1. Introduction

1.1. Gaius Verres

Cf. Jens Bartels’s entry in Brill’s New Pauly:

- ~ 115–43 B.C.
- Son of the senator C. Verres and (arguably) one Tadia
- Largely known from Cicero’s speeches in 70 B.C.
- 84 B.C. quaestor to the Marian consul Papirius Carbo
- 83 B.C. joined Sulla’s ranks
- 80 B.C. Legate to Cn Cornelius Dolabella, proconsul of Cilicia
- [75 B.C. Cicero quaestor in Sicily]
- 74 B.C. praetor urbanus
- 73–71 B.C. propraetor (~ provincial governor) of Sicily (i.e. during the Third Servile war [Spartacus!])
- 70 B.C. trial, then exile in Massilia (Marseille)
- 43 B.C. proscribed by Mark Antony, killed subsequently

1.2. Cicero’s Speeches Against Verres

- Against Q. Caecilius – claiming the prosecution for himself
- In Verrem I – Accusation, discussing the danger for the senatorial jury to lose face if they came to the wrong conclusions, deviating from the established procedure of a speech duel by introducing witnesses at this point. This was to avoid a scenario in which the defence were given the opportunity to drag out the process on end
- (Verres gives up – unclear whether or not a speech in his defence was given by Hortensius, Cicero’s opponent, at the time; cf. Alexander, Hortensius’ speech [in bibliography])
- Cicero subsequently publishes the Actio Secunda (In Verrem II) in five books, in which he has collected and arranged the list of Verres’ misdeeds

2. The Content of Cic. Verr. 2.1.53 ff.

2.1. The Structure of Cic. Verr. 2.1

| 1–32 | Introduction |
| 32–34 | Structure of the entire actio secunda |
| 34–158 | Main part |
| | 34–43 | Quaestorship |
| | 44–102 | Proquaestorship in Cilicia |
| | 103–158 | Praetorship |

2.2. The Structure of Cic. Verr. 2.1.44–102

| 44–102 | Proquaestorship in Cilicia |
| 44–45 | Crimes in Achaea |
2.3. The Structure of Cic. Verr. 2.1.53–69

(49)–61 Crimes in Asia Minor

(…)

53 Aspendos
54 Perge
55 Historical precedence I: older exempla
56 Historical precedence II: recent exempla
57 Verres’ crimes incomparable in scale
58 Verres’ attempts to defend himself are void
59 Verres’ behaviour is dangerous to the Roman nation
60 Verres’ accounting system does not stand trial
61 Even the existing accounts are useless

62–(85) Lampsacus scandal

62 Introduction: giving motivation to a particularly wicked example
63 Setting the scene: Lampsacus
64 Introducing the main characters: Philodamus and Rubirius
65 Exposition: the dinner party
66 Rubirius causes a scandal, asking Philodamus’ daughter to join the party
67 Catastrophe: tumultuous scenes at the party, Lampsacenes support Philodamus
68 Aftermath: Lampsacenes seek revenge
69 Roman expatriates try to mitigate

3. Unpicking Cicero’s Rhetoric

Tentative definition of rhetoric:

Rhetoric is a purpose-driven, target-oriented form of human communicative behaviour, aiming for success, effectiveness, and persuasion (as well as the theoretical study of said behaviour).

3.1. Verres as a Creative Accountant. Audiatur et altera pars – but how?

Cicero feigns his upset about Verres’ accounting system, claiming that Verres deliberately obfuscates the origin of the artworks in his possession:


[60] Hic ego non arbitror illum negaturum signa se plurima, tabulas pictas innumerabiles habere; sed, ut opinor, solet haec quae rapuit et furatus est non numquam dieere se emisse, quoniam quidem in Achaia, Asiam, Pamphylia sumptu publico et legationis nomine mercator signorum tabularumque pictarum missus est. XXIII. Habeo et iustus et patris eius tabulas omnes, quas diligentissime legi atque digestis, patris quoad vivit, tuae quoad ait te confitesci.

[1] The pop. have accepti after eius: Petronius retains it and omits Habeo.

