraceful withdrawal
from a challenge to speak at the *contio* by conflating his flight from a face-to-face encounter with his departure from the city itself.

In Plutarch’s account Cicero takes to the streets as a direct response to a summons, calling him to answer to the indictment against him, which appears to have been made at the *contio* in the Circus Flaminius (Plut. *Cic*. 30). Plutarch seems to regard this as an adequate response to the challenge even though it proves unsuccessful. Cicero provides vivid descriptions of the public meeting (*Pis*. 14 and *Post Red*. 13), but never confirms his own presence. If taking to the streets was an effective way to answer a summons announced before the people addressed at the *contio*, speaking at the *contio* itself before his accusers as they ratified their legislation would have to be the best possible way to attempt to sway public opinion in his favour. Cicero’s rhetoric in 15-20 blurs the chronology and context of such a face-to-face encounter, adopting the imagery of a violent contest against neo-Catilinarian conspirators. The image of Cicero fleeing the brow of Piso (*Pis*. 20) gives us some idea of how things might have gone. The fact that he stayed away or failed to emerge as an interactant at a meeting that decided his fate suggests that the situation was truly beyond his control.

Cicero’s canny awareness of how orators use avoidance processes to accommodate face-threats into their positive images of self informs one of his richest attacks on Piso’s pretentious disdain of triumphs. The extended impersonation of Piso at *Pis*.59-60 begins with Cicero inviting Piso to meditate on how he might attempt to persuade his heroic son-
in-law, Julius Caesar, to follow his example and abandon his ambitious desire for
triumphs. The figure of prosopopeia is ideally suited to the subversion of avoidance
process since it allows the orator to introduce threatening information in the voice of his
opponent, giving the comical impression that the target is revealing his secrets directly to
the audience. The delivery of speeches in alternate personas was a regular if strange
feature of Roman oratory and permitted a restrained mimicry of the target's voice,
delivery, and gestures. Cicero's skill in mimicry would certainly have been on display,
but it is the information privilege inherent in such a strategy that has the strongest impact
on Piso's avoidance processes since Cicero as Piso can say things that the real Piso would
never publicly admit to: namely, that he has been punished by the gods and that he has
broken Caesar's *Lex Iulia de Repetundis* which stipulates that money not used for a
triumph is to be returned to the treasury. Having Piso admit to these threats to his face is
only part of the fun: Cicero goes further and interjects himself into the scene, pretending
to coach Piso along towards an acceptable way to persuade Caesar and avoid revealing
these damaging pieces of information. Piso's imaginary struggle to find an acceptable
face in an unconventional situation casts doubt on Piso's actual attempt to justify his
distain for triumphs which the audience has just heard prior to the *In Pisonem*. However
well Piso's avoidance processes might have disguised the unconventional nature of his
decision, the audience is now left to consider just how much effort it must have taken for
Piso figure out how to put a good face on what is clearly a bizarre decision.

Coherent attacks on avoidance processes inform both sides of the contest. Piso's
recognition of Cicero's bargain with the Triumvirs effectively calls into question Cicero's fixation on Piso's conduct in 58 and suggests that Cicero is attacking the wrong person. The Senate's outcry at Piso's attempts to ridicule Cicero's flight suggests that Piso probably went too far, but it still plants the suggestion that Cicero is 'timidus' and accurately anticipates that Cicero will ultimately avoid his challenge to prosecute. Cicero's defense against these points is unconvincing according to Nisbet but offers a glimpse into the power of Cicero's rhetoric to find a useable face even in the most unfavourable circumstances. As for Cicero's attacks on Piso, it is clear that Cicero's awareness of Piso's avoidance process offers countless opportunities for his attack which contribute greatly to his goal of demonstrating Piso's complete loss of face in the current situation.

4.3: Corrective Processes

Piso’s return to the Senate in September of 55 was something of a novelty for everyone concerned. Normally, a proconsul who had been declared Imperator for his victories in the field would have convened a Senate meeting outside the pomerium in the temple of Bellona and there made his case for a triumph. Instead, Piso had trampled his laurels underfoot outside the city gates, and entered the city as a private statesman with his lictors in regular attire. The speech he gave to the Senate has not survived, but so far as we can reconstruct its points from the evidence of Cicero’s speech and Asconius’

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86 Nisbet (1961) notes that nobody could have believed Cicero's suggestion at 94 that he would prosecute Piso after the jury-system had been reformed and summarizes 95 as follows: “Cicero gives other unconvincing reasons to explain why he is not prosecuting Piso” 167.

