

1 Arpinum and Rome

Marcus Tullius Cicero was born on 3 January 106 BC at the family home just outside Arpinum, a Volscian hill town some 70 miles south-east of Rome. The citizens of that *municipium* had received Roman citizenship in 188. Cicero's family belonged to the local nobility and had connections with leading political figures in Rome. His municipal origin would define and haunt Cicero's life and career and differentiate him from, for example, his life-long friend and confidant, Titus Pomponius Atticus, who was a Roman born and bred. This becomes clear from a number of incidents in Cicero's life and in a dialogue, *On the Laws*, which he composed in the late 50s, and in which he portrays himself walking with Atticus around his country estate. Cicero will have received his earliest education (alphabet, reading, writing and elementary mathematics) at home – his father was a devoted student of literature and keenly interested in his sons' education – and possibly at a local school in Arpinum.



Italy: physical features and regions.

3 MARCUS Now, when it is possible for me to get away for more days, especially at this time of year, I make for the beauty and the healthy climate of this place, though it is seldom possible. But there is in fact another reason that gives me pleasure, which does not apply to you, Titus.

ATTICUS And what is that? 5

MARCUS This is, to tell the truth, my own and my brother's real fatherland. Here are the most ancient roots from which we are descended; here are our family shrines, here our family, here the many traces of our ancestors. Furthermore this house, as you now see it, was enlarged through the efforts of my father; because he was of weak health he 10 passed almost all his time here in literary studies. But in this very place, while my grandfather was alive and the house was small in the ancient fashion, like that house of **Curius** among the Sabines, I tell you I was born. And so something exists and lies hidden in my mind and consciousness, which, perhaps, makes this place give me more 15 pleasure ...

5 ATTICUS I am quite delighted to have made its acquaintance too. But that remark that you made a moment ago that this place – for I assume you were speaking about Arpinum – is your real fatherland: what did you mean? Do you have two fatherlands, or is there one that we 20 share? Was the fatherland of wise old **Cato**, perhaps, not Rome but Tusculum?



In this family shrine from the house of the Vettii at Pompeii, the father is in the centre, making an offering to the household gods, who stand on either side of him holding drinking horns. Underneath, the sacred serpent is about to consume an offering laid out for it.

Curius Manius Curius Dentatus, early Roman hero, four times consul, noted general, who conquered the Sabines and was renowned for his rectitude and frugality; he was much admired by the elder Cato.

Cato the elder Cato, Marcus Porcius Cato, 'Cato the Censor' (234–149 BC), a dominant and influential figure in the political and cultural life of his age.

MARCUS I really think that both Cato and all those who come from the *municipia* have **two fatherlands**, the one by birth, another through citizenship: in the same way that Cato, although he was born at 25 Tusculum, was admitted into the citizenship of the Roman people, so that, though he was by birth a Tusculan and by citizenship a Roman, he had one fatherland through birth and another through law ... But it is necessary that the land whose name, *respublica*, embraces the whole citizen body should take precedence in our affection; for 30 it we ought to die and to it we should give ourselves completely; and in it we ought to place and, as it were, to consecrate everything we have. But the land that gave us birth is almost as sweet as the one that admitted us. Thus I will never deny that this is my fatherland, though that other one is the greater and this one is contained within it. 35

Cicero, On the Laws 2.3–5

- 1 Cicero was born in a country town, which was a disadvantage in his pursuit of a political career in the city of Rome. Does the place of one's birth have any such advantage or disadvantage today?
- 2 Do you feel any particular devotion to the place of your birth? If so, why?
- 3 Can you imagine any circumstances in which your loyalty to your locality (e.g. home, town, province, county, state) could come into conflict with your duty to your country?