Now I do not suppose that Verres will at this point deny that he has numerous statues, and more pictures than he can count, in his possession. But I understand it to be his habit now and then to assert that these objects, which he has stolen by force or fraud, have really been bought. It would appear that he was sent out to Achaia and Asia and Pamphylia, at the national expense and with the title of assistant governor, in order to engage in the statue and picture trade. XXIII. Both his own accounts and his father’s have come into my hands; I have read and studied them carefully; the father’s up to the day of his death, his own for the period during which he claims to have kept them. For
What does Cicero actually claim here?

- Cicero accepts that people either keep accounts of their transactions or not, but he finds it hard to believe that someone stops doing so (n.b. the year in question in ch. 60 is 73 B.C., i.e. the year in which Verres went to Sicily).
- However, this is irrelevant for the current section, as accounts exist for this period.
- There are some acquisitions unaccounted for in the existing documents for which one would assume to find records. The insinuation is: this proves Verres' guilt.

Interestingly enough, Cicero takes a rather different line in his speech Pro M. Fonteio, just one year after the Verres trial (69 B.C.). The Pro M. Fonteio presents another extortion case, with the small, yet important difference that Cicero is now the defence lawyer. When it comes to questionable practices in the accounting system, Cicero claims that these are just that: practices.


So how is this substantially different from Verres? How does this justify different treatment?

The answer may lie in another statement made in the Pro M. Fonteio – it depends on whom you extort:
So – how robust is this system? How meaningful is Cicero’s accusation?

3.2. The Lampsacus episode

Cf. Steel, Being Economical with the Truth [in bibliography]

- Note that no express claim is made for Verres’ presence at the dinner party: Cicero merely insinuates Verres’ agreement and involvement
- Cicero fabricates a strange unity between the actions of Verres’ staff and Verres’ own intentions. Beyond the episode related in ch. 62–69, one must also wonder if there is any actual connection between the dinner party episode and a subsequent trial at which Verres punishes Philodamus and his son

Despite the rhetorical design of the passage under consideration, an important question must be asked: is ‘oratory’ even the right category for the *actio secunda*?

→ Was Cicero, in addition to career considerations, simply interested in the creation of ‘archival truth’ (in which aim he seems largely to have succeeded)?

4. Digging Deeper – and a Potential Response to Cicero

4.1. Could Verres in fact at certain times have tried to achieve something positive...

Cf. R. Schulz, Herrschaft und Regierung: Roms Regiment in den Provinzen in der Zeit der Republik, Paderborn 1997, who argues that during his term in Sicily Verres may have tried to achieve a more direct control and management of provincial resources by the government in Rome, thus interfering with the interests of the locals ... and their powerful patrons in Rome.

4.1. (continued:) ... but messed with the wrong people?

So is it really just the scale of Verres’ corruption that stands trial here?

An interesting clue lies in Cicero’s repeated moral judgements in ch. 55 ff., trying to claim that Verres – while he essentially did the exact same things as everyone else before him – was morally corrupt and acted selfishly rather than in the interest of the state. The question is: does Verres’ morality stand trial here, or is it something else that motivates Cicero’s claims for the moral high ground, and a very different agenda that Cicero aims to obfuscate behind his attacks?

The evidence speaks against Cicero’s moral claims as a self-serving end: in ch. 55 he refers to Lucius Mummius, the destroyer of Corinth. Outside the speeches Against Verres, however, Cicero (does seem to imply that (i) Mummius had little regard for Greek culture (cf. De Officiis 2.76) and (ii) Mummius’ ‘benefactions’ were not entirely selfless after all.

4.2. Systemic Constraints and Established Practice

- Public offices during the Roman Republic were unpaid (and did not come with support staff)
- Running for office, while important for one’s career, was often a ruinous business – to an extent that the financial exploitation of provinces became habitual to an extent that a permanent law court, the quaestio de repetundis, was established as early as 149 B.C. (as a result of the lex Calpurnia, modified by the lex Acilia repetundarum of 123/122 B.C.); the repetundarum crimen, however, has been dealt with by Roman legal institutions from at least as early as about 200 B.C.

