

# Discontents at Rome: 63 B.C.

[Working Draft]

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*To Dr. Paul Dixon*

Away from these he adds also the abodes of Hell,  
The high gates of Dis, the penalties of sin,  
And thee, Catiline, hanging on a frowning cliff,  
And trembling at the faces of the Furies;  
Far apart, the good, and Cato giving them laws.

*Aeneid 8.666-670.*

If it were possible to present the same subject matter in one form and in no other, one might have reason to think it gratuitous to weary one's hearers by speaking again in the same manner as his predecessors; but since oratory is of such a nature that it is possible to discourse on the same subject matter in many different ways—to represent the great as lowly or invest the little with grandeur, to recount the things of old in a new manner or set forth events of recent date in an old fashion—it follows that one must not shun subjects upon which others have spoken before, but must try to speak better than they. For the deeds of the past are, indeed, an inheritance common to us all; but the ability to make proper use of them at the appropriate time, to conceive the right sentiments about them in each instance, and set them forth in finished phrase, is the peculiar gift of the wise.

*Panegyricus 7-10.*

## Chronology

- Foundation of Rome (753 B.C.)  
 Lucius Junius Brutus (509 B.C.)  
 Thucydides (460-455 B.C. to 400 B.C.)  
 Plato (427 BC-347 BC)  
 Catiline (87-62 B.C.)  
 Cicero (106 to 43 B.C.)  
 Sallust (86 to 35 B.C.)
- Pollio (76/75 B.C. to A.D. 5)
- Livy (59 B.C. to A.D. 17)  
 Elder Seneca (54 B.C. to A.D. 39)
- Quintilian (35-95)  
 Martial (38–41 to 103-102)  
 Tacitus (56–117)  
 Plutarch (46- 127)  
 Suetonius (75 to 160)  
 Appian (95 to 165)  
 Cassius Dio (155 to 229)  
 St. Jerome (340-420)  
 St. Augustine (354-430)
- Leonardo Bruni, *History of the Florentine People* (1416)  
 Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy* (1531)  
 Ben Jonson, *Catiline: His Conspiracy* (1611)
- Voltaire, *Rome Sauvée* (1754)  
 G.W.F Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807)  
 Henrik Ibsen, *Catiline* (1850, revised 1875)  
 Theodor Mommsen, *A History of Rome* (1854-56)  
 Karl Marx, *Capital* (1867)
- Aleksandr Blok, *Catiline: A Page from the History of World Revolution* (1918)
- Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents* (1929)  
 Judith E. Kalb, *A Roman Bolshevik* (2000)
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## I. Prologue

The reputation of the once archetypical villain, Catiline, has undergone a complete transformation over the past 150 years. Once considered the epitome of political villainy, Lucius Sergius Catiline has been rehabilitated, from villain to hero. The scholarly opinions of the historical persona Lucius Sergius Catiline are almost universally negative except those held by Ibsen, Blok, Wilkins, Hutchinson, Hardy, C. MacDonald and Kalb. On the other hand, there are those opinions about the primary historian of the *Bellum Catilinae* (63 B.C.), Sallust, that are almost as equally bad; especially for those who follow the opinions of Cicero or Cassius Dio. Many important scholars have also praised him as a historian *par excellence*. Ironically, the history of the *Bellum Catilinae* has been handed down by two of Catiline's bitterest enemies, Cicero and Sallust, who had a mutual dislike for each other. The tale of Catiline's conspiracy, and his *putsch* against the Roman republic, was transmitted to us, more or less, authentically from the classical authors to the Renaissance humanists. The authentic transmission, however, ended with Ben Jonson's dramatic piece. Once the historical persona of Catiline was removed from what was once considered the pinnacle of classical historical authorship, and transmitted into the dramatic arts, the history of the event itself began to change until the historical persona, Catiline, had undergone a complete historical revision, from villain to hero.

Aleksandr Blok's opinion is the first ostensibly dialectical and historical materialist interpretation of the life of Catiline through the lens of the primary historian Sallust. Blok's commentary is an important one and cannot be ignored. Aside from being a gifted poet, he was also a classicist who could read Latin, and was generally

aware of contemporary philological trends in the classics, especially in relation to the Catiline affair. It is clear that he has pondered this matter very deeply. As he put it, “Scholars of the new era think that the life of Catiline has yet to receive a just evaluation. We shall examine whether or not they are correct.” (Blok 293) I will examine whether or not Blok’s treatment is itself adequate. Eighty-two years after Blok’s *Catiline*, Judith E. Kalb, in her commentary on Blok’s commentary, *A Roman Bolshevik* (2000), would seem to complete a historical revision of the Catilinarian conspiracy which began with Ibsen’s dramatic piece *Catiline* (1850); a marked departure from Ben Jonson’s dramatic piece *Catiline: His Conspiracy* (1611). Ibsen’s departed even from his principal ideologue, Voltaire. Voltaire’s *Rome Sauvée* (1754) presented Catiline as a villain and Voltaire himself had opposed tyranny, but Ibsen, in his apologetic for Catiline, actually supported a would be tyrant, Catiline. Catiline would appeal to him not only because of his propensity for revolutionary violence, but also because Ibsen’s and Catiline’s social decline resembled each other.

Ben Jonson’s play preserved the traditional legend of Catiline and transmitted it to us in the post-reformation Elizabethan English vernacular, during the wars of religion, into contemporary western civilization as a dramatic work of art. Jonson’s study of Catiline comes at a critical time between the Renaissance and the Reformation, on the one hand, and the Scientific Revolution, and the Enlightenment, on the other hand. Ben Jonson’s dramatic piece has been praised both its adherence to the texts of Sallust and Cicero, with many allusions to other classical Roman authors, including Seneca, but also for his knowledge and skill as a Latin grammarian and translator of Roman classics.

Jonson too contemplated the whole affair. But it was with Ibsen's work that the historical persona of Catiline was transformed from an archetypical villain into a hero of the modern bourgeoisie. Blok seized upon this shift and tried to transform Catiline into a symbol of revolutionary violence, and failed. After Blok a *bone fide* movement of historical revision began which attempted to rehabilitate the historical persona Catiline within the western cannon, with tragic results. After Ibsen, there is a distinct change in the interpretation of the historical persona of Catiline. With Kalb, however, bad becomes good and good becomes bad. He was the epitome of political villainy until Henrik Ibsen first reinterpreted him in 1850. My work is both a history of the process of the historical revision of the *Bellum Catilinae*, a defense of Sallust's history, a vindication of classical scholarship and the opinions of the classical authors of Lucius Sergius Catiline. A strong argument has been made to the effect that the *Bellum Catiline* would be more appropriately called *De Conviratione Catiline* (The Conspiracy of Catiline) since the greater part of the extant history of the event is actually the history of Catiline's conspiracy. The war takes up a comparatively small part of the overall narrative and the conspiracy is actually be a more relevant issue. Indeed the war itself, coming at the end of the narrative, amounts to only one battle which is related in but a few words. If the story of the conspiracy were lost, as historians we would have nothing. If the story of the battle were lost, it would be inconsequential. It is the political developments surrounding the conspiracy, and its defeat, which ought to interests us as the ancients thought it should. It is on the other hand better known as the *Bellum Catilinae*, therefore, I refer to the events both by its accepted title and by what it ought to be called.

## II. Sources

The *Chronicles of Jerome* records the life of C. Sallustius Crispus between 87 B.C. and 36 B.C. The textual critic J. T. Ramsey ascribes to these dates. The textual critic P. McGushin said, on the other hand, “There is no absolute certainty about the standard dates, since Jerome can be convicted of carelessness and inaccuracy in other particulars of literary history.” (McGushin 1) And according to Ronald Syme, “Jerome cannot be accepted on Lucretius and Catullus. Further, he may well be in error with his dates for Livy’s life (59 B.C.-A.D. 17).” Thus by McGushin’s dates, Gaius Sallustius Crispus was born in 85 B.C. at Amiternum and died in 35 B.C. McGushin contradicts Ramsey. While Ramsey relied on R. Helm’s codex of Jerome’s *Chronicle*, McGushin relied on MS (O).

(1) ann. Abr. 1931 [=Ol. 173.2/3 = 86 B.C.] (87 B.C., cod.

B) p. 151 Sallustius Crispus scriptor historicus in Sabinis  
Amiterni nascitur.

(2) ann. Abr. 1981 [=Ol. 185.4/186.1 = 36 B.C.] p. 159

Sallustius diem obit quadriennio ante Actiacum bellum.

(Ramsey 1)

Vis-à-vis:

(i) Sallustius Crispus scriptor historicus in Sabinis Amiterni

nascitur: ann. Abr. 1931 = Ol. 173.3/4 = A.U.C. 669 = 85

B.C.

(ii) Sallustius diem obit quadriennio ante Actiacum  
bellum: ann. Abr. 1981 = Ol. 186.1/2 = A.U.C. 719 = 35  
B.C. (McGushin 1)

His family was of plebian origin and of the equestrian order. The *ordo equester* were those who had met a property qualification and served on horseback in the Roman army. They were not *senators* and were not members of the *ordo plebeius* either. Although they were not members of the patrician ruling class *per se*, their class contained the *publicani*—tax collectors and financiers. After 70 B.C. they would share the function of the juries along with the *senators*. “A *publicanus* was a farmer-general of the revenues, usually from the equestrian order.” (Ramsey 108)

Although the etymology of the word plebeian (*plebeius*) is unknown, the plebeians were an intermediary class of noble origin which would later become a division of the ruling class as distinct from both the patricians (*patricus* from *pater*, father) and servi—the slave class (*servus*, and pl. *servi*). The patricians were the descendents of the Italic kings of Latium and the Trojan refugees, who sailed to Italy after the sack of Troy, and inter-married with them. Hence, “patricians” could be understood as “sons of the founding fathers.” The plebeians, on the other hand, were a bourgeoning class, being distinct from both the patricians, the laboring class (*proletarii*), and the slave class. Between the patricians and the plebeians there was a class of equestrians. Tacitus, in his *Annals*, briefly explained the early political developments of Rome from its foundation to the ascension of Augustus:

*Urbem Romam a principio reges habuere; libertatem et  
consulatum L. Brutus instituit. Dictaturae ad tempus*

*sumebantur...non Cinnae, non Sullae longa dominatio; et Pompei Crassique potentia cito in Caesarem, Lepidi atque Antonii arma in Augustum cessere.*

From the beginning kings held the Roman city. Freedom and the consulship were established by Lucius Brutus. Dictatorships were held for a short period of time...Neither Cinna's nor Sulla's dominion was long; both the power of Pompey and Crassus quickly yielded to Caesar; and the arms of Lepidus and Antonius to Augustus. (*Annals* 1.1)

Lucius Brutus was the patrician revolutionary who is credited with running out the Etruscan kings in 509 B.C. and, thereby, establishing the Roman republic. Rome, until this time, had been ruled by the Etruscans, a foreign power. Unable to agree on who should rule, instead of appointing another king, or a tyrant, the ruling class decided to institute a political system similar to the Spartan regime by appointing two consuls, who ruled simultaneously, and thereby settled, at least for a time, how many should rule insofar as they agreed that it should not be one man alone. The reader may recall that Sparta had been ruled by two kings. The Roman system of consulship was slightly different, however, in that each consul had the right of veto over the decisions of his co-consul and, in time of war, one consul would nominate the other to be *dictator* (the one who gives orders), also known as the *magister populi et peditum* (master of the people and infantry), and the other consul became the *magister equitum* (master of the horse and cavalry) and rendered aid to the *dictator*. "Our fathers did not appoint one on all occasions nor for a longer period than six months." (*Historiae Romanae* 36.34.1) The

decree passed by the Senate authorizing the dictatorship was called the *senatus consultum ultimum* (final decree of the Senate) and conferred *imperium* (power to command) upon the dictator and was only used in times of crisis.