two fatherlands perhaps 'homelands' would be better. Cicero states explicitly that a Roman citizen may possess only one citizenship, that is, Roman citizenship: 'under our civil law no Roman citizen is able to be a citizen of two states' (Cicero, *Balbus* 28). However, as Cicero makes clear, citizens of municipal and Italian background might nonetheless retain strong ties with the place of their birth; in a letter of early 46 Cicero declares: 'while it is my habit to look after my fellow townsmen, I have a particular concern and responsibility towards them this year. It is my wish that my son, my nephew, and a very close friend of mine, Marcus Caesius, should be appointed aediles to set the affairs of the *municipium* in order' (Cicero, *Friends* 13.11.3 (278)). (There are four collections of Cicero's letters: to *Atticus*, to his *Friends*, to his brother *Quintus*, and to *M. Brutus*. In every case the traditional reference is followed in brackets by the number in the various editions and translations by D. R. Shackleton Bailey, the most convenient and complete of which is the Loeb Classical Library edition, 1999–2000.) Three aediles were the chief magistrates at Arpinum. The enfranchisement of all Italy, following the Social War of 90–89 BC, gradually loosened these ties, though even in the first century AD men such as Pliny the Younger could use their wealth to benefit their municipal birthplace – in his case with a library and welfare for children of the poor.

Education in Rome

By the late 90s BC, when Cicero was in his teens, his father had taken him and his brother, Quintus Tullius Cicero, some three or four years his junior, to Rome so that they could receive a suitable education to enable them to enter public life. Here the brothers continued their studies of Greek and Latin language and literature and began to study rhetoric, law and philosophy. Their father had ambitions and aspirations for his sons; his connections put them in the household of the great orator, **Lucius Licinius Crassus**. They received further education from Crassus and from **Marcus Antonius**, another noted orator.

- 1 When we were boys, **my dear Quintus**, there was a widespread opinion, if you recall, that L. Crassus had attained no more learning than he had been able to get from the elementary instruction of a boy of his time, while M. Antonius had been wholly ignorant and without education. There were many people who did not think such was the case but made such statements about those orators as I have stated, 5 so that they might more easily deter us from being taught when we were fired with enthusiasm for oratory. If men without education had achieved the highest level of proficiency and unbelievable eloquence, then all our hard work might appear pointless and the attention of our father, an excellent and most sensible man, to our education might seem stupid. As boys we used to prove such people wrong 10 using witnesses from our own homes – our father, our relative Gaius Aculeo, and our uncle Lucius Cicero: our father and Aculeo – he was married to our mother’s sister and Crassus held him in the very highest regard – and our uncle, who had gone abroad with Antonius to Cilicia and returned home from service with him, often told us many things about Crassus, his application to study and his learning. 15 In the company of our cousins, the sons of Aculeo and our aunt, we were not only studying such subjects as Lucius Crassus considered suitable but were also being instructed **by those teachers who were in his circle**; being in his house we often realized – even as boys we were able to appreciate it – that he spoke Greek

Lucius Licinius Crassus Crassus (140–91 BC), outstanding and influential orator, teacher of the young and ambitious. He was consul in 95 with Mucius Scaevola *pontifex* (the priest). In politics he seems to have been in favour of reform, supporting the proposal to enfranchise the Italians.

Marcus Antonius grandfather of the triumvir Marcus Antonius, he was consul in 99 BC, a distinguished orator who opposed Greek influence. He did not write down his speeches but composed an unfinished work on public speaking; Cicero listened to him and made him one of the principal speakers in his work *On the Orator*. He was killed in Rome in 87.

my dear Quintus Cicero’s younger brother is the addressee of the dialogue, *On the Orator*.

by those teachers who were in his circle one of these teachers, the poet Licinius Archias, was apparently a great influence upon the young Cicero; some thirty years later Cicero defended him in court when he was charged with falsely assuming Roman citizenship.

in such a way that he seemed to know no other language; and that when he put
 topics by way of enquiry to our teachers, and in every discussion where he himself
 dealt with topics, there seemed nothing novel to him, nothing he had not heard
 3 of. We had often heard from our uncle, a man of great culture, how Antonius
 had devoted himself to conversations with the most learned men in Athens or
 at Rhodes. As a young lad I myself often put questions on many subjects to him, 25
 so far as the modesty of one entering upon manhood allowed. What I write will
 certainly be no news to you, for you often heard it from me at that time: as a result
 of many varied conversations I considered him neither untaught nor ignorant of
 any topic among subjects on which I could have any opinion.

Cicero, *On the Orator* 2.1–3

- 1 What, if any, are the requirements today for a political career? How important is the ability to speak well?
- 2 What did the Romans see as the purpose of education? Are there any modern parallels?
- 3 In Rome the government appeared to play little or no part in education. Why do you think this wasn't considered part of the state's duty towards its young citizens? Why do modern governments play a part in the educational system?