‘Privatisation’ of Greek Art

Cf. the ‘practice’ allegedly established (?) by Marcellus in 212 B.C., ironically in the very same place where Verres is said to have committed many of his crimes: Sicily!
XL. While these things were being done in Spain, it is true that Marcellus, after the capture of Syracuse, had settled matters in general in Sicily with such conscientiousness and honesty that he added not only to his own fame, but also to the dignity of the Roman people. But as regards the adornments of the city, the statues and paintings which Syracuse possessed in abundance, he carried them away to Rome. They were spoils of the enemy, to be sure, and acquired by right of war. Yet from that came the very beginning of enthusiasm for Greek works of art and consequently of this general licence to despoil all kinds of buildings, sacred and profane, a licence which finally turned against Roman gods, and first of all against the very temple which was magnificently adorned by Marcellus. For temples dedicated by Marcus Marcellus near the Porta Capena 1 used to be visited by foreigners on account of their remarkable adornments of that kind; but of these a very small part is still to be seen.

[6] Liv. 34.4.1–4

IV. "Saepe me querentem de feminarum, saepe de virorum nec de privatorum modo sed etiam magis 2 trautum summipibus audias, diversique saevis vitis, avaria et luxuria, civitatem laborare, quae postes 3 omnia magna imperia evertunt. Hae ego, quo meliiores laetitiae in dies fortuna raet publicae est imperiiusque cresce—et iam in Graeciam Asianque transseedimus omnibus libidinum illecebris repelletas et regias etiam atrocissimae gassae—et plus horreo, ne illae magis res nos ceperint quam nos illas. 4 Infesta, milie credite, signa ab Syracusis illata sunt huie urbi. Iam nimis multos audicii Corintii et Athenarum ornamenta laudantes mirantescet et

4.3. Roman Expansion, Propaganda, and the Art Market

...but is this actually true?

Cf. Cic. Verr. 2.1.60 = item[1], above: Verres as an art merchant; cf. also reports about Verres’ Sicilian workshop in Cic. Verr. 2.4.54.
4.3. Cicero, Greek Art, and the Proverbial Glass House (Or: The Mud Campaign)


2 L. Cicero HS OCDO OCDO OCCC pro signis Megarices, ut tu ad me scripteras, curavi. Hermae tui Pentelici cum capitibus aeneis, de quibus ad me scriptisti, iam nunc me admoodum delectat. qua re velim et eos et signa et cetera quae tibi eandem loci et nostri studii et tuae elevasti eae videbuntur quam plurimae quam primumque mittas, et maxime quae tibi gymnasiis et sytique videbuntur esse. nam in eo genere sic studio effervimus, ut abs te adhucundi, ab alius prope reprehendendi simus. si Lentuli navis non erit, quae tibi placebit imponito.

[8] Cic. Att. 6(=1.9).2 S-B [67 B.C.]

I am eagerly expecting the Megarian statues and the herms you wrote to me about. Anything you may have of the same sort which you think suitable for the Academy, don’t hesitate to send it and trust my purse. This is how my fancy takes me. Things that are specially suitable for a lecture hall are what I want. Lentulus promises his ships. Please attend to this carefully.


3 Signa nostra et Hermeracetas, ut scribas, cum commodissime poteris, velim imponam, et si quid aliquid oportuerit eandem loci quem non ignoras reperies, et maxime quae tibi pa-laestrae gymnasiisque videbuntur esses. etenim ibi sedes haec ad te scribem arm, ut me locus ipse admoneret, praeterea typos tibi mando quos in tectorio atrio posito in includere et pudium sigillata duo bibliothecam tuam cave cuiquam despondeas, quamvis acerum amatorem inveneris; nam ego omnis meas vindemias eo reservoir, ut illud sub-sidum senectutis paremus.

4 De fratre, confido tua esse ut semper volui et elaboravi.

5 Yes, I should be grateful if you would ship when you most conveniently can my statues and Hercules herms and anything else you may discover that would be commodious you know where, especially things you think suitable to a palaestra and lecture hall. In fact I am sitting there now as I write, so that the place itself is a reminder. Further please get me some bas-reliefs which I can lay in the stucchi of the small entrance hall and two figured putea.2 Mind you don’t engage your library to anyone, no matter how ardent a wooer you may find. I am putting all my little gleanings aside to pay for this standby for my old age.

– Cf. also Cic. fam. 209(=7.23).1–3 S-B [46 B.C.]
Bibliography (highly selective, and – sadly – restricted to Anglophone work)