87 Beard (2007), 201-203. If a triumph was awarded in the session held outside the pomerium, the general would then be given imperium within the city for the day of the celebration.
commentary, it must have been a strange inversion of traditional proceedings. Asconius provides a brief account of Piso’s return:

Nam cum revocati essent ex provinciis Piso et Gabinius sententia Ciceronis quam dixerat de provinciis consularibus Lentulo et Philippo consulibus, reversus in civitatem Piso de insectatione Ciceronis in senatu conquestus est et in eum invectus, fiducia maxime Caesaris generi qui tum Gallias obtinebat. (Asc. 2KS)

In the year Lentulus and Philip were consuls, and when Piso and Gabinius had been recalled from their provinces due to the opinions Cicero had expressed in the De provinciis consularibus, Piso, having returned to the city complained about Cicero’s persecution of him in the Senate and inveighed against him, with the full support of his son-in-law Caesar who was then in charge of Gaul.

In the first place, Asconius reports that Piso complains in the Senate of Cicero’s insectationes while he was in his province. Being attacked in absentia is in itself a cause for complaint, since there is no opportunity to defend oneself. Cicero’s post-reditum attacks on Piso and Gabinius are violations of their rights which would under normal circumstances betray a vitium in moribus which Cicero himself warns against in De Officiis 1.134:

Ac videat in primis, quibus de rebus loquatur, si seriis, severitatem adhibeat, si
And it seems firstly that we should consider what the subject of conversation is: if they are gravely important, then severity is appropriate, if trifling, then, humour. And, above all, we must beware lest our conversation demonstrate a lack of character: which most frequently happens when people in jest or earnest take delight in making malicious and slanderous statements about the absent for the sake of injuring their reputations.

The ground rules Cicero lays out here are meant to preserve the orator’s character so that he can perform his role effectively. According to Cicero in *De Oratore* the orator’s right to blame others rests on their perception of his own moral worth. 88 Cicero’s bad conduct towards Piso is surely minor but still offensive enough to provoke Piso’s complaints.

Without a doubt Cicero’s attacks on Piso *in absentia* were intended to offend his opponent, and he would not have entertained the idea of apologizing for them at any point in his contest with Piso. Nonetheless, there is a strategic value in engaging in bad behaviour towards an opponent in a contest of invective. Cicero was ingenious enough in *De Consularibus Provinciis* and *Pro Sestio* to find pretexts for violating such principles.

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88 *De Or.* 2.85.384.
The debate concerning the allocation of the provinces in 55 was virtually an invitation to attack his enemies. Although Cicero claims that he will not be influenced by his private emotions in his deliberations of the allocation of provinces, he takes pride in quoting the *contumelia* of Publius Servilius who had just branded Piso and Gabinius as the “two monsters and near destroyers of the republic”.\(^8^9\) Similarly, Cicero’s defense of Sestius attacks Piso, Gabinius and Clodius as part of the backdrop against which Sestius’ actions are to be correctly understood by the jury.\(^9^0\) Cicero's supporters will view his actions as courageous, but from Piso's point of view these attacks *in absentia* represent a dangerous provocation that cannot be ignored.

Cicero's attacks on Piso serve an important rhetorical function in setting up the *In Pisonem*. One of Cicero's great talents as an orator lay in delivery and he understood that in order to maximize the emotional power of his speeches, his audience needed to be familiar with the technical and narrative details of the case. Steven Cerutti notes that Cicero's preference for speaking last on the defense team and avoidance of prosecutions allowed him to build on the points established by those who spoke first and to perfect the humour and passion of his argument and delivery into what Cerutti terms his accretive style.\(^9^1\) By going over the details of the pact between Clodius and the consuls and presenting his version of his flight from Rome as a heroic self-sacrifice that saved the Republic from civil war in his defense of Sestius, Cicero has laid the ground for future

\(^8^9\) *Prov.* 2.

\(^9^0\) *Sest.* 31.

\(^9^1\) Cerutti (1996) 7.
attacks against his enemies.