Education in the law

A young man aspiring to a career in politics needed training and education in public speaking and in the law. Cicero describes his legal education.

- 1 Now, having assumed the *toga virilis*, I had been introduced by my father to *Scaevola* the augur on the understanding that, so far as I was permitted and he would allow it, I should never leave the old man's side. And so I used to commit to memory many of his clever arguments and many of his brief and fitting comments and I was keen to become more learned from his wisdom. After his 5 death I took myself to *Scaevola the pontifex*, who I venture to declare was for ability and integrity the outstanding man in our state ...

toga virilis the toga of manhood, which a young man assumed on reaching the age of 16; in 90 BC this event perhaps occurred on 17 March, the traditional day for this family ceremony.

Scaevola Quintus Mucius Scaevola, the augur, born c.170 BC, learned in law, consul 117. He was now an old man and died after 88. He appears in several of Cicero's dialogues, including that *On Friendship*, the topic which 'was on the lips of many people'.

Scaevola the pontifex Quintus Mucius Scaevola the *pontifex* (priest), born about 140 BC, nephew of the augur. He became a priest following the death of his father in 115 and head of the priestly college in 89. He was a noted specialist in law and a teacher, and was consul with Crassus in 95, when they enacted a law removing illegal immigrants from Rome, an immediate cause of the Social War. He was murdered on the orders of the consul, Marius the younger, in 82.

- 2 I have many frequent recollections of the augur but one in particular: when he was sitting at home on a semicircular bench, I and just a few of his close friends were with him; he entered upon a topic of discussion which about that time was 10 on the lips of many people.

Cicero, On Friendship 1–2

- Do you have any vivid recollections of a learning experience such as that described by Cicero at the end of the passage?

Cicero in the household of Scaevola

An anecdote records how Cicero met and listened to the women within the household: 'I often heard **Laelia**, the daughter of **Gaius**, speak; I saw that her speech was coloured by the good taste of her father and that of her daughters, the **Mucia**e, with both of whom I had conversation' (Cicero, *Brutus* 211).

- Roman women as a rule had no formal education beyond the elementary stage. Why do you think this was?
- How do you imagine the women in the household of Scaevola became such engaging conversational partners?

The timely death of Licinius Crassus

Cicero, a devoted pupil, wrote an obituary of his revered teacher and believed that his death was a benefit for Crassus in that he avoided the dreadful times that followed, which the teenage Cicero experienced.

His death brought grief to his own family, distress to his native land, pain to all *boni*. Such, however, have been the disasters befalling the *respublica* that I think it was not life the immortal gods snatched from L. Crassus but death that they gave him as a present. He did not live to see Italy ablaze with war, the senate

Laelia daughter of Laelius, wife of Quintus Mucius Scaevola the augur; her style of speech and that of her daughters attracted the young Cicero when he met them in the house of Scaevola.

Gaius Gaius Laelius, influential political and cultural figure of the second century BC, nicknamed 'the wise'. He was a noted orator, consul in 140, and died after 129.

Muciae the two daughters of Q. Mucius Scaevola and Laelia, the elder of whom married L. Crassus, the revered teacher of Cicero; Crassus elsewhere remarks that she retained an old-style pronunciation, a consequence of the fact that women did not converse with a large number of people, and that her speech was neat, even and smooth (see Cicero, *On the Orator* 3.45).

aflame with malice, the leaders of the state on trial for a wicked crime, his daughter's grief, his son-in-law's exile, **C. Marius**' dreadful flight, the savage and indiscriminate massacre on his return; lastly, he did not see the state, in which at its most flourishing stage he had stood much the most distinguished citizen, now disfigured in every aspect.

Cicero, *On the Orator* 3.8

Cicero, for whatever reason, records little detail of these years. It is hard to appreciate what it must have been like for the young Cicero, but imagine being a teenager in Berlin in 1944–5 or in Beirut in 2006 or Gaza in 2007.

The Social War, 91–89 BC



Romans, Latins and Italian allies before the Social War of 91–89 BC.

C. Marius seven times consul, the greatest general of his age, having most recently annihilated a German invasion (102–101 BC); now in his late sixties, he wished to be the commander of Roman forces against Mithradates.

