

Misceri Nocturna Strage: Night and Day in Cicero's De Consulatu Suo

Themes of night and day are prevalent throughout Cicero's portrayal of the Catilinarian conspiracy, yet they are often examined only through the lens of Cicero's prose Catilinarian orations. Examinations of the *De Consulatu Suo* are often dismissed as a poetic retelling (Pieper, 2020) of an event more expertly related in the *Catilinarians*. While the *Catilinarians* do employ night and light imagery in meaningful and expressive ways (*In Cat.* 1. 3-4, 1.6, 3.4, 3.20-4), the *De Consulatu Suo* takes these themes a step further by framing the night as a deadly place that is mixed with murder and destruction (*De cons.* fr. 2.16-19, 26-29, 51-53)

Many of the still extant fragments of the *De Consulatu Suo*, such as Urania's speech (*De cons.* fr. 2.1-78), either occur in or refer to the nighttime and its activities. This strong thematic connection between dark and light imagery present in both the *Catilinarians* and *De Consulatu Suo* tends to suggest that Cicero thought of these two works as companions in his consular corpus (Kubiak, 1994). While much of the thematic and narrative reworking of the *De Consulatu Suo* is speculative due to the fragmentary nature of the work (Beerden, 2020), it is evident that this prominence on night and day, coupled with Cicero's repeated assertion of his perpetual *vigilia* against Catiline in the *Catilinarians*, strongly suggests that Cicero repeatedly wished to craft a persona of himself as a vigilant and competent consul both in public by day and in private at night (Dugan, 2014).

Scenes from the *Catilinarians* and *De Consulatu Suo* that express these themes specifically include the retelling of the portents of 63 and 65 BC and the subsequent erection of the new statue of Jupiter on top of the Capitoline (Butler, 2010). The portents recounted by Urania spell fiery destruction at night, while Jupiter's statue is the bringer of light and truth to

Cicero in a time of fear and nocturnal crisis associated with the conspiracy (Feeney 1998, Ripat 2006). Cicero's thematic battle between night and day is emphasized to such a poetic extreme in the *De Consulatu Suo* that it is clear that Cicero meant for these ideas to be a key motif in his retelling of the larger narrative of the Catilinarian Conspiracy, shaping Cicero not only as a determined consul and public figure by day, but also as vigilant citizen and diviner by night.

Bibliography

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