Both consuls were preceded wherever they went by 12 *lictors*, who functioned as bodyguards and carried the *fasces* and other emblems of Roman political authority like the silver eagle. The Latin word *fasces* is the plural of *facio*. A *facio* was a bundle of rods surrounding an axe carried by the *lictors* who preceded the *dictator*, the *facio* was a symbol of state power and the authority to administer the scourge. “The Romans took from the Etruscans the *toga praetexta* and the *Phalera*...the *fasces*, the *lictors*...and all other insignia of kings and magistrates” (Bruni 25). The contemporary word fascist was derived from this Latin word. The fact that Piso, and Catiline sought to seize them tends to imply that they also intended to seize control of the government by an illegal means. Octavian, after ascending as Caesar Augustus (27 B.C.), changed the meaning of the word *imperium* to mean “Emperor.”

At the time of Sallust, the Roman state was developing a distinct slave class, a proletariat, a bourgeoisie, and an aristocracy. The office of the dictatorship had fallen into disuse after the Third Punic War (146 B.C.). The plebeians corresponded to the contemporary bourgeoisie and played a revolutionary role under the leadership of Lucius Junius Brutus—the historical founder of the Roman republic and sharing this distinction with Publicola. “They had a constitution founded upon law, which was in name a monarchy; a chosen few, whose bodies were enfeebled by age but whose minds were fortified with wisdom, took counsel for the welfare of the state. These were called the Fathers.” (*Bel. Cat.* 6.6). G. W. F. Hegel said, “The relation of the patricians and the

plebeians is that those who were poor, and consequently helpless, were compelled to attach themselves to the richer and more respectable, and to seek for their *patrocinium* (protection, advocacy, defense, patronage): in this relation of protection on the part of the more wealthy, the protected are called *clients* (a freeman protected by a patron).” (*History* 288) Although this was true at the time of the expulsion of the Etruscan king Lucius Tarquinius Superbus by Lucius Junius Brutus and Marcus Valerius, later known as Publicola (Cf., Bruni, I. 24), and for sometime after, the plebeians scaled the political hierarchy, as Hegel put it, “by degrees,” and, over time, a *proletarii* and a *servi* grew by degrees as well. By the time of the *Bellum Catilinae*, in 63 B.C., the patrician and the plebeians formed a dualistic “aristocracy of a rigid order.” (*History* 285)

Having followed the example of Thucydides, and imitating him, Sallust has been recognized as one of the greatest historians of all time. Sallust, like Thucydides, invented the speeches of his *personae* while, at the same time, relying both on extant sources, such as eye witnesses and written documents, and remaining true to the character of the individual to which the oration was so ascribed. St. Jerome placed Sallust and Thucydides next to God in historical authority. In his jeremiad for Christian history, Jerome said: “If it came to telling this tale adequately even Thucydides and Sallust would have no voice.” (*Letters* 60.16) In his *City of God*, St. Augustine said that Sallust was:

*Nobilitate veritatis historicus.*

A historian having been famous for truthfulness. (*Cit. Dei.* 1.5)

Martial called him the foremost of the Roman historians.

Hic erit, ut perhibent doctorum corda virorum,  
primus Romana Crispus in historia.

Here will be Crispus, the hearts of learned men say,  
 first in Roman history. (*Epigrams* 14.191)

And Tacitus said that Sallust was:

*Rerum Romanarum florentissimus auctor.*

An author of Roman blossoms. (*Annals* 3.30)

Plutarch, on the other hand, faulted Sallust for saying that Romans had never seen a camel until Lucullius defeated Mithridates at a battle near the river Rhyndacus, Bithynia, in Asia Minor. “As if he thought those who, long before, under Scipio defeated Antiochus, or those who lately had fought against Archelaus near Orchomenus and Chaeronea, had not known what a camel was.”<sup>1</sup> In the end, Sallust had both his flatterers and his critics. In general, however, he was highly praised and held in equal esteem as the Greek historian Thucydides. According to the elder Seneca, “Thucydides’ primary virtue is brevity, but Sallust has beaten him at it and defeated him on his own ground. The Greek epigram is certainly short, but there are words one can remove without harm to the sense; take out “hiding” or “shading,” take out “everybody’s”—and the sense will remain, not perhaps so pretty, but equally complete. But from Sallust’s epigram nothing can be removed without spoiling the sense.” (*Controversarium* 9.1.13)

Quintilian preferred Livy to Sallust when teaching boys, because he believed that Livy was easier to understand. “For instance, when prescribing for boys, I should give Livy the preference over Sallust; for although the latter is the greater historian, one requires to be well-advanced in one’s studies to appreciate him properly.” (*Institutio* 2.5.19) Ausonius asserted that Sallust as a historian neither enlarged the events nor

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<sup>1</sup> Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans: The Dryden Translation*, (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1990): 405.

understated them, and was, therefore, the middle path between the jealous critic and obsequious opportunistic flatterer. “If I touch sparingly upon the graces of his character, I shall be thought to show signs of jealousy: if I duly enlarge upon them, I shall be next door to a flatterer. I will therefore copy Sallust in his rigid mode of giving evidence.” (*Epistularum* 18.3)

Seutonius reported that the grammarian Asinius Pollio had criticized Sallust for his archaic language. “Asinius Pollio, too, in the book in which he criticizes the writing of Sallust, as marred by excessive effort for archaism, writes as follows: ‘He was especially abetted in this by Ateius Praetextatus, a famous Latin grammarian, afterwards a critic and teacher of declamation, and finally self-styled Philologus.’” (*De Grammaticis* 10) The elder Seneca said that Livy was deeply jealous of Sallust. According to him, Livy intended to detract for Sallust by praising Sallust’ chief competitor Thucydides. “Livy, however, was unjust enough to Sallust to criticize him both for translating the epigram and for spoiling it in translation. He doesn’t prefer Thucydides out of any love for him; he is praising someone he does not fear, and thinks he may more easily overcome Sallust if Thucydides overcomes him first.” (*Controversarium* 9.1.14. See also: Syme 289 and Quintilian 2.5.19)

Cassius Dio thought that Sallust was a dangerous hypocrite. He said, “Caesar, immediately after Juba’s flight, captured the palisade and caused great slaughter among all who came in the way of his troops, sparing not even those who came over to his side. Next he brought the rest of the cities to terms, meeting with no opposition; and taking over the Numidians (Nomads), he reduced them to the status of subjects, and delivered them to Sallust, nominally to rule, but really to harry and plunder. At all events this

officer took many bribes and confiscated much property, so that he was not only accursed but incurred the deepest disgrace, inasmuch as after writing such treatises as he had, and making many bitter remarks about those who fleeced others, he did not practice what he preached. Therefore, even if he was completely exonerated by Caesar, yet in his own history, as upon a tablet, the man himself had chiseled his own condemnation as well.” (*Historiae Romanae* 42.9.1-3) Aleksandr Blok said of Sallust, “Man is weak, and he can be forgiven everything except loutishness. Thus Sallust can, if you please, be forgiven his decadence, his corruption...One thing alone cannot be forgiven: the moral and patriotic tone he adopted...Sallust’s voice cracks; and it is this cracking of his voice that is difficult to forgive the stylist and bribe-taker.” (Blok 296-7)

Textual critics have disputed the authenticity of Cicero’s invective against Sallust, *In Sallustium Crispum*. The *Invective’s* vituperation of Sallust’s character is unparalleled in the ancient literature and for that reason it has become suspect, since Cicero’s ability to traduce with greater eloquence is well known. The authenticity of Sallust’s invective against Cicero, *In Ciceronem*, has also been disputed, but opinions of the textual critics tends to indicate that it is a genuine work of Sallust published by him as a political pamphlet and circulated anonymously. The *In Sallustium Crispum* however is believed to be the product of a rhetorical school, composed by a writer of small ability. (*Bel. Cat.* xix-xx)

Cassius Dio was, however, even less than kind to Cicero than he was to Sallust. “Toward Caesar, accordingly, the masses were well disposed, for the reasons given, but they were angry at Cicero for the death of the citizens, and displayed their enmity in many ways. Finally, when on the last day of his office he desired to present his account

and defense of all that he had done in his consulship—for he certainly did take great pleasure not only in being praised by others but also in extolling himself—they made him keep silent and did not let him utter a word outside of his oath...Nevertheless, Cicero, doing his best to resist them, added to his oath the statement that he had saved the city; and for this he incurred much greater hatred.” (*Historiae Romanae* 37.38.1-2) Cicero, apparently never ceased in praising himself both before, and after, the defeat of Catiline. The infuriating remarks referred to by Cassius Dio could have been nothing less than those Cicero himself published. “I have preserved the Republic, I ask nothing of you except that you remember this occasion and the whole of my consulship.” (4 *In Catilinam* 23) And even before that Cicero said, “You and your descendants should hold in honor the man who has saved this same city...It is I who have quenched the fires...It is I who have thrust back the swords drawn against the Republic and have dashed away the daggers they held at your throats. It is through my efforts that these plots have been detected.” (3 *In Cat.* 2)

The conspiracy of Catiline, a patrician, was an outgrowth of the dictatorship and the proscriptions of Sulla. Catiline was himself was among Sulla’s adherents and had profited by his service to him and had reportedly used the proscriptions of Sulla as a cover for the murder of his own brother-in-law and for killing a former praetor, Marius Gratidianus. He also greatly enriched himself under Sulla’s reign. “This man [Catiline], namely had killed his brother before the civil struggle was decided, and now asked Sulla to proscribe the man, as one still living; and he was proscribed. Then Catiline, returning the favor of Sulla's, killed a certain Marcus Marius, one of the opposite faction, and

brought his head to Sulla as he was sitting in the forum, and then going to the lustral water of Apollo which was near, washed the blood off his hands.” (*Sulla* 32.2)

Lucius Cornelius Sulla Felix (Sulla the Fortunate), having returned to Italy, landed at Brundisium in 83 B.C. after campaigning in Greece, Macedonia and Asia Minor against the Mithridates. By 82 B.C. the Roman Senate conferred *imperium* on Sulla and he adopted the title of *dictator*, which for all intensive purposes had been abolished after the Hannibalic War. By choosing the title dictator as opposed to the title tyrant or king, Sulla tried to dissemble the significance of his true nature of his rule, that of a tyrant, because the leading men of the city would have taken offence to it. While Sulla wished to appear to be diminishing his power by adopting the title of dictator, in reality he was enlarging it. According to Mommsen, Sulla adopted the title of *dictator* in order to create the nuance of the old dictatorship, something more favorable to the ruling class at the time. In reality, Sulla’s dictatorship restored the old monarchy of the Tarquin’s in all but name. In fact, because the office had no heredity precepts it would best be called Rome’s first tyranny. The word tyrant is not applied to hereditary sovereignties like kings, for the term regards the irregular way in which the power was *gained*, than the way in which it was *exercised* (Τύραννος, an absolute sovereign, unlimited by law or constitution). Sulla’s contemporary apologists vindicated him under the slogan:

*Satius est uti regibus quam uti malis legibus.*

It is more satisfying to profit oneself by means of kings  
than by bad laws. (*Rhetorica ad Herennium* 2.40)

This slogan indicated both that one should not lament the loss of the constitution since kings are just as beneficial as bad laws and that Sulla was all but a king. At any rate, Sulla having reconstituted Rome and effectuated the *Leges Corneliae*, ascended as an absolute monarch and his first act was to annihilate the opposition by means of a list of the “proscribed,” called a *proscriptio* (*proscribo*, to make public by writing, publish, proclaim, announce). The *proscriptio* was a list of names posted by Sulla in the Forum. Anyone whose name appeared on this list could be killed by anyone else and, he who carried out the evil deed would receive a reward for having done so. In fact, one could even obtain a reward by indicating the hiding place of one so proscribed. The victim’s property was expropriated to the State to be disposed *subhastatio* (*sub hasta*, i.e., at auction) with political disabilities vested on his children and grandchildren. By the end of Sulla’s reign, according to Valerius Maximus, an estimated 4700 people had been so proscribed. (Cf., Mommsen 102) After Sulla, neither he nor Crassus were required to return their ill gotten gains. “The man who had slain Lucretius at the instance of Sulla, and another who had slain many of the persons proscribed by him, were tried for the murders and punished, Julius Caesar being most instrumental in bringing this about. Thus changing circumstances often render very weak even those once exceedingly powerful. This matter, then, turned out contrary to most people’s expectation, as did also the case of Catiline, who, although charged with the same crimes as the others (for he, too, had killed many of the proscribed), was acquitted. And from this very circumstance he became far worse and even lost his life as a result.” (*Historiae Romanae* 37.10.2-3) Sallust says, “After Lucius Sulla, having gained control of the state by arms brought everything to a bad end from a good beginning, all men began to rob and pillage.” (*Bel.*

*Cat.* 11.4) The story of the Catilinian conspiracy preserved in the writings of the historians of the late Roman Republic, the scribes of the Roman church, the writings of the Church fathers and eventually transmitted to us the writings of the Renaissance humanists. After the Renaissance humanists, however, the interpretation of the texts began to change until Catiline was transformed from the villain of classical antiquity into the hero of the modern bourgeoisie.

Leonardo Bruni retells this story, in part, in his *History of the Florentine People* (1416). According to him, Florence was first colonized by Sulla's veterans. "Not many years before Sulla's dictatorship, there was a general rebellion among the peoples of Italy against the Romans." (Bruni 9) What resulted was the *Social War*. Rome quashed the rebellion and areas adjacent to the ruins of Tuscany, Asculum, Faesulae were colonized by Sulla's agents. He credits both Cicero and Sallust for recording these events and the existence of the colonies. "[They] built grandly and created great households, gave large and luxurious banquets with abandon, and soon were buried in debt. To free them from this burden, Sulla himself would have had to return from the dead...At this very time ...Catiline in Rome was fermenting revolt." (Bruni 11-15) Ben Jonson's drama *Catiline: His Conspiracy* (1611) begins with Sulla's ghost arisen which, after haunting Rome like a specter, enters "the darkest bosoms" of Rome, which happens to be Catiline's at the time.

"Dost thou not feel me, *Rome?* not yet?/... Can SYLLA'S  
Ghost arise within thy walls,/ Lesse threatening, then an  
earth-quake, the quick falls.../ Thy darker bosome enter  
SYLLA'S spirit:/ All that was mine, and bad, thy breast  
inherit...and I feele/ A spirit, within me, chides my

sluggish hands/ And sayes, they haue beene innocent too  
long.” (Jonson 80-81)

Though many of Seneca’s tragedies are known to begin with specters and ghosts, Jonson’s apparition was undoubtedly taken from Cicero’s remarks to the effect that if Sulla’s veterans, who had squandered their wealth on luxuries, and now sought, through the Catilinarian conspiracy, to make a putsch on the consulship, wanted to be out of debt:

*Si salvi esse velint, Sulla sit eis ab in feris excitandus.*

If they wish to be saved, Sulla himself would have to arise  
from the dead. (2 *In Cat.* 20)

Jonson borrowed it from Bruni who borrowed it from Cicero. Ibsen lost the thread. Though it has been said that Ibsen knew no dramatic works before he wrote *Catiline* (1850), he began with a similitude of Jonson’s ghost. Instead of Sulla’s ghost arisen entering “the darkest bosoms,” a voice speaks from the beginning to Catiline from within. This similitude is strange since although Ibsen repeats Jonson’s metaphor of a wicked soul entering Catiline, he fails to employ Sulla’s ghost as it was set forth in Cicero’s oration.

“I must, I must a voice commands me thus/ from my soul’s  
depths, and will follow it...a secret nation smolders in my  
breast.” (Ibsen 127-28)

Catiline is, in this instance, Ibsen himself, of course, speaking through the persona of Catiline. Ibsen, and the dramatic trend that followed him, took the historical persona of Catiline not as a *bone fide* character of history, but as merely an abstract character of literature which could be molded to suit their own rhetorical needs and used as a

mouthpiece for their own political programs. Ibsen's *Catiline* was written in 1850, just after the upheavals in of 1848, when he was only 21 years of age. Born in Skien, Norway, Ibsen's father Knud was a member of the upper echelons of the merchant bourgeoisie who own a general store and an import business. According to a census taken at the time, Ibsen's family was the 17th wealthiest in the town of 2000 people. Between 1834 and 1836 much of the Ibsen family's business was shut down by authorities and Knud, having fallen deeply into debt, was forced to sell much of the family's possessions and his business came to an end. This gave Henrik "the sense of having been cruelly deprived of his rightful place in life by an unjust fate." Clearly, Henrik Ibsen had bound-up his ego with his nearly aristocratic early up-bringing for after his social decline "he refused to accept as equals or develop any kind of friendship with the poorer children."

Ibsen left school in 1843 when he was fifteen and became an apprentice to a pharmacist in the town of Grimstad where, five years later, he wrote *Catiline*. At sometime within this period he became acquainted with the writings of Voltaire and had gathered around him a small group of friends, Due and Schulerud, who wrote poetry, political pamphlets and read aloud together. Ibsen became an atheist and a republican under the influence of the writings of Voltaire and began to express his "bitter ill will" towards those with "empty brains with full purses." In 1848 he became enthusiastic about the February Revolution in France and began to speak against all emperors, tyrants and kings and in favor of republicanism while the historical persona which would become the protagonist in his first play, and to whom Ibsen would soon identify himself,

was the *criminis auctor* that destroyed the Roman republic and paved the way for the empire.

/--Yes, freedom, it is freedom I'll create,/ as pure as one  
time in the bygone days. (Ibsen 181)

Ibsen's understanding of the conspiracy of Catiline was not particularly deep. While still in Grimstad, Ibsen studied both Cicero's invectives against Catiline and Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae*. "He read these from the perspective formed by the political events of 1848 and his own financial and social circumstances, and developed a completely different view of Catiline from the one Sallust and Cicero sought to convey." (Ibsen 4-8) Save Mommsen, the true Catiline became lost after this work of Ibsen.

### III. Narrative

Sallust began his narrative:

*Omnis hominis, qui sese student praestare ceteris  
animalibu, summa ope nite decet, ne vitam silentio  
transeant veluti pecora, quae natura prona atque ventri  
oboedientia finxit.*

All men, who are themselves eager to surpass other  
animals, are fit to strive with all their might, not pass life in  
silence just as cattle who have been made by nature  
groveling and obeying the belly. (*Bel. Cat.* 1.1)

But man is also a slave to the belly. Poverty hurts. Starvation compels man to satisfy the demands of the belly. It is, in fact, only when man's material needs have been satisfied that man become free to excel the other animals. Sallust was not starving when he wrote

these lines. The opening remarks to the *Bellum Catiline* are also a self-disclosure indicating not to which social class he belongs, but to which social classes he does not belong. He does not belong to the social class of the slaves nor to the class of free labor, the proletariat. Though Sallust attributes subservience to the belly as being caused by Nature, he neglects to mention the real cause for his own leisure. In truth, it is through the high civilization that he lives in that, by means of the class system, has satisfied his material needs. The state that Sallust lived in was class stratified with slavery at its base. Sallust himself was neither in the lowest class nor in the highest class, but was somewhere in between them. Both the laboring class and the slave class toiled to satisfy the immediate hunger pangs of the belly. They were subservient to it while Sallust was not.

Indeed Sallust uses many pretty words. He leads us to believe, to trust, that such words or moral rectitude could have only come from the most upright of men. He passed moral judgment on mankind and, at the same time, excused himself from scrutiny. Sallust as an author, and as a moral being, was beyond reproach. Like a god he lectures the reader on virtue. This cannot but help build trust between the author and the reader. With these remarks, Sallust exaltes himself and his work. The reader becomes a co-traveler with Sallust's soaring virtue by affirming that Sallust himself is no animal. Though it may have been unintended, correspondences could be drawn between the actual social classes and Sallust's metaphors: "gods" and "brutes." Sallust's metaphor indicates that the ruling class corresponds to the linguistic signs, the analogy: god = mind = rulers and the proletariat corresponds to the analogy: body = brute = workers. "Therefore I find it becoming, in seeking renown, that we should employ the resources of

intellect rather than those of brute strength.” (*Bel. Cat.* 1.3) Later on, he questions his own remark: “Each of these [mind and body] is incomplete in itself.” (*Bel. Cat.* 1.7) Sallust develops this dichotomy as a kind of historical dualism. “In the beginning kings took different courses, some training their minds and others their bodies.” (*Bel. Cat.* 2.1) In so doing, he admitted that the rulers, who by nature correspond to the mind, virtue and god, could, as individuals, correspond to either mind or body. This is a somewhat contradictory metaphorical mixture by his previous tenets.

Freud, on the other hand, said that there are three basic types of human personality: the erotic personality, the narcissist personality and the “man of action” personality. “The man who is primarily erotic will choose emotional relationships with others above all else; the narcissistic type, who is more self-sufficient, will seek his essential satisfactions in the inner working of his own soul; the man of action will never abandon the external world in which he can assay his power.” (Freud 40) Thus, according to Freud’s psychoanalysis, the mindful are narcissistic and the brutes are men of action. Naturally the erotic are in between, but each personality type is, nevertheless, a mixture of all these traits with but one trait overwhelming all the others. Sallust himself was, clearly, a narcissist, though he denies it, but Catiline, on the other hand, was a man of action—a brute. “But among intellectual pursuits, the recording of the events of the past is especially serviceable; but of that it becomes me to say nothing...in order that no one suppose that I am led to vanity to eulogize my own favorite occupation.” (*Jugurtha* 4.2) Ironically, though Cicero was too a narcissist, in the end of the Catiline affair he praises himself as a man of action, proving the unity of these traits in the personality. “My conduct of this whole matter may be thought to display both foresight and action.”