Cicero's mistreatment of the absent Piso is crucial also to the social dynamics of Cicero's attack on Piso since it is an insult to his honour and reputation. The art of baiting an enemy can be broken down into a series of moves. The provocation in Goffman's social analysis is typically a minor transgression deliberately undertaken by the offender to test an opponent's character. According to Goffman, the self has borders that cannot be literally patrolled: personal space; possessions; personal information; the turn; and conversational preserves are the basic territories in which individuals practice good or bad conduct toward each other. When one of these territories is violated, the victim is left with some difficult choices. Riggsby has described invective debates as a game in which one gains status by lowering the other. Status is relative and it is the fact of the insult that counts in an attack since it represents a denial of status. If the victim does nothing, he can expect similar violations in the future and he will appear to have weak character. He can choose to call attention to the offense in the hopes that others will help him obtain an apology or take some corrective action against the offender. If the offender persists at this point, then the target will find himself in a protracted state of hostility in which he will have to prove himself stronger than the offender or accept that he has no power to alter the current situation and withdraw from the encounter. Finally, the target can accept the challenge and go on the attack.

Piso's complaint about Cicero’s attacks in the *De Consularibus Provinciis* and *Pro Sestio*
represents an appeal for corrective action but it is followed by jokes about Cicero's
desperate flight from Rome in 58 and his verses ‘cedant arma togae’; suggestion that
Cicero is attacking the wrong person and that Caesar and Pompey are his real enemies,
and a challenge Cicero to prosecute him in the law-courts.

Like positive social attributes, poise and the avoidance processes, corrective processes
can be used defensively or aggressively. Where avoidance processes allow interactants to
maintain the expressive order by treating threatening incidents as insignificant, and can
be dealt with in ways that reduce or entirely do away with the burden of accountability on
the part of the person who has caused the event, the corrective process begins when
participants choose to draw attention to the offense and accredit an incident as a threat to
face. 92 A state of disequilibrium prevails between the participants and the offender, and
normal relations are suspended until the incident has been successfully dealt with. From
here, the modern apology begins when the offender takes responsibility for their action
by offering some explanation, excuse or compensation. Once these offerings have been
accepted, the offender is supposed to display gratitude and face is restored on all sides.
The Roman elite, like the Homeric heroes, do not offer full apologies in the modern
sense. 93 Three specific sections of the In Pisonem reveal variations on the corrective
process: Cicero offers apologetic explanations that avoid responsibility, forgive the
person who least deserves it, and assign blame to others.

92 Goffman (1967) 19.
Ruth Scodel's observation that Homeric practices aimed at restoring the victim with minimal cost to the offender, applies equally to Roman corrective processes. Of the four stages Goffman identifies, the challenge, the offering, acceptance and gratitude, Cicero’s invective is most at home in the first. The *In Pisonem* offers several variations on the corrective process, none of which make it through all four stages. The most complete of these is the excuse Cicero offers for the verses which Piso claims offended Pompey: *cedant arma togae* (*Pis.* 72). Suggesting that the verses referred to Pompey, Piso finds a way to blame Cicero for his own misfortunes in 58.

Atque ista oratione hoc tamen intellegi, scelerate, vis, Pompeium inimicum mihi isto versu esse factum, ut, si versus mihi nocuerit, ab eo quem is versus offenderit videatur mihi pernicies esse quaesita. Omitto nihil istum versum pertinuisse ad illum; non fuisse meum, quem quantum potuissem multis saepe orationibus scriptisque decorassem, hunc uno violare versu. Sed sit offensus primo; nonne compensavit cum uno versiculo tot mea volumina laudum suarum? Quod si esset commotus, ad perniciemne non dicam amicissimi, non ita de sua laude meriti, non ita de re publica, non consularis, non senatoris, non civis, non liberi, in hominis caput ille tam crudelis propter versum fuisset? (*Pis.* 74-5)

And yet, by this argument you try, O you wretch, to make out that Pompey was made an enemy to me by that verse so that, if my verse has injured me, the injury

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94 ibid 95.

may appear to have been sought for me by that man whom that verse offended. I say nothing of the fact that that verse had no reference to him that it was not at all my object to insult with one single verse the man whom I had repeatedly extolled in many speeches and writings. But grant that he was offended. In the first place, will he not put in the scale against this one verse the many volumes full of his praises which have proceeded from me? And if he has been moved by such a consideration,

