

Night, Catiline, and Sallust's Narrative Challenge to Cicero

Night and the events that occur at night play a prominent role in Sallust's narrative of the Catilinarian conspiracy and in Cicero's orations against Catiline. In this paper, I argue that the night is a narrative battleground on which Sallust vies with Cicero's account of the Catilinarian conspiracy (cf. McGushin 1977: 154; Ramsey 2007: 127-128). Sallust reconfigures the role that night plays in the conspiracy, creating in his monograph a narrative that supersedes Cicero's Catilinarian narrative. Cicero's rhetorical strategy in his speeches relies on a distinction between night and day: conspirators work at night while Cicero and his allies expose their crimes to the light of day (Habinek 1998; Mueller 2004; Welch 2005). Night, in Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae*, is a time for action – for both sides. Catiline and his allies conspire at night, but find their nocturnal actions are ineffective for numerous reasons: e.g., the arousal of suspicion (*Cat.* 42.2) or inaction (*Cat.* 27.3-28.1). Catiline's opponents find night politically efficacious, preempting the conspirators' plans with their own nocturnal action at the Mulvian Bridge (*Cat.* 45.1). But night's political efficacy for the anti-Catiline forces raises moral difficulties: the conspirators are killed on dubious grounds in the darkness of prison (*Cat.* 55.4), echoing the extra-judicial execution of Fulvius on his father's orders from earlier in the monograph (*Cat.* 39.5) (Earl 1961). Similarly, among Catiline's many vices is his ability to avoid sleep (*Cat.* 5.3, 15.4); Caesar counts the same as one of his virtues (*Cat.* 54.4) (Batstone 1988). Sallust's night directs his reader's attention to the moral tension that arises when similar men undertake ethically different action. Night's appeal to Sallust is not located in one individual's subversive exploitation of it, which is the subject of Cicero's oratory, but as a space in which men of virtue and vice contend over the political landscape of the Roman republic, the subject of Sallust's historiographical endeavor (Pagan 2004).

This paper is divided into three parts. In the first, I examine how Cicero uses light and night to shape his rhetoric of the Catilinarian conspiracy. I argue that his principal use of night is as a temporal space where evil occurs: Cicero's allies might operate at night, but he never does. It is his job as the orator to bring nocturnal actions into the light through his political actions and the process of delivering his speeches themselves. The second part of the paper turns to night in the *Bellum Catilinae*. Sallust depicts both the conspirators and the anti-conspirators as operating at night. The night is a contested space during which the fate of the Republic is battled over; likewise, the night is a contested narrative space in which Sallust rebuts Cicero's conception of the night as opposition to the deeds of the day. It is in considering this rebuttal that I turn to the third part of my paper in which I argue that Sallust's narrative vying with Cicero is a challenge to Cicero's moral conception of the Republic. For Sallust, the political realm of the late Republic is a contest between men of vice and virtue. In secluding himself from the site of that competition and sticking to the day, Cicero removes from his narrative of the conspiracy the problems of moral ambiguity. Sallust's historiographical correction to Cicero's oratorical presentation embraces night's potency in shaping Republican moral discourse.

Bibliography

- Batstone, William. 1988. "The Antithesis of Virtue: Sallust's 'Synkrisis' and the Crisis of the Late Republic." *Classical Antiquity* 7: 1-29.
- Earl, D.C. 1961. *The Political Thought of Sallust*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Habinek, Thomas. 1998. *The Politics of Latin Literature: Writing, Identity, and Empire in Ancient Rome*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- McGushin, P. 1977. *C. Sallustius Crispus Bellum Catilinae: A Commentary*. Leiden: Brill.

Mueller, Hans-Friedrich Otto. 2004. "La reglamentación nocturna en la antigua Roma." *Nova Tellus* 22: 121-139.

Pagan, Victoria. 2004. *Conspiracy Narratives in Roman History*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Ramsey, J.T. 2007. *Sallust's Bellum Catilinae*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Welch, Kathryn. 2005. "Lux and Lumina in Cicero's Rome: A Metaphor for the *Res Publica* and Her Leaders." In K. Welch and T.W. Hillard eds., *Roman Crossings: Theory and Practice in the Roman Republic*. Swansea: Classical Press of Wales. 313-337.