(3 *In Cat.* 18) How a man chooses to live, according to Freud is guided by pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain. “For pleasure and pain extend throughout the whole life, and are of great moment and influence for virtue and happiness; since men choose what is pleasant and avoid what is painful.” (*Nicomachean Ethics* 10.1.1) For the narcissist, pleasure is obtained, and pain avoided, through intellectual pursuits, the “men of action” through the vain pursuit of many things of the material world ( دنيا , the dunya). What the erotic pursue goes without explanation, but Catiline represented a fusion of the “man of action” and the erotic personality. The fact that he left no written works testifies to this fact. Though Cicero would later be praised as “a man of action,” he manifests this through oratory in the political arena, a characteristically narcissistic activity while Blok would seem to fuse the erotic and the narcissistic.

Although Sallust was the primary historian of the *Bellum Catilinae*, it is important to understand that Cassius Dio, in his time, may have had access to texts, which are non-extant today. We cannot dismiss his work or presume that his narrative is corrupt on the grounds that it differs from Sallust or that it merely comes after Sallust. Indeed just as Greece was the conscience of all of Latium, and Greek historians are the lie detectors and reality-testers of contemporaneous Roman historians, all together making-up, in the process, the scientific history of the period. Just as Rome cast a backward glance on Greece as its own antecedent, and the study of Livy casts a backward glance on Polybius; Cassius Dio looks back on Sallust, Cicero, Plutarch, et al, summing-up the entire period. Greek historians not only made-up the basis and the prototype for the Roman historians; they also checked their progress along the way, summing it up again at the very moment their own culture faded. Rome would go on. Just as Greek culture made Roman culture

possible in the first place, later they made it possible for us to learn of it and understand it. Our debt to Cassius Dio, then, is immense; and we could say as much for Plutarch. We cannot, therefore, just take Sallust's version as the primary history and be done with it. We need Cassius Dio, and Plutarch, to capture the high ground, to gain perspective. Polybius stands as something to which Livy must be compared; Sallust too must be compared to Plutarch and Cassius Dio. Cicero is a primary source for the history of the *Bellum Catilinae*, and we must keep in mind that Cicero had numerous vested against Catiline's conspiracy; Cicero was the primary source for the history, Sallust is the primary historian.

According to Sallust, after Sulla gained control of the state by means of arms and brought everything to a bad end from a good beginning, avarice controlled the people.

*Postquam divitiae honori esse coepere et eas gloria,  
imperium, potentia sequebatur, hebescere virtus, paupertas  
probro haberi, innocentia pro malivolentia duci coepit.*

As soon as riches came to be honors and themselves a glory, dominion, and power followed, virtue became blunt, poverty was held shameful, innocence began to be taken for malevolence. (*Bel. Cat.* 12.1-2)

Men like Catiline pillaged and squandered. "To such men their riches seemed to me to have been but a plaything; for while they might have enjoyed them honorably, they made haste to squander them shamefully...they slept before they needed to sleep; they did not await the coming of hunger or thirst, of cold or of weariness, but all these things their

self-indulgence anticipated.” (*Bel. Cat.* 13.2) In his lamentation of the virtue of bygone days, Sallust said of men like Catiline:

*Quibus profecto contra naturam corpus voluptati, anima  
oneri fuit.*

For whom, truly, contrary to nature, the body was an  
enjoyment, the soul a burden. (*Bel. Cat.* 2.8)

Hutchinson said, “[Sulla] set a dangerous precedent of quasi-regal rule that whetted the appetite of the ambitious and paved the way for the open monarchy of the Empire.” (Hutchinson 39)

Catiline had gathered about him a number of young men to whom he taught the habits and techniques of the criminal mind. In addition to these men, Catiline enlisted the aid of a number of Sulla’s veterans, like himself. (*Bel. Cat.* 16.1-4) Plutarch confirms this. “It was the old soldiers of Sulla, however, who were most of all urging Catiline on to action.” (*Cicero* 14.2) According to Bruni, “Absorbed in their luxurious way of life...colonists lived, as Cicero tells us, without thought of the future...Meanwhile Sulla...not only left the dictatorship but passed out of this world. So, partly because of their poverty and partly because they were accustomed to getting rewards, they looked forward to some disturbance. Soldiers and men used civil war, they had no idea how to live in peacetime. Their thoughts ran ever to new dictatorships and new booty.” (Bruni 1.6)

In his second invective against Catiline, Cicero lays out the six types of men who supported Catiline. The first group were those “who have heavy debts and possess estates more than large enough to pay them...These men have the most respectable

outward appearance— for they are wealthy—but their intentions and attitudes are quite unscrupulous...The second group consists of those overwhelmed by debt but still enjoy absolute power. They want to gain control of the government and think that revolution (*perturbata*, disturbance) can bring them offices of which they have no hope in times of peace...The third group...are men from those colonies which Sulla founded...who have used their sudden and unexpected wealth to give a display of luxury to which they were quite unaccustomed and which was beyond their means...they have run so deeply into debt that they would have to raise Sulla from the dead if they wanted to be in the clear...The fourth group is a motley assortment of trouble makers...These men, I would say, are not so much eager soldiers as reluctant defaulters...The fifth group is composed of parricides, assassins and every sort of criminal...The last group is...Catiline's very own; his special choice...his most intimate friends. These men are the men you see with their carefully combed hair, dripping with oil, some smooth as girls, others with shaggy beards...wearing frocks not togas...their waking hours are devoted to banquets that last till dawn...all the gamblers, all the adulterers, all the filthy minded lechers...boys so dainty and effeminate, have learnt not only to love and be loved, not only to dance and sing, but also to brandish daggers and sow poison.” (2 *In Cat.* 18-23)

According to Mommsen, “the gangrene of a slave-proletariat gnawed at the vitals of the states of antiquity,” including that of Rome. It was especially coming to a head in 66 B. C. when, in addition to the robbing and squandering, the rural population was falling into debt, losing their property and crowding into the cities. (Hutchinson 61) Machiavelli says that Rome was a free state, because it had free origins and Hegel disagreed. For, although Rome had been founded by foreigners, it was not founded as a

colony of another republic or by a prince who sought to glorify his own name and hence had free origins. “The builders of cities are free when any people, either under a prince or on its own, is forced by disease, famine, or war to abandon its native land and seek a new home.” He credits Aeneas with having achieved this. (*Discourses* 19-20) Hegel disagreed. Hegel said, with respect to the founding of Rome, and the events that occurred at the end of the Republic and the ascension of Julius Caesar to the *imperium*: “A state which had first to form itself, and which is based on force, must be held together with force. It is not a moral, liberal connection, but a compulsory condition of subordination, that results from such an origin.” (*History* 287) The *argumentum ad baculum* (argument by means of force) became his final argument against the Republic.

In 66 B. C., when Catiline returned to Rome, he was already the subject of charges leveled against him by the envoys from Africa based on atrocities he had committed there where he was *propraetor* in 67-66. (Hutchinson 41) Even before that, in 73, he was accused of adultery with the Vestal Virgin Fabia. Quintus Latatius Catalus, consul in 78 and leader of the optimates, testified in Catiline’s favor and he was acquitted. Furthermore, L. Annius Bellienus and L. Luscius, who had slain men during the proscriptions of Sulla, were tried for murder and convicted at the insistence of Julius Caesar. Catiline faced the same charges and was acquitted. Notwithstanding Cicero’s remarks to the effect that Catiline had been charged and acquitted at least twice (*Letters to Atticus* 59), Hardy says that the majority of the charges against Catiline “depended on mere rumor, had never been judicially investigated and were given inconsistently by other authorities.” His remarks on this issue, perhaps, understates Catiline’s political power and the great amount of fear he instilled in the Senate and his propensity to

dissemble effectively. Hutchinson says, “These accusations against Catiline lack conviction.” (Hutchinson 35) Mommsen disagreed, because, according to him, Catiline was “accustomed to impose on his cowardly opponents by his audacious insolence...neither private persons nor officials ventured to lay hands on the dangerous man.” (Mommsen 477-78) According to Plutarch, “even the heavenly powers seemed, by earthquakes and thunderbolts and apparitions, to foreshow what was coming to pass. And there were also human testimonies which were true, indeed, but not sufficient for the conviction of a man of reputation and great power like Catiline.” (*Cicero* 14.4) Cicero himself related a great number of portents, and a vision, which guided him through the whole affair.

C. Macdonald surmised the charges made against Catiline by ancient authors: “In his speech *in toga candida*, delivered in the summer of 64, Cicero alleges a series of crimes committed over the past two decades. He says that at the time of the Sullan proscriptions Catiline had cut off the head of Marcus Marius Gratidianus and carried it through the streets of Rome, and that he had murdered Quintus Caecilius, Marcus Volumnius and Lucius Tanusius; that he had been discredibly involved with the Vestal Fabia... that he had entered into an incestuous marriage with his daughter, whose name, Aurelia Orestilla, is supplied for us by Sallust. In the first speech against Catiline he adds the further allegation that after getting rid of his previous wife he committed another crime, the murder of his son. Two other writers add to this list. The author of the electioneering handbook, *commentariolum petitionis*, alleges that Catiline did away with his brother-in-law, a knight by the name of Quintus Caecilius, during the proscriptions.