In making his offering, Cicero follows three distinct remedial procedures for handling ratified face-threats: firstly, he attempts to show that his verse do not have the meaning Piso attributes to them; secondly, he assumes the perspective of the offended party, and considers what would happen if they in fact had the threatening character; and thirdly, he abases himself by downgrading the regard he expects to be shown to that of an ordinary human being. Ordinarily one can not pass from the offering stage to acceptance without giving the offended party a turn to express his view of the apology made, but since all this lies in the past and Cicero can count on Pompey's renewed support in the current situation, he proceeds at 80 to demonstrate the acceptance Pompey has demonstrated by making public speeches on his behalf, working with Lentulus to secure Cicero's recall, and winning Caesar over to Cicero's cause. Finally, drawing a sharp line between his enemy Piso and those he feels proper gratitude towards, Cicero concludes:

Iam vides me tibi non inimicum sed hostem, illis quos describis non modo non
iratum sed etiam amicum esse debere; quorum alter, id quod meminero, semper aequem mihi amicus fuit ac sibi, alter, id quod obliviscar, sibi aliquando amicior quam mihi. (Pis. 80)

You see now it is towards you that I should be not only an opponent but an enemy, and as for those to whom you refer, not only should I not be angry with them but I am bound to be their friend. One of them, and I will take care always to remember it, has been as great a friend to me as to himself; the other, as I will try to forget, was a better friend to himself than to me.

Cicero's excusatio proceeds through a nebulous path, blurring some temporal lines, and pushing the boundaries of his renewed political life. Does Pompey's support in 57 really amount to proof that he was not offended by Cicero's verses in 58? It is a huge risk, of course, if it turns out that Pompey really does hate those lines; hence, the self-abasement, sliding down the scale from non dicam amicissimi all the way down to in hominis caput.

That this sort of quasi-apology strains modern credulity is owing to the reluctance on the part of Roman elite to admit mistakes into their concept of self. Where the modern apology in its fullest form requires the person to split themselves in two, and act out the parts of both the guilty person and judge who disapproves of the offense and reaffirms the rule that has been broken, Romans tend to persist in defensive facework rather than
apologizing.\footnote{Goffman (1971) 108-113. Scodel (2008) notes the absence of modern apologies in the Homeric poems and compares their quasi-apologies to "the inadequate apologies that are so familiar a feature of modern public life" 95.}

Willingness to forget past differences, which played a large part in Cicero's reconciliation with Caesar (\textit{id quod obliviscar}; \textit{Pis. 80}), allowed the Roman elite to take massive shortcuts through the corrective process. Just as the Homeric heroes are able to shift the blame for their offences onto the jealousy of the gods or onto anger as an impersonal force, the Roman elite can move from enmity to friendship without making offerings or pondering acceptance at length:

\begin{quote}
Deinde hoc ita fit ut viri fortes, etiam si ferro inter se comminus decertarint, tamen illud contentionis odium simul cum ipsa pugna armisque deponant. Neque me ille odisse potuit umquam, ne tum quidem cum dissidebamus. Habet hoc virtus, quam tu ne de facie quidem nosti, ut viros fortis species eius et pulchritudo etiam in hoste posita delectet. (\textit{Pis. 81})
\end{quote}

But this is a common state of things, that brave men, even after they have fought together in close combat sword in hand, still lay aside the hostility of the contest at the same time that they cease from the battle itself, and lay down their arms. Nor, indeed, was he ever able to hate me, not even when we were most at variance. Virtue, which you do not even know by sight, has this quality, that its appearance and beauty delight brave men even when existing in an enemy.
Reconciliations of this sort occur only at the highest levels and Cicero presents his reconciliation with Caesar as a healing of the past wounds of the republic, *rei publicae praeterita fata Pis.* 82. Competition breeds hostility, but when all is said and done, it is virtue and courage that bring men back together in friendship. Blame is shifted onto the *contentionis odium* and forgotten with the past. Piso, in Cicero’s opinion, does not have the right qualities for this form of face-saving realignment and is incapable of understanding it. While the expression *arma deponent* implies a mutual and equal withdrawal from the contest, Cicero elsewhere applies the same ideas to the decisive outcomes of the gladiatorial arena: "it is natural for us even to dislike the quaking suppliant who craves permission to live, while we are anxious to save the courageous and spirited who hotly offer themselves to death" (*timidos atque supplices et ut vivere liceat obsecrantis etiam odisse solemus, fortis atque animosos et se acriter ipsos morti offerentis servare cupimus; Mil. 92).

