

## Consular and Poetic Vigilance in Cicero's *De Consulatu Suo* and Epigram 2 Soubiran

An epigram attributed to Cicero, preserved by Macrobius, targets the brevity of the consulship of Caninius Rebilus, suffect consul for a single day in 45 BCE, in a pair of iambic lines (Epigram 2 Soubiran = Macr. *Sat.* 2.3.6: *vigilantem habemus consulem Caninium / qui in consulatu somnum non vidit suo*). The authenticity of these verses has often been doubted, not least because the same observation is found in Cic. *Fam.* 7.30 (Cugusi; Monaco). Morelli, who believes these lines to be Ciceronian, has argued that their humor and form are closely mirrored by other late-republican invective epigrams. This, however, at best serves only to date the poem plausibly to Cicero's age. Blänsdorf also appears to agree with this periodization and places the lines among the anonymous *versus populares in Caesarem et similia* (Fr. 10, p. 197). As my paper suggests, a more compelling case for Ciceronian authorship can be made by focusing on the consular—and metapoetic—vigilance that animates the epigram's attack against Caninius.

By focusing its critique on the supposed vigilance of the suffect consul (*vigilantem habemus consulem*) and his lack of sleep (*in consulatu somnum non vidit suo*), the epigram picks up on defining facets of Cicero's own consular self-presentation, both in the Catilinarian orations (*vigilare*: 1.8, 2.19,27, 3.3; as *labor* at 2.14, 3.1, 4.1) and, more importantly, in the poem on his consulship, for which *vigilare* appears to have been something of a watchword (cf. Fr. 3 Soubiran; reception in Juv. 8.231-44, esp. 236, where the meter and sound of the line clearly evoke Cicero's poem: *sed vigilat consul vexillaque vestra coerces*). Indeed, the second line of the epigram deliberately seems to play not only on the likely title of Cicero's consular poem, via the phrase *in consulatu..suo*, but also its content, contrasting Caninius, who *somnum non vidit*, with Cicero himself, who, according to most reconstructions, spent at least some part of his poem asleep and dreaming (e.g. Büchner; Courtney; cf. Volk). Far from signaling a rest from vigilant labor, however, Cicero's dream will have instead further emphasized the consular poet's continued work on behalf of the state. Dreams after all were commonly viewed as reproducing in sleep the things with which

one was most occupied while awake (see, e.g. Cic. *Div.* 1.45; *Rep.* 6.10). Ennius, in fact, had famously made this point near the beginning of the seventh book of his *Annales*, in lines that Cicero's epigram recalls (*Ann.* 211 Skutsch: *nec quisquam sophiam, sapientia quae perhibetur, / in somnis vidit prius quam sam discere coepit*). Ennius' statement concerning his own belabored sleep formed part of the earlier poet's programmatic claim to have reinvented Roman epic through his own hellenistic philosophical and philological rigor (cf. *Ann.* 209 Skutsch: *nec dicti studiosus [quisquam erat] ante hunc*). Cicero's *De consulatu suo* reveals something much the same in its longest surviving fragment (Fr. 3 Soubiran), interweaving the consul's vigilant concern for the safety of the republic within a wider frame of deliberate learning. Cicero's intellectual efforts are explicitly invoked at lines 75-78 (see esp., *quod patriae vacat, id studiis nobisque sacra*), but are also implicitly foregrounded throughout the fragment via conscious allusions to and expansions of the poet's earlier *Aratea* (cf. Büchner; Kubiak). By making his philological and philosophical exertions the concomitants of his political efforts on behalf of the state, Cicero combines Aratean *lucubratio* and consular *vigilantia* into a mutually reinforcing whole, transforming himself into a hero, hard at work—day and night, asleep and awake—for the betterment of Rome. Mobilizing these connections in miniature, the epigram in question calls to mind the consul-poet's wakefulness in a way that underscores just how far short the consulship of Caninius Rebilus falls. Unlike the efforts of the watchful Cicero, which are portrayed as encompassing even his life and leisure before 63 BCE, the so-called vigilance of Caninius, the epigram insinuates, was really no work at all.

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