Plutarch relates that he killed his own brother and committed incest with his daughter.” (1 *In Catilinam* 3-7)

C. MacDonald faults Cicero for not including the urban plebs in his list of *criminis auctores*, but there is no evidence that the urban plebs, as a class supported him, or that any class in particular supported him; rather Catiline’s supporters were, in fact, divided along the lines to which Cicero spoke. MacDonald says that the Roman masses, at first, supported him, but his own annotations prove this to be incorrect. Indeed, Sallust records a total of eight social groups gripped by Catiline’s insanity. (*Bel. Cat.* 37.1-11) According to him, the first group was “the whole body of the commons through desire for change.” Here, since Sallust himself uses the word “*plebs*,” it could be argued, then, that Catiline was indeed supported by them, at least for a moment, but it is clear that his feelings were not mutual in this regard, because Catiline was a *sophist* not an orator. “For what makes the sophist is not the faculty [of speech] but [his] moral purpose.” (*Rhetoric* 1.1.14) Since, as it has already been established, Catiline was positively amoral; the body of the commons could have been *persuaded* to support Catiline but this in no way implies that Catiline had any *love* for them in return. “Let loving be defined as wishing for anyone the things which we believe to be good, for his sake and not our own...Wherefore one who wishes for another what he wishes for himself seems to be the other’s friend.” (*Rhetoric* 2.4.1-4) Cicero says Catiline collected about him “a huge crowd of desperate men” (2 *In Cat.* 8) not the entire class of the plebians. A crowd of desperate men are not a social class. In his first invective against Catiline, Cicero said: “What mark of family scandal is there not branded upon your life? What deplorable episode in your personal affairs does not help form your reputation? What lust has never

shone in your eyes, what crime has never stained your hands, what shameful deed has never fouled your entire body? What young man that you ensnared with your allurements of your seduction have you not provided with a weapon for his crime or a torch for his passion?" (1 *In Cat.* 13) Mommsen declared: "Catiline especially was one of the most wicked men in that wicked age. His villainies belong to the records of crime, not to history." (Mommsen 465)

Cicero had been an ally of Pompey's, and an enemy of Sulla's, since the time he served under Pompey in the war against the Marsians (B.C. 90-88). Plutarch says, incorrectly, that Cicero had served under Sulla when it was Pompey who had served under him (Cf. *Cicero* 3.2n1). Furthermore, on account of the fact that Cicero's first defense was in favor of Roscius, one to whom his father had been proscribed by Sulla, Cicero fled to Greece for a number of years out of fear of Sulla. (Cf. *Cicero, Pro Roscio*) It was there, in Athens, that Cicero cultivated his skills as an orator. After Cicero learned of Sulla's death, having first consulted the oracle at Delphi who urged him to follow his own nature and not the opinion of the multitude, he returned to Rome in 77 B.C. (*Cicero* 3.4-5.2) In 75 B.C. he was appointed *quaestor* and won many friends defending the Sicilians. (*Cicero* 6.1-3) 66 he was appointed *praetor* and convicted a man close to Crassus named Licinius Macer. (*Cicero* 9.2) Two or three days before the expiration of his praetorship he set a trial date for Manilius, a friend of Pompey's, in such a way that Cicero could defend him on his last day in office. The tribunes were enraged and summoned Cicero to the rostra. (*Cicero* 9.4-7)

In the 66 election for the consulship of 65, Autronius Paetus and Cornelius Sulla—a nephew of the great Sulla—were disqualified for bribery. They joined a secret

league of men formed from the highest ranks of Roman society who sought to obtain power by any means necessary. It seems that Catiline also violated Machiavelli's laws of conspiracy in several ways. The whole plot was fractured with fatal flaws from the very beginning due to Catiline's disordered thinking and his tangled web of lies. According to Machiavelli it is difficult to develop conspiracies beyond three or four persons in number. (*Discourses* 262) At the first meeting at the home of Procius Laeca: "There were present from the senatorial order Publius Lentus Sura, Publius Autronius, Lucius Cassius Longinus, Gaius Cethegus, Publius and Servius Sulla, sons of Servius, Lucius Vargunteius, Quintus Annius, Marcus Procius Laeca, Lucius Bestia, Quintus Curius; also of the equestrian order, Marcus Fulvius Nobitor, Lucius Statilius, Publius Gabinus Capito, Gaius Cornelius; besides these there were many men from the colonies and free towns who were of noble rank at home." (Bel. Cat. 17.3-5)

Lucius Cotta and Lucius Torquatus ascended to the high office in 65 (*Historiae Romanae* 36.44.3) followed by Lucius Caesar and Gaius Figulus in 64. (Bel. Cat. 17.1) Piso and Catiline were the principal actors in a plot to assail the Senate with armed men in the *putsch* of Jan. 1, 65 B.C. The newly elected consuls were to be put to death, Sulla and Paetus reinstated; Crassus was to be acclaimed dictator and Caesar the Master of the Horse. According to this sinister plan, Catiline was to await a signal to be given by Caesar upon a hint from Crassus, but Crassus was absent. (Mommsen 466) Since this plot failed, they decided to postpone the action until Feb. 5th. Under the revised plan, they decided to murder not only the consuls but a number of senators as well. The conspiracy came to naught because Catiline gave the signal for the attack too early. The armed conspirators had not yet assembled in sufficient number to follow through with the

plan, but Piso's intentions became known to all. (*Bel. Cat.* 18.1-8) "On that day the most dreadful crime since the founding of the city of Rome would have been perpetrated," (*Bel. Cat.* 18.8) Piso was defended by Crassus. "The Senate, however, had been quite willing to give him the province, wishing to remove this shameless fellow to a distance from the seat of government." (*Bel. Cat.* 19.1) Cassius Dio says that a decree would have been passed against the conspirators but the tribunes had opposed it thinking that a conviction against Piso would have caused a riot. Piso was sent on to Spain where he met his death. (*Historiae Romanae* 36.44.5)

At the time of the *Bellum Catilinae*, Pompey was absent from Rome, in the east, waging war on the kings of Pontus and Armenia. In 64, "Catiline wished to obtain first a strong base of operation, and therefore sued for the consulship" sued for the consulship hoping that he might share the office with Antonius. The populace, having recognized Antonius as a weak leader, who, as consul, would only add strength to the man next to him, chose Cicero over Catiline. (*Cicero* 11.1-3) During this time, the tribunes were introducing legislation that would have appointed a commission of ten men (a *decimvirate*) with unlimited power to rule Rome and all its territories. Antonius was one of those who favored the legislation. Pompey, so says Cassius Dio, returned to Rome in 63 where he was granted, at the insistence of Caesar and against the recommendation of Cato, the "trophy of the inhabited world" in honor of all his wars. "He did not, however, add any other title to his name, but was satisfied with that of Magnus alone, which he had gained even before these achievements. Nor did he contrive to receive any other extravagant honor." (*Historiae Romanae* 37.20.4.-21.4)

In July of 63 B.C. Catiline again announced his candidacy, this time it was a cover for his *putsch* against the consulship, Cicero, and *res publica*. “According to Plutarch, Cicero postponed the day of the elections and summoned Catiline to the Senate to question him about his activities. Catiline reportedly made a spectacle of himself with remarks to the effect: “‘What dreadful thing, pray,’ said he, ‘am I doing, if when there are two bodies, one lean and wasted, but with a head, and the other headless, but strong and large, I myself become a head for this?’” (*Cicero* 14.6-7) Catiline’s parable was intended to signify the meaning that Catiline was the head of a body politic that was *lean and wasted*, due to its political poverty, and that the Roman republic, being *strong and large*, was headless with Cicero, or anyone besides Catiline, at its helm. Because of Catiline’s remarks in the Senate, Cicero became seriously alarmed and began wearing a breastplate under his tunic which he showed to the commons by loosing the tunic from his shoulders from time to time. (*Cicero* 14.7-8) “When the day of the elections came and neither Catiline’s suit nor the plots which he had made against the consuls in the Campus Martius were successful, he resolved to take the field and dare the utmost, since his covert attempts had resulted in disappointment and disgrace.” (Bel. Cat. 26.5) “He again suffered defeat, this time at the hands of Decimus Junius Silanus and Lucius Licinius Murena...The highest office in the State...was not to be his by constitutional means, and it was the realization of this fact that turned Catiline into an active revolutionary...This was the only path now left open to him.” (1 *In Catilinam* 5-6)

Mommsen says that Catiline and Piso were the political tools of Crassus and Caesar. (Mommsen 468) “[Cicero], in later years, when he had no reason to disguise the truth...expressly named Caesar among the accomplices.” (Mommsen 486) “In the affair

of Catiline, which was very serious, and almost subversive to Rome, some suspicion attached itself to Crassus, and a man publicly named him as one of the conspirators, but nobody believed him. The conspirator Lucius Tarquinius confirmed the testimony of Volturcius and then implicated Crassus. (*Bel. Cat.* 48.3-9) “Nevertheless, in one of his orations [non-extant] plainly inculpated Crassus and Caesar. This oration, it is true, was not published until both were dead; but in his treatise upon his consulship [non-extant], Cicero says that Crassus came to him by night with a letter which gave details of the affair of Catiline, and felt that he was at last establishing the fact of a conspiracy.” (*Crassus* 13.2) Machiavelli said about Caesar’s character, “Anyone who wishes to know what writers, when free, would say about him should see what they say about Catiline.” (*Discourses* 48) Mommsen said, “Anyone who impartially considers the course of the conspiracy will not be able to resist the suspicion that during all this time Catiline was backed by more powerful men.” (Mommsen 488)

Having been defeated in all legal but not in all illegal means of securing a consulship for himself, Catiline redoubled his efforts. He drew together his band of conspirators and harangued them about the nature of the government to the effect that the wealth and power of the state were in the hands of the few and urged them to action. (*Bel. Cat.* 20.1-17) In his speech to his conspirators Catiline denied in advance what he had already planned to do. “We have taken up arms, not against our fatherland not to bring danger upon others, but to protect our own persons against outrage.” (*Bel. Cat.* 33.1) This is contradictory to the known fact that he, inter alia, intended to burn the city. “Catiline believed that he could tempt the city slaves to his side and set fire to Rome.” (*Bel. Cat.* 24.4) He went on to blame the moneylenders for their ruin. This may at least

in part be true. It is, after all, well known fact that usury (ربا, *riba*) was out of control in the Roman republic and that many had been ruined by falling into debt. The principal contradictory statement in Catiline's speech to the conspirators, however, was his reliance on the succession movements of the plebeians against the patricians for Catiline was, after all, himself a patrician. The term succession, moreover, implied that Catiline looked forward to a separation with Rome, as if to leave to found a new city. It was through the First Succession movement (494 B.C.) that the Tribune of the Plebs was created. After this a *tribunnus plebis* was elected annually and is considered to have been the first step toward democracy between the members of the ruling classes. Catiline, obviously, intended nothing of the sort. As a supporter of Sulla he could not have, since Sulla had abolished the tribunes and removed the juries from the equestrian order and they were not restored until 70 B.C. by the consuls Pompey and Crassus.

Catiline, in his speech, went on to contrast the wealth of his enemies with the poverty of his friends. "We have destitution at home, debt without, present misery and a still more hopeless future...Lo, here, before your eyes, is the freedom for which you have longed, and with it riches, honor, and glory; Fortune offers all these things as prizes to the victors. (*Bel. Cat.* 20.2-17) Whereupon Catiline promised his friends the abolition of their debts and the *proscription* of the rich. Here Catiline's use of the word *proscription* shows he was still genetically tied to the politics of Sulla. In light of this, it would be difficult to articulate an argument to the effect that Catiline actually stood for something else besides Sulla's political program. Clearly Catiline sought to imitate the proscriptions of Sulla. He was not a reformer, then, but a reactionary.