It is with these biases in mind that we may begin to fully appreciate the cross-cultural limitations of modern concepts of the apology. Goffman details the elements of the apology as follows:

- expression of embarrassment and chagrin;
- clarification that one knows what conduct had been expected and sympathizes with the application of negative sanction;
- verbal rejection, repudiation and disavowal of the wrong way of
behaving along with vilification of the self that so behaved; espousal of the right way and an avowal henceforth to pursue that course; performance of penance and the volunteering of restitution.\textsuperscript{97}

At first sight, Cicero’s depictions of Piso as timid and trembling seem to fit Goffman’s definition of the offering/self-abasement component of apology. Indeed, in the final sections of the \textit{In Pisonem}, Cicero suggests that Piso condemns himself, a kind of apologetic behaviour involving the constraints of a guilty conscience. To begin with, Cicero considers Piso's actions as proconsul in Macedonia as a sign of madness and a guilty conscience: "What is madness if it is not blindness to the claims of our fellow-men, of the laws, of the Senate, of society? (\textit{quid est aliud furere? non cognoscere homines, non cognoscere leges, non senatum, non civitatem}, 47). Piso disbanded his army without authorization from the Senate or any precedent for doing so, and this primarily provides the proof that his mind has been unseated by his guilt. When we return to this theme in the exordium, we find that Piso is now split in two, and the part which has been blinded to the laws and society is now being judged by a second self which hates and condemns the wrong-doing of the former self: Ex illo fonte et seminario triumpharum cum arida folia laureae rettulisses, cum ea ad portam abiecta ad portam reliquisti, tum tu ipse de te 'fecisse videri' pronuntiavisti, (And when from that famous source and well-spring of triumphs you brought back to us a few withered laurels which you cast away and abandoned by the gate, then too out of your own mouth you uttered against yourself the

\textsuperscript{97} Goffman (1971), 112.
word “guilty”) 97; *qui se ipse oderit...qui se ipse condemnet*, (when you loathe your own self... when you condemn yourself) 98; *a te ipso desperatum et relictum*, (abandoned and despair of even by you yourself) 99. Through this device of having Piso pass judgement on himself, Cicero shifts attention away from Piso’s challenge to prosecute. Why should Cicero leave it to the courts that acquitted Catiline and Clodius to decide Piso's guilt and punishment, when Piso has already passed judgment on himself?

Each of the various modes of attack Cicero employs in the speech contribute to this overarching goal of convincing his audience that Piso has completely lost face and has in effect already been punished for his many offenses to the social order. As brilliant as this strategy is, it still does not completely dis-spell the threat of Piso's challenge to prosecute, since Cicero must still admit that he is unwilling take this step. The face Cicero saves for himself in denying Piso's challenge, is also the face he loses when he admits that his prosecution of Piso will not continue any farther. It's a sour-grapes situation: Cicero cannot risk prosecuting or threatening Caesar's son-in-law any further, so he claims that his opponent is already ruined.

