

Jupiter and the Political Leader in Cicero's Speeches

Various scholars have claimed that Cicero uses the divine as a rhetorical device to influence his audience (Burriss 1926; Heibges 1969). In this paper, I attempt to demonstrate as an example of these claims how Cicero manipulates Jupiter as a representation of the political leadership in his speeches, particularly *S. Rosc.* and the Catilinarian orations. In these texts, Cicero alters Jupiter's image so that Jupiter reflects the consulship and serves as a mirror in which Cicero's audience sees the consul's attributes, whether positive or negative, or projects onto the consul what Cicero wants the audience to see in this mirror. Although Cicero's own beliefs and those of the Roman populace are irrecoverable, this study remains valid because it addresses only how Cicero portrays the divine, not whether Cicero believed his language corresponded to reality. I aim only to demonstrate how Cicero uses oratory to transform the political leader into an image of Jupiter, and that the way Jupiter is characterized depends on how the orator desires to shape the political leader's image.

At *S. Rosc.* 131, Cicero compares Sulla to Jupiter. Although some scholars have denied that this passage is ironic, others have suggested that Cicero uses the comparison to subtly portray Sulla as omnipotent within the state and, therefore, morally responsible for Chrysogonus' actions (Berry 2004; Gildenhard 2011; Vasaly 2002). Cicero's choice of words in the text supports the latter reading. He uses the verbs *putamus* and *videmus* to draw a distinction between the way humans perceive reality and reality itself, and by means of this distinction Cicero suggests the possibility that the popular belief in Jupiter's beneficence is false. He encourages this doubt by affirming Jupiter's sovereignty even over natural disasters. Through the use of the verbs *nocuit*, *delevit*, and *perdidit*, Cicero even suggests that natural disasters are not accidental and that Zeus is morally responsible for these disasters. By drawing a comparison with Sulla,

then, Cicero implies that Sulla is in control of Rome's affairs but that he also intentionally harms the Roman people. In this way, Cicero subtly alters a common perception of Jupiter to shape the audience's view of the political leader, whom Jupiter represents.

In the Catilinarian orations, Cicero also connects himself as consul with the character Jupiter. First, in *Catil.* 3 he claims that his own actions are the actions of the gods, and, more specifically, he presents his deeds as the deeds of Jupiter which, at the very least, makes Cicero Jupiter's agent. In *Catil.* 1, he goes even further by ascribing to himself attributes of Jupiter. Also, in *Catil.* 2, 3, and 4, Cicero suggests that he deserves a Triumph for his salvation of the state. Because the Triumph involved the impersonation of Jupiter by the successful general, Cicero's references to his own "Triumph" connect him even more closely with Jupiter. Finally, in *Catil.* 1 and 3 Cicero refers to locations associated with Jupiter in Roman tradition, especially the Temple of Jupiter Stator. Through these references to locations and the traditions associated with them, Cicero portrays himself as a new founder of Rome. This elevates him to divine status in three ways. First, he presents himself as a second Romulus, who attained divine status. Second, since Romulus is closely associated with Jupiter, Cicero, as a new founder of Rome, is also closely associated with Jupiter. Lastly, the presence of Jupiter's statue in *Catil.* 3 symbolizes the presence of Jupiter among the people and for the protection of the people. Cicero subtly suggests that he is the manifestation of Jupiter's presence and protection symbolized by the statue.

Through these passages, then, I demonstrate that Cicero retains the core element of Jupiter's character while ascribing to the basic model of Jupiter various additional characteristics that reflect upon the political leader. Thus, oratory transforms the political leader into an image of the Jupiter created by Cicero. By understanding how Cicero uses Jupiter in his political

speeches in this way, one may appreciate Cicero's ability to enrich his speeches by introducing and manipulating a well-known character that was central to Roman life.

Works Cited

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