Not only that, but, Catiline's belief that riches ought obtained by means of force (*ad baculum*) were diametrically opposed to the behavior Sallust, or any wise man, would recommend to his students. "The leader and ruler of man's life is the mind, and when this advances to glory by the path of virtue, it has power and potency in abundance, as well as fame; and it needs not fortune...notable beauty and riches, as well as bodily strength ...soon pass away, but the splendid achievements of the intellect, like the soul, are everlasting...magistracies and military commands, in short all public offices, are least desirable in these times, since honor is not bestowed upon merit, while those who have gained it wrongfully are neither safe nor the more honorable because of it. For to rule one's country or subjects by force...is nevertheless tyrannical." (*Jugurtha* 1.3-3.2)

Catiline continued: "Thereupon he heaped maledictions upon all good citizens, lauded each of his own followers by name; he reminded one of his poverty, another of his ambition, several of their danger or disgrace, many of the victory of Sulla, which they had found a source of booty." (*Bel. Cat.* 21.2-5) In short, Catiline claiming the advantage of the stronger promised to benefit his friends, harm his enemies, and see that justice be done. In Plato's *Republic*, Simonides says that justice is giving each person his due, "friends owe it to friends to do them some good and no evil... owing from an enemy to an enemy what also is proper for him, some evil... To do good to friends and evil to enemies." (*Republic* 331e-332d) Later on, Thrasymachus claims: "The just is nothing else than the advantage of the stronger." (*Republic* 1.338) By lauding each man by name, Catiline also addressed each man's particular problem and promised to ameliorate that particular condition. This is decidedly different then promising to satisfy a single want shared by members of a single class; such as freeing the slaves and proscribing the rich,

for instance. Indeed, since Catiline did not represent any particular social class, he could do nothing less than promise a particular benefit to each and every particular friend.

After that, Catiline bound his criminals to the future crime with a crime. “[He] compelled the participants in his crime to take an oath, he passed around bowls of human blood mixed with wine.” (*Bel. Cat.* 22.1-2) Cassius Dio’s narration depicts the gravity of the crime. According to him, Gaius Antonius, a participant in the 1st conspiracy of 66 (Cf. *Bel. Cat.* 21.3) who was co-consul along with Cicero, “Sacrificed a boy, and after administering the oath over his vitals, ate these in company with the others.” (*Historiae Romanae* 37.30.3) To this Florus would say: “Human blood, which they handed round in bowls and drank, was used as a pledge to bind the conspirators together—in itself an act of the utmost wickedness, were not the object for which they drank it still more wicked.” (*Epitome* 2.12.4) Although human sacrifice was outlawed in Rome and its territories in 97 B.C., Polydore Virgil, in his *De Inventoribus Rerum* (1499), says “Those who conspire to commit some great crime do the same today.” (Polydore 2.15.7-8)

Next, Catiline “himself was busy at Rome with many attempts at once, laying traps for the consul, planning fires, posting armed men in commanding places. He went armed himself, bade others to do the same, conjured them to be always alert and ready, kept on the move night and day...Finally, when his manifold attempts met with no success, again in the dead of night he summoned the ringleaders of the conspiracy.” (*Bel. Cat.* 27.2-3) Quintus Curius was the weakest link. Unable to keep a secret, he revealed the whole plan to his mistress Fluvia who told a number of people. The bad news eventually fell upon the ears of Cicero; and Cicero began to regularly use Fluvia as an informant about Catiline’s criminal mechanizations. (*Bel. Cat.* 23.1-4) Later, in 63 when

Catiline again ran for consul, Cicero persuaded Quintus Curius to reveal Catiline's plan and immediately countered Catiline's plot by first paying off Gaius Antonius and surrounded himself with a bodyguard. (*Bel. Cat.* 26.3-4)

According to Plutarch, while Catiline's soldiers were assembling in Etruria, Crassus, Marcus Marcellus, and Scipio Metellus came to Cicero's home on the night of Oct. 18 and, after having dined with him, an unidentified man brought Crassus some letters which were addressed to a number of different persons. One of those letters lacked a signature, but was addressed to Crassus, which he read. This letter reportedly warned Crassus of the bloodshed to come at the hands of Catiline and advised him to flee the city. In order to deflect suspicion from himself, so says Plutarch, Crassus handed over the letters to Cicero who convened the Senate at dawn. Cicero delivered these letters to the persons to whom they had been addressed and compelled each of them to read his letter aloud. All the letters told of the plot.

The Senate passed a decree Oct. 20 that placed charge of the state in the hands of the two consuls, Cicero and Antonius. Thus a decree of *imperium* was conferred; Cicero was appointed *dictator*; Antonius the *master of the horse*. "The power which according to Roman usage is thus conferred upon a magistrate by the Senate is supreme, allowing him to raise an army, wage war, exert any kind of compulsion upon allies and citizens, and exercise unlimited command and jurisdiction at home and in the field; otherwise the consul has none of these privileges except by order of the people." (*Bel. Cat.* 29.3) Such a decree of *imperium* had not been pronounced by the Senate at Rome since the Third Punic War (146 B.C.). The consuls, having been so empowered, were entrusted with all the power and responsibility to save the city. Cicero surrounded himself with a

bodyguard and began appointing officials to carry out his commands. (*Cicero* 15.1-16.1) Catiline, having learned of this, prepared to join Manlius in Etruria. Manlius took the field with a large army on the 27th of October (*Bel. Cat.* 30.1) and began to inflame Etruria where many had lost their lands during the proscriptions of Sulla. The expropriated land had been settled by Sulla's veterans. (*Bel. Cat.* 28.1-4) Faesulae, in Etruria, was a Sullan stronghold, but many who had lost their lands during the proscriptions were also ready for war. (*Bel. Cat.* 28.4)

On Nov. 6, in the dead of night, Catiline, once again, summoned the leaders of the conspiracy to the house of Porcius Laeca where he suborned to knights, Gaius Cornelius and Lucius Vargunteius, into a plot to murder Cicero at his home. The informant Curius told Fluvia who told Cicero (*Bel. Cat.* 27.4-28.2) who surrounded his home with a great many men. "Then, at the house of Laeca on that night, Catiline; you allocated the regions of Italy, you decided where you wanted each man to go, you chose those whom you were leaving in Rome and those whom you were taking with you, you assigned the parts of the city to be burnt...Two Roman knights were found to...kill me in my bed...Your meeting had scarcely broken up when I learned all this." (1 *In Cat.* 9) Cicero brought the matter to the attention of the Senate and the Senate took heed.

Cicero summoned Catiline to the Senate, who presented himself in one, last, and final dissemblance. "Catiline at first welcomed this heartily, as if supported by a good conscience, and pretended to make ready for trial, even offering to surrender himself to Cicero...Cicero, however, refused to take charge of him, [and] he voluntarily took up residence at the house of Metellus the praetor, in order that he might be as free as possible from the suspicion of promoting a revolution until he should gain some

additional strength from the conspirators there in the city. But he made no headway at all, since Antonius shrank back through fear and Lentulus was anything but energetic.” (*Historiae Romanae* 37.32.1-3) “When he took his seat, Catiline, prepared as he was to deny everything, with down cast eyes and pleading accents began to beg the fathers of the Senate not to believe any unfounded charge against him...they must not suppose that he, a patrician, who like his forefathers had rendered great service to the Roman people, would be benefited by the overthrow of the government, while its savior was Marcus Tullius, a resident alien.” (*Bel. Cat.* 31.7) His very presence in the Senate caused a great deal of unease. It seemed to them that Catiline was up to something nefarious but many were uncertain, considering his position and the position of his chief adversary, as to what to do about it. “No senator, however, would sit with him, but all moved away from the bench where he was.” (*Cicero* 16.4) He claimed that he was the victim of calumny. In the Senate on Nov. 8, Cicero delivered his first invective against Catiline. (*Bel. Cat.* 31.6)

Thus spoke Cicero: “In heaven’s name Catiline, how long will you take advantage of our forbearance...Are you impressed not at all that the Palatine has a garrison at night, that the city is patrolled, that the populace is panic stricken, that all loyal citizens have rallied to the standard... Do you not appreciate that your plans are laid bare...Do you think that there is a man among us who does not know what you did last night or the night before last, where you were, whom you summoned to your meeting, what decision you reached? What an age we live in!...This man is still alive. Alive did I say? Not only is he alive, but he attends the Senate, takes part in our debates, picks us all out one by one

and with his gaze marks us down for death...You Catiline, should have been led to your death long ago and on a consul's orders." (1 *In. Cat.* 1-2)

Instead of following through with his threat to have Catiline executed; "we have a decree of the Senate...but it is locked up with the records like a sword buried in its sheath; yet it is a decree which you, Catiline, ought to have been executed immediately," (1 *In. Cat.* 4) Cicero magnanimously granted Catiline the option to leave the city. "Catiline, finish the journey you have begun: at long last leave the city: the gates are open: be on your way...Take all your men with you or, if you cannot take them all, take as many as you can...You cannot remain among us any longer; I cannot, I will not, I must not permit it." (1 *In. Cat.*10) Thereafter, Catiline stormed from the Senate vowing along the way to put out the fire of his enemies with a general devastation. (*Bel. Cat.* 31.9) "He gladly withdrew on this excuse, and went to Faesulae, where he took up war openly. Assuming the name and dress of the consuls, he proceeded to organize the men." (*Historiae Romanae* 37.2) Theophrastus' character analysis of the ironic man (the dissembler) describes Catiline perfectly in this instance. The ironic, or dissembling, man is one "who goes up to his enemies and is willing to chat with them...He admits to nothing that he is actually doing, but says he's thinking it over." (*Characters* 1)

Catiline left Rome under the pretext of going into voluntary exile at Marseilles in order to spare Rome the calamities of civil war, but he had no intention of doing this in earnest until he later learned of the death of the conspirators he left behind in Rome. "He rushed from the Senate-house and went home. There after thinking long upon the situation...he left for the camp of Manlius with a few followers in the dead of night." (*Bel. Cat.* 32.1) Omens and portents along with rumors of war flooded the city.

According to Livy, during the consulship of Marcus Cicero and Gaius Antonius several things were struck by lightning: “Bronze tablets containing laws were struck by lightning and the letters melted. With these portents the abominable conspiracy of Catiline began.” (*Ab Urbe Condita* vol. 14: 303) Cassius Dio also recorded the occurrence of many portents during the consulship of Antonius and Cicero, among them were thunderbolts, earthquakes, human apparitions, flashes of fire in the west. “Even a layman, was bound to know in advance what was signified by them.” (*Historiae Romanae* 37.25.2) The Senate announced a reward for any information about the plot, the gladiators were quartered on Capua; Rome was at watch night and day. Gloom and apprehension replaced gaiety. (*Bel. Cat.* 29.1-31.3) On Nov. 9, the next day Cicero addressed the people, delivering his second invective against Catiline.

Nulla iam perniciēs a monstro illo atque prodigio moenibus  
 ipsis intra moena comparabitur...Palam iam cum hoste  
 nullo impediēte bellum iustum geremus.

No longer will the destruction of our very walls be prepared  
 within the walls itself by that monstrous and reckless man  
 thither...Now we will openly wage a just war without  
 impediment against the enemy. (2 *In Cat.* 1)

Cicero had outsmarted him militarily as well as politically. Catiline was no longer able to rely on the activities of ordinary citizens neither as a cover for his clandestine military activity nor dissemble to, and confuse, the people directly. Once drawn out into the open field, as Cicero repeatedly said *murus interest* (a city wall is between us, 2 *In Cat.* 17 *et*

*passim*), it was easier, both to the people and the Senate, to distinguish friend from foe and when it came to war the innocent would be spared.