The threateningly urgent and unavoidable character of this conflict for both men has been made abundantly evident. Piso, for his part, sacrificed his claims to a triumph in order to confront Cicero in the Senate rather than waiting outside the *pomerium*. Cicero equally anticipated the opportunity of revenge by loading his post-Reditum oratory with lengthy narratives of his exile and invective against the treacherous consuls and the monstrous
tribune of 58. For all this determination and mutual fatefulness, it remains a challenge to determine both the outcome and the consequences of this specific contest. Cicero brilliance as an attacker in the In Pisonem leaves little doubt about his ability to wound Piso. But as persuasive as the attack may have been, Cicero ultimately failed to influence Caesar's view of Piso and Piso was able to comfortably continue in his role as father-in-law. One would think that Caesar, a man who divorced his wife in the aftermath of the Bona Dea scandal because he felt that “Caesar's wife must be above suspicion”, would have acted accordingly if he felt that his name and family honour had been similarly contaminated by Piso's disgrace at the hands of Cicero. Evidently, he didn't. On the other, despite Cicero's glowing presentation of himself as a hero who saved Rome twice, it's hard to see any immediate gain in his status in the Senate. Furthermore, after publicly prosecuting Piso and his allies for more than a year, it is difficult to believe that his decision not to pursue Piso in the law-courts would not entail a loss of face. Piso called his bluff. Finally, Cicero's reluctant defense of Gabinius at the request of Pompey two years later underscores the hollowness of Cicero's victory over his enemies in the text of the In Pisonem.
This thesis set out to explore the conflict between Piso and Cicero in the *In Pisonem*. I have argued that when the *In Pisonem* is viewed as a 'character contest', the conflict between Piso and Cicero appears to have been both unavoidable and yet inconclusive, despite evidence of Cicero's victory in the speech itself. While Cicero's attack on Piso displays superior rhetorical skill, humour and poise the fact that Piso responded to the publication of the *In Pisonem* by publishing his own speech demonstrates that he was able to continue his side of the battle beyond Cicero's apparent victory. Although Cicero can claim a victory as the 'manifest outcome' of the Senate debate, it is clear that 'interpretological outcomes' came into play on both sides. Piso's persistence in the quarrel permits him a secondary claim to victory when Cicero, believing he has already won, decides not to respond. Comparison with Cicero's handling of Clodius' victory in the Bona Dea scandal reinforces the importance of interpretation in determining the outcomes of invective contests. Win or lose, Roman orators will put the best face on their performance and emerge relatively unscathed from the 'character contests' in which their careers seem to hang in the balance. Piso's success in the conflict is seen as well in his continuation as Caesar's father-in-law, a role that Cicero clearly attempted to put in jeopardy in his attack. In this regard, Goffman's account of 'character contest' has proven a reliable guide to understanding the grey areas which obscure the outcome of the conflict.

The relevance of 'face' to the analysis of the social emotions of the Roman elite has been
well documented in current scholarship. As I have argued, both positive and negative aspects of face are evidenced in the *In Pisonem*. Cicero's rivalry with Piso's positive face-claims constitutes a major component of Cicero's attack on Piso and of his own self-presentation as the ideal consul as well. Goffman's understanding of 'face' also encompasses the important role of physical appearance in Cicero's attack on Piso. Piso's deceptive appearances have mislead the Senate and people of Rome into accepting his upright appearances as evidence of strong character. According to the rhetorical handbooks, the best way to attack an opponent who appears blameless is to claim that his appearances are hypocritical. This ancient precept finds a modern explanation in Goffman's observation that individuals tend to be accepted on the basis of a small number of positive attributes, an acceptance that is dramatically reversed when contradictory information comes to light. In Piso's case, his refusal of a triumph seems to be the smoking gun that Cicero hopes will call all of Piso's positive attributes in question.

The strongest possible form of verbal attack from the point of view of face in a Roman context are the animal insults that Cicero hurls against Piso in the *In Pisonem*. I argue that Cicero's identification of *verecondia* in his philosophical writings as a quintessentially human emotion, which separates men from animals and constitutes the fundamental building block of human civilization, is essential for understanding his use of animal insults in his *contumelia* against Piso. Nonetheless, Cicero's cautions against the overuse of *contumelia* are applicable to his own attack on Piso and he does appear to

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98 Nisbet, (1961) 195; Cic. *de inventione* 2.34 *nam eum ante celasse, nunc manifesto teneri* (“for formerly he was hidden, but now his ways are to be made known”); *rhet.ad.Her.2.5 illum ante occultasse sua flagitia* (“that man formerly had concealed his vices”).
take a significant risk in applying these abusive terms to his opponent. In the context of aggressive facework however, such risks are inevitable and may have the effect of making Cicero appear even more courageous in his attack on Piso, since he is willing to risk offending his audience. The tolerance of Senate audiences for abusive language is a mitigating factor here, and Cicero's confidence in applying these terms to Piso was likely well-founded in his own experience as a speaker in the Senate.