The tribune **Drusus** had proposed in 91 BC to give the Italian allies Roman citizenship, which they had sought for three decades. They desired equality with Roman citizens and to share the benefits of the empire which they had helped to build by their service in the armies. The Romans, elite and plebs alike, opposed this aspiration of their allies, and Drusus' proposal was not put to the vote. He was assassinated, whereupon the Italians rose in revolt. Bitter and bloody fighting followed. Cicero was obliged to do **military service** and served in 89 in the armies of **Sulla** in the south and then with the consul **Pompeius Strabo** in the north.

For a short time he did military service under Sulla in the war against the **Marsi**.

Plutarch, Cicero 3.2

I remember meetings with the bitterest enemies and with citizens in the most violent disagreement. Cn. Pompeius, son of Sextus, the consul, held a parley with P. Vettius Scato, the leader of the Marsi, between the two camps in my presence, when I was a new recruit in his army. I recall that Sextus Pompeius, the brother of the consul and a man of learning and good sense, came from Rome especially for the meeting. Scato greeted him and asked, 'What am I to call you?' The latter replied, 'I wish it were a friend, but it has to be an enemy.' It was a fair-minded meeting, no fear, no suspicion lurking beneath the surface; even the animosity was restrained; for the allies were not seeking to take our citizenship away from us but to be admitted into it.

10

Cicero, Philippic 12.27

Drusus M. Livius Drusus, noble, tribune in 91, introduced a raft of proposals, of which the enfranchisement of the allies was the key element.

military service it was the custom for those aspiring to political life to do military service before formally embarking on a political career, though by the late Republic many no longer performed the required ten years: this very brief period of service during the Social War, which – so he claims – he somehow managed to combine with his studies, was Cicero's only military experience until he commanded troops as governor of Cilicia in 51–50.

Sulla Lucius Cornelius Sulla, consul in 88, commander against Mithradates in the East 87–84 and dictator 82–80.

Pompeius Strabo Gnaeus Pompeius Strabo, consul in 89, father of Pompeius Magnus ('the Great'); a man of ambivalent character and reputation, he died of illness in 88, having connived at the death of a successor.

Marsi the Italian people who were the core and leaders of the rising against the Romans in 91–89; initially they gave their name to the Marsic war; it was later known as the Social War (from the Latin *socius* meaning 'ally').

In 90 and 89 BC laws were passed to give the Italians citizenship and, though sporadic fighting continued, the Romans ended the war by conceding the demands of their allies. The nobility tried to minimize the consequences by restricting the voting power of the new citizens; thus there was another cause of political dispute. But the enfranchisement of all Italy south of the river Po was a watershed in the history of Rome, and the consequences were to be worked out gradually over succeeding generations. Regional differences in identity, ethnicity and language continued to exist and it was only in the nineteenth century AD that Italy became a united nation state. One immediate consequence of the Social War concerned the army: recruits, who were in the main drawn from rural Italy, were now no longer allies but Roman citizens, and their payment devolved upon the Roman treasury.

- The twenty-first century is witnessing diverse tendencies: on the one hand there is the continued growth of the European Community, 27 states in 2007, while on the other hand there is some pressure to break up into nations (e.g. the push in Scotland and Northern Ireland for greater independence from the United Kingdom, and similarly for independence for Quebec in Canada, the Basques in Spain, the Kurds in Iraq). What was so special about Roman citizenship that led the Italian peoples to fight so vigorously to obtain it?

Wartime education: oratory, law and philosophy

Cicero's late teens were disturbed times for Rome and Italy: there was hostility towards the allies and disagreements about how to handle their demands. While he tried to continue his studies in law, politics and rhetoric for a career in public life, he had been obliged to do military service, but the description of his life at this period, which he wrote in the *Brutus* in 46 BC, makes no mention at all of his time in the army. We must presume he did not find it or the period congenial; he certainly hated war and always sought to resolve political disputes by negotiation. He does, however, recall the practice of military training when defending a protégé, in 56.

When I was a young man, one year was set aside for **keeping our arms in our togas** and we used to undergo physical exercise and training in the **campus** in our tunics; and if we began our military service immediately, it was the same procedure in camp and on active service.

Cicero, *Caelius* 11

keeping our arms in our togas no extravagant gestures, under military discipline, on probation.

campus military training ground in the Campus Martius outside the walls of the city.