As a delay tactic, Manlius sent an attaché, along with an entourage, to Marcius Rex declaring that Catiline's men had not taken up arms against the fatherland, but to defend themselves from outrage. "We ask neither for power nor riches...but only for freedom." (*Bel. Cat.* 32.3-33.5) In addition to these letters, Catiline also sent letters to the consuls and many nobles "saying that he was the victim of false accusations and unable to cope with the intrigues of his person enemies, he bowed to fate and was on his way to exile at Massilia." (*Bel. Cat.* 34.2) In a different letter addressed to Quintus Catulus: "Maddened by wrongs and slights...I followed my usual custom and took up the general cause of the unfortunate." (*Bel. Cat.* 35.1-3) Although, in this letter to Catulus, Catiline claimed he had taken up the cause of the unfortunate, he had not actually done so, but distributed these documents to feign his victim hood, as he had been doing all along. One of those letters was in fact a ruse which was intended to signal the remaining conspirators to initiate the insurrection. On Nov. 17, the Senate had resolved to charge Catiline and Manlius with the *Plautian law* which had been passed in 89 B.C. by M. Plautius Silvanus, tribune of the commons, and directed against acts of violence and breaches of the peace. (*Bel. Cat.* 31.4-5, n. 4)

Plutarch said that one of the most dangerous criminals Catiline had left behind in Rome, in order to initiate the insurrection there at the appointed time, was Publius Cornelius Lentulus. This man was so shameless and arrogant that at one time, when he was under prosecution, he bribed the jury and, when acquitted by only two votes said "that what he had given to the second juror was wasted money, since it would have

sufficed if he had been acquitted by only one vote.” (*Cicero* 17.4) He was so utterly conceited that he went about Rome reciting forged oracles from the Sibylline books to the effect that Rome was fated to be ruled by three Cornelii. According to this urban legend Cinna and Sulla had been the first two and Publius, having the *nomen* (middle-name; Roman men had a *praenomen*, a *nomen*, and a *cognomen*. Roman women had only a *praenomen* and a *nomen*) Cornelius was thereby destined to become the third. (*Cicero* 17.5). “He also said that this was the year, the tenth after the acquittal of the Vestal Virgins and the twentieth after the burning of the Capitol, fated for the destruction of Rome and her empire.” (3 *In Cat.* 9, also *Bel. Cat.* 47.2) In order to effectuate this he conceived of a plan to kill all the senators and as many of the other citizens as he possibly could; while at the same time setting the city aflame and sparing only the children of Pompey whom he intended to hold hostage. The night of Saturnalia (December 19) was chosen for the insurrection; (3 *In Cat.* 10) the weapons were quartered in the house of Cethegus, and a hundred armed men were stationed in strategic places around Rome ready to commit arson upon receiving the signal. Others were to stop the aqueducts and kill anyone who tried to bring water to extinguish the blazes (*Cicero* 18.1-3)

Meanwhile, two ambassadors of the Allobroges, a Celtic tribe oppressed by Rome and residing in Gaul, were intercepted by Lentulus and his gang who tried to persuade them to join the conspiracy and incite Gaul into revolt. (*Cicero* 18.4-5). Sallust says it was Publius Umbrenus who sought them out. (*Bel. Cat.* 40.1) At any rate, the Allobroges were outfitted with all sorts of letters to take to their Senate, which made all sorts of false promises regarding their freedom, and to Catiline which urged him to set the slaves free to march on Rome. (*Cicero* 18.6) Umbrenus reportedly said to them: “Why, I myself, if

only you will show yourselves men, will disclose a plan which will enable you to escape the great evils you are suffering.” And the Allobroges were overcome with vain hopes and replied that they would do anything if only the conspirators, when victorious, would abrogate their national debt. (*Bel. Cat.* 40.3-4) And so the story goes, the Allobroges disclosed the plan to their national representative in Rome, Quintus Fabius Sanga, who told Cicero. (*Bel. Cat.* 41.5)

The plot was rapidly unfolding, or, perhaps, unravelling. “Lucius Bestia, tribune of the commons, should convoke an assembly and denounce the conduct of Cicero... That was to be the signal for the rest of the band of conspirators to carry out their several enterprises... Statilius and Gabinius... were to kindle fires at twelve important points in the city... Cethegus was to beset Cicero’s door and assault him... The eldest sons of several families... were to slay their fathers. Then, when the whole city was stunned by the bloodshed and the fire, they were all to rush out and join Catiline.” (*Bel. Cat.* 43.1-2) Cicero was hardly napping. He made arrangements with the Allobroges to visit Lentulus, Cethegus, Statilius, and Cassius to demand an oath from them which they could carry back with them to their countrymen in Gaul. They all complied except Cassius who promised to come to Gaul, but instead slipped away. (*Bel. Cat.* 44.1-2) On account of the fact that many of the conspirators were licentious men who rarely met without wine, women and song, informants easily kept track of their comings and goings and reported their findings to Cicero. Lentulus gave a letter to Titus Volturcius of Crotona and sent him along with the Allobroges who, on his way home, was to confirm to Catiline that an alliance had been made. An ambush set by Cicero’s men on Dec. 2, Lucius Valerius Flaccus and Gaius Pomptinus, captured Titus Volturcius at the Mulvian Bridge. (*Bel. Cat.*

45.1) Cicero again convened the Senate the following day, Dec. 3, and tried the men. Volturcius, after having been granted a pardon in exchange for his cooperation, gave details of the affair. (*Bel. Cat.* 47.1 & 3 *In Cat.* 8) The Senate read the letters and examined the informants who told of plots to kill three consuls and four praetors and that Caius Sulpicius, a praetor, discovered a huge cache of missiles, swords and knives at Cethegus' house. Lentulus was convicted and resigned his office as praetor. (*Cicero* 18.6-19.4)

Cicero delivered his third invective against Catiline to the people, wherein he explained how the conspirators were caught. "Not to make a long story of it, citizens, we ordered the letter to be produced which each man was alleged to have given them [the Allobroges]. We first showed Cethegus his letter and he identified his seal. We cut the string and read the letter...Now, when his letter was read out, he stood paralysed and smitten by his guilty conscience and suddenly fell silent...Statilius was brought in and identified his seal and handwriting. His letter was read out...He admitted writing it. Then I showed Lentulus his letter and asked whether he recognized the seal...There was read out the letter that he had written...I offered him the chance to say anything he wanted about its contents. At first he refused...Then, suddenly, his guilt made him lose his wits...Although he could have denied their statement, to everyone's surprise he suddenly confessed." (3 *In Cat.* 10-11)

After Cicero explained all this to the throng outside the Senate, the people "who at first...had been so eager for war, faced about and denounced...Catiline, while they extolled Cicero to the skies, manifesting as much joy and exultation as if they had been rescued from slavery." (*Bel. Cat.* 48.1-2) The next day Lucius Tarquinius, who had been

arrested while making his way to join Catiline, was brought back and upon a pledge of immunity from the Senate confirmed the testimony of Volturcius and added that he had been sent by Crassus to advise Catiline not to be worried about the arrest of the conspirators but to return to the city to boost the morale of the rest, to return and free the captives. “Cicero learned of this beforehand and occupied the Capitol and the Forum by night with a garrison. At dawn he received some divine inspiration to hope for the best...Accordingly, he ordered the praetors to administer the oath of enlistment to the populace, in case there should be any need of soldiers.” (*Historiae Romanae* 37.35.3-4)

Many thought the charge made against Crassus was credible, “but thought that in such a crisis so powerful a man ought to be propitiated rather than exasperated.” (*Bel. Cat.* 48.5) Many others, held in thrall to Crassus by economic means, condemned the charge and demanded that the matter be laid before the Senate and, upon a motion of Cicero, voted the testimony of Tarquinius to be false and demanded that he reveal the name of whom so ever had caused him to lie. Some said the charge was fabricated by Autronius, but others thought it was Cicero. Sallust himself testifies that Crassus told him personally, later on, that Cicero was behind the insult. (*Bel. Cat.* 48.5-9)

At any rate, it had been reported that Quintus Catulus and Gaius Piso, through bribes and political influence, tried to get Cicero to bring a false charge against Caesar to no avail. The Senate resolved that the conspirators were guilty of treason. Decimus Junius Silanus, the consul-elect, suggested, at first, that the men be put to death, but later, he was persuaded by Caesar’s oration and changed his opinion and held thereafter that they should only increase the guards to protect the city. The matter was reopened for discussion. According to Sallust’s narrative, Caesar spoke first followed by Cato the

younger. In his oration, Caesar urged the Senate not to be influenced by their emotions. “Kings and peoples under the influence of wrath or pity have made errors in judgement, he said.” (*Bel. Cat.* 51.4) He went on by way of two examples derived from ancient sources: the first suggested that the Senate recall the experience of the Macedonian war against king Perses (168 B.C.) as a precedent where the elder Cato had persuaded the Romans not to retaliate against them for a wrong they had committed. The second example raised by him cited the numerous occasions that Rome had not immediately retaliated for great injustices committed against them by the Carthaginians during the Punic wars, but had, instead, first debated whether or not such a retaliatory action was consistent with Roman law. (*Bel. Cat.* 51.5-6)

Caesar’s sophistical remarks: “If a punishment commensurate with their crimes can be found, I favor a departure from precedent; but if the enormity of their guilt surpasses all men’s imagination, I should advise limiting ourselves to such penalties as the law has established...If the humble, who pass their lives in obscurity, commit any offense through anger, it is known to few; their fame and fortune are alike. But the actions of those who hold great power, and pass their lives in a lofty station, are know to all the world.

*Ita in maxuma fortuna minuma licentia est.*

In this way, in great fortune is the least freedom.

(*Bel. Cat.* 51.8-14)

He then holds that the penalty initially suggested by Silanus, i.e., death, was foreign to the customs of Rome. Caesar’s sophism could be parsed thus:

(a) If a punishment equal to their crimes can be found, then

(b) depart from precedent.

(c) If the guilt of the conspirators surpasses all imagination, then

(d) punishment should be limited to what is allowed by law, and

(e) death is a relief from the woes, not a punishment.

Caesar maintained that the Senate must adhere both to precedent and to written law. Therefore, Caesar argued that no punishment equal to their crimes could be found and that the enormity of the guilt of their surpassed all men's imagination. In short, death was too good for these people. He then went on to deploy a form of *slippery slope argument* by means of (a) digression on the history of the Peloponnesian war where Lacedaemonians instituted the rule of the Thirty Tyrants after defeating the Athenians, and (b) digression on Sulla:

*Omni mala exempla ex rebus bonis orta sunt.*

All bad precedents have originated in cases which were good. (*Bel. Cat.* 51.27)

“It is possible that in another time, when someone else is consul, with this precedent before and is likewise in command of an army, some falsehood may be believed to be true. When the consul, with this precedent before him, shall draw the sword in obedience to the Senates decree, who shall limit or restrain him?”