The analysis of facework in the text offers a number of important insights into the social practices surrounding Roman orator's use of invective. In the first place, I have argued that the boisterous outcries and heckling of Late Republican audiences represented a significant challenge to the orator's face. Orators, like Pompey, who able to recover from outcries of their audience were seen as courageous, while those who succumbed were seen as timid and lacking in courage. Cicero's own style of orator was explicitly intended to emotionally overwhelm both audience and opponent with its 'fiery words'. Nonetheless, Cicero was himself occasionally overwhelmed by his audience and unable to deliver his oratory, as was seen in his inability to deliver his defense of Milo due to his fear of Pompey's soldiers. In verbal battles such as the altercatio between Clodius and Cicero in 62, poise appears to have been a decisive factor in winning the contest. Cicero's skill in riposte and wit enabled him to out-maneuver his opponent.

My analysis of avoidance processes used by Piso and Cicero in the speech revealed a rich and varied set of practices. In the first place, practices of over-looking enabled orators to
avoid threatening situations but left them vulnerable to forms of aggressive facework, when these were later pointed out: Cicero's encounter with Piso outside the drinking den illustrates the how cooperative facework which allowed Piso's public drunkenness to go unnoticed at the time of the encounter, could later be aggressively renewed as a face-threat in the context of Cicero's invective against Piso. Cicero's own avoidance processes took the form of re-interpretation of his humiliating departure from Rome as a heroic sacrifice which saved the city from a prolonged civil war. Also of importance as avoidance processes are the excuses Cicero offers for Pompey and Caesar's failure to help or even meet with him during the crisis. Piso's awareness of this maneuver formed an powerful argument in his attack on Cicero. Finally, Cicero's impersonation of Piso offers his audience a revealing glimpse into the 'real' reasons for Piso's refusal of a triumph. Clearly, avoidance processes offered the orator a rich field for attack, defense and protection of the faces of others. Indeed, further study of how avoidance processes are employed in other contexts, such as Cicero's defense speeches and more broadly in the training of orators appears to be significant avenue for future study.

The corrective processes, as I have argued, have provided a deeper understanding of both Piso's attack on Cicero and of Cicero's strategy in his own invective against Piso. Piso's complaint about Cicero's previous attacks on his reputation represent a clear call for corrective action. It is important to recognize that Cicero's attacks on his absent enemies could be seen as a risky and unethical provocation by his audience. While his infraction is relatively minor in comparison with the injury Cicero has suffered at the hands of his
enemies, offending Piso was a necessary step in bringing about the contest when Cicero refused to acknowledge Piso's complaints or to offer an excuse or apology for his offensive behaviour. Applying Goffman's framework here proved problematic, however, since, like the Homeric heroes Ruth Scodel analyzed in her study, Roman orators do not seem to offer full apologies in the modern sense. Cicero's abbreviated apology to Pompey for his offending verses ‘cedant arma togae’ provides the most complete example in the speech, but lacks the step of acknowledging responsibility for the offense since Cicero refuses to accept that Pompey actually was offended by his self-aggrandizing poetry. Cicero's reconciliation with Caesar offers an example of how elite Romans were capable of mutually laying aside their differences and offer acceptance without the conditional expectation that the offender should be punished or debase himself. The expressions of self-debasement and condemnation expected in the modern apology are problematic in the context of Late Republican invective. Piso's self-condemnation is interpreted as signs of guilt and madness, and his timid, fearful figure is seen as pathetic rather than contrite. The focus of this study on invective has limited my survey of evidence for corrective processes in other contexts in Roman social life. Situating Goffman's corrective processes and the modern apology in a specifically Roman context would be a fascinating field for future research.

While Goffman's framework yields many vital insights into the social processes and strategies employed in the contest between Piso and Cicero, it is largely unresponsive to the problem of Cicero's social mobility. The In Pisonem is clearly an important document
of Cicero's understanding of his condition as a *novus homo*, but Goffman's theory approaches participants in 'character contest' as social equals. Piso's resilience in the conflict and Cicero’s victory might be still better understood in future studies by expanding the sociological framework to include theories of class difference and social mobility.

In conclusion, Goffman's theory of face and the social processes of facework have offered many important insights into the *In Pisonem*. Concern for face was paramount for both Piso and Cicero in their conflict. The fact that they both seem to have preserved positive images of themselves throughout their costly and risky conflict is a testament to the vitality and social value of rhetoric in Late Republican senatorial culture. The insights offered by Goffman's 'character contest' provide an important way to move beyond 'zero-sum' concepts of honour towards a more nuanced appreciation of invective as a flexible and creative strategy through which Roman elites were able to confront their differences and establish their reputations within a highly competitive social environment.
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