In the digression on the Thirty Tyrants at Athens, he said: “They applied the scourge to citizens and inflicted the supreme penalty upon those found guilty. Afterwards the state reached maturity, and because of its large population factions prevailed; when blamelessness began to be oppressed and other wrongs of the kind were perpetuated: then they devised the *Porcian law* and other laws which allowed the

condemned the alternative of exile. Do I recommend that the prisoners be allowed to depart and swell Catiline's forces? By no means! This, rather, is my advice: that their goods be confiscated and that they themselves be kept imprisoned...further, that no one hereafter shall refer their case to the Senate or bring it before the people, under pain of being considered...to have designs against...the state." (*Bel. Cat.* 51.35-43) In view of the fact that Caesar was implicated in the plot by Tarquinius, we ought to suspect that Caesar may have wished to free the suspects. If Caesar was indeed as powerful as many of the ancient sources claim, it is entirely possible that things could have been arranged so that the so-called "strongest of the free towns" could have been induced to revolt. To this Cato replied in his speech that followed, "As if, indeed there were base criminal men only in our city and not all over Italy." (*Bel. Cat.* 52.15)

More over Caesar remarks to the effect that men of great power are less free than the downtrodden is reminiscent of the remarks made by Hiero, the tyrant of Syracuse (478-467 B.C.), to the poet Simonides. For example, "If it profits a man to hang himself, know what my finding is: a despot has the most to gain from it." (*Hiero* 7.13) Caesar statement to the effect that life imprisonment in a strong city is a fate worse than death is an absurd contrary to fact remark, for, if this were true, the Roman people never would have enacted the *Procian law* which was instituted to protect Roman citizens from the penalty of death. Not only that, but the Roman religion, and therefore Roman custom, testifies to the pain of death and the trials of the wicked condemned to Hell, as Virgil testified to in his *Aeneid*. Caesar falsely equated: life is woe some with death is relief, when clearly life is a relief from death and death is one of life's woes. Anyone who sincerely believed this would have killed himself immediately.

Cato, who relied on the expedience of the cause toward justice, and his own moral character, spoke next: “The speakers appear to me to have dwelt upon the punishment of these men...but the situation warns us rather to take precautions against them than to argue about what we are to do with them...in the case of other offences you may proceed against them after they have been committed; with this, unless you take measures to forestall it, vain will you appeal to the laws when once it has been consummated...nothing is left to the vanquished.

*Capta urbe nihil fit reliqui victis.*

The city, once seized, nothing is remaining to the living.

*(Bel. Cat. 52.4)*

“I call upon you, who have always valued your houses, villas, statues, and paintings more highly than your country; if you wish to retain these treasures to which you cling, of whatsoever kind they may be...wake up at last and lay hold of the reigns of the state...Now...the question before us is not whether our morals are good or bad...but whether all that we have, however we regard it, is to be ours, or with ourselves is to belong to the enemy...

*Iam pridem equidem nos vera vocabula rerum amisimus.*

Now we have indeed let slip true names of things long ago.

“It is precisely because squandering the goods of others is called generosity, and recklessness in wrong doing is called courage, that the republic is reduced to extremities.” *(Bel. Cat. 52.5-12)* Cato’s reference to the “true names of things” is an allusion to a well known phrase belonging to Homer, as Plato recorded his Cratylus: “For

the Gods must clearly be supposed to call things by their right and natural names.” (Cratylus 391e) For truly, Casear’s rhetoric had the appearance of a well reasoned argument without having actually been so. “In fine finished phrases did Gaius Caesar a moment ago before this body speak of life and death, regarding as false, I presume, the tales which are told of the Lower World, where they say that the wicked take a different path from the good, and dwell in regions that are gloomy, desolate, unsightly, and full of fears.” (*Bel. Cat.* 52.13) Contrasting the virtues of their ancestors with the attitudes and habits of his contemporaries, Cato remarked, “We have extravagance and greed, public poverty and private opulence. We extol wealth and foster idleness. We make no distinction between good men and bad.” (*Bel. Cat.* 52.22) He also chastised Cicero because he “even let them go, taking their arms with them!” (*Bel. Cat.* 52.27)

Cato continued by way of example stressing the urgency of the decision because laws were of little use to people who are dead or a republic that no longer existed, and demanded that the conspirator be treated “after the manner of our forefathers.” (*Bel. Cat.* 52.30-36) In this way, Cato relied on what Aristotle called the general law, “For it is evident that, if the written law is counter to our case, we must have recourse to the general law.” (*Rhetoric* 1.15.4) Aristotle himself cites Sophocles. “Antigone in Sophocles justifies herself for having buried Polynices contrary to the law of Creon, but not contrary to the unwritten law...and further, that justice is the real expedient.” (*Rhetoric* 1.15.6) Having been thus persuaded, the Senate agreed that justice was indeed the real expedient. “All the ex-consuls, as well as a great part of the other senators, praised the proposal and lauded his courage to the skies...Cato was hailed as great and

noble, and a decree in the Senate was passed in accordance with his recommendation.”

(*Bel. Cat.* 53.1)

Cicero, who spoke last, delivered his fourth invective against Catiline to the Senate. “Their plan is that in the universal slaughter there should not survive a single individual even to mourn the name of the Roman people...informants have disclosed these facts, the accused men have confessed.” (4 *In Cat.* 5) Cicero, in true democratic spirit, went on to refer the decision as to the fate of the conspirators to the Senate and revealed his true feelings on the matter. “If you adopt the motion of Gaius Caesar...I shall have less need to fear the attacks of the people because it is he who is proposing and advocating this motion; but if you adopt the alternative, I fear that more trouble may be brought down upon my head.” (4 *In Cat.* 9) After noting Crassus’ absence from the proceeding he recognized Caesar’s concerns regarding the *Sempronian law*, enacted by Gaius Gracchus (123 B.C.) which gave Roman citizens the right to appeal to the people in capital cases, and then roundly declared: “an enemy (*hostis*) of the Republic cannot in any respect be regarded as a citizen,” on the grounds that the author of the *Sempronian law* himself paid the supreme penalty to the Republic without appeal to the people. (4 *In Cat.* 10) He went on to tell the Senate that he was indeed not motivated by cruelty, but “In my mind’s eye I see pitiful heaps of citizens lying unburied upon the grave of their fatherland; there passes before my eyes the sight of Cethegus as he prances upon your corpses in his frenzied revels...I have pictured Lentulus as potentate...Gabinus as his grand visor, and Catiline there with his army...this vision arouses in me such strong feelings of pity and anguish that I am acting with severity and vigor against those who have wanted to perpetrate such horrors.” (4 *In Cat.* 11-12) After having made

several examples he directed the Senate's attention to the throngs of people outside awaiting the decision: "I cannot pretend to be deaf to what comes to my ears...Everyone is here—men of every order, every class and every age; the Forum is crowded, the temple around the Forum are crowded, all the approaches and grounds of this temple are crowded...the whole mass of freeborn citizens is here, even the poorest...All classes are united in purpose, will and voice to preserve the Republic. Beset by the brands and weapons of this vile conspiracy, the fatherland we all share extends to you [the Senate] the hands of a suppliant...You have a consul who will not shrink from obeying your decrees and, while he lives, from defending your decisions and answering for them in person. (4 *In Cat.* 14-24)

With these concluding remarks, Cicero formally submitted the fate of the conspirators to the Senate who voted to condemn the men. Not wishing to give the enemies of Rome any advantage that might be obtained by hesitation or delay, Cicero ordered the *triumvis* to make the preparations for the executions and then he himself led Lentulus into the dungeon, where he, followed by the others, were strangled. "Thus that patrician, of illustrious stock of the Cornelii...ended his life in a manner befitting his character and his crimes." (*Bel. Cat.* 55.1-6) Cassius Dio said that others too, who had information lodged against themselves, were rounded up and called to account; that Aulus Fulvius, a senator, was murdered by his own father, a private person, and many others, not only consuls but private individuals as well, killed their sons for their involvement in the conspiracy of Catiline. "This was the course of affairs at that time." (*Historiae Romanae* 36.3-4)

In a comment on these orations, Florus would later write, “When the question of punishment was discussed, Caesar expressed the opinion that the conspirators ought to be spared on account of their position; Cato thought that they ought to be punished in accordance with their crime.” (*Epitome* 2.12.10) The position referred to by Florus was no doubt the conspirator’s positions as citizens. The question of the legality of trying these men in the Senate and executing them has been raised many times and by many authors and I do not propose to have a solution to the argument. Andrew Drummond has examined this case in relation to Roman law very thoroughly and I don’t purport to resolve the question of the legality of the issue, but only to caution the interpreters of these events not to succumb to presentism by projecting our understanding of the present law on to the past, for we must remember that the Roman Senate at this time was not only chronologically closer to the opinions of Aristotle than to modern western law, but was also psychologically, culturally, morally and politically closer to him. Although the question of the legality of imposing the death penalty on citizens of Rome without appeal to the people, in accordance with the *Sempronian law*, was raised in the Senate, and plagued Cicero’s reputation for the rest of his life, the very fact that the trial both of Catiline, and the conspirators captured in Rome, did take place in the Senate without objection, and was not submitted to the juries, tends to suggest that this procedure was not as controversial as it may at first seem to the students of modern positive law. Furthermore, the suggestion that Cicero and Cato, *inter alios*, and hence the Senate, deviated from the rule of law perhaps misunderstands the office of the dictator. Cicero held *imperium* and it was his prerogative to submit this case to the Senate. Therefore the question would be properly framed by referring to the acts of the Senate, not to the acts of

Cicero, since, in the end, the decision belonged wholly to the Senate. Whether or not the Senate adhered to the rule of law, its decision, in this case, was, nevertheless expedient with respect to the cause of justice. As Cicero said to the people, “My consulship cannot cure these men but, if it removes them, then it will have prolonged the life of the Republic.” (2 *In Cat.* 11) According to Plutarch, after the conspirators had been put to death, many of Catiline’s hangers-on, for they could not truly have been called supporters, continued to hang around the Forum unaware of the recent turn of events believing that the men might still be rescued. Cicero reportedly cried out to them: *Vixere!* (They have lived). “Most of those who had flocked to the standard of Catiline, as soon as they learned the fate of Lentulus and Cethegus, deserted him and went away.” (*Cicero* 22.8)

Meanwhile, Catiline was in Faesulae arranging his men in to two full legions of 5,000 men each. According to Sallust’s narration when Antonius marched upon him, Catiline withdrew into the mountains and gave the enemy (*hostium*) no opportunity for battle while, at the same time refusing the aid of slaves who wished to join his army. Once news of the executions had reach Catiline’s army, his men began to desert. With the men that remained, Catiline pressed on though forced marches into the mountains near Pistoria (modern Pistoia) in the region of Tuscany. Metellus Celer with three legions approached from Picene. When Catiline realized that he was trapped between two Roman legions, and that his plans for insurrection in Rome had failed, and that all was hopeless, he harangued his troops and prepared to battle Anonius’ army.

“Two hostile armies, one towards Rome, the other towards Gaul, block our way. We cannot remain longer where we are...Wherever we decide to go, we must hew a path

with the sword. Therefore I counsel you to be brave...If we win, complete security will be ours...You might have passed your life in exile and infamy...but since such conditions seemed base and intolerable to true men, you decided upon this course. If you wish to forsake it, you have need of boldness; none save the victor exchanges war for peace...But if Fortune frowns upon your bravery, take care not to die unavenged. Do not be captured and slaughtered like cattle, but fighting like heroes, leave the enemy a bloody and tearful victory.” After a moment of silence, the trumpets were sounded, the horses dispersed, and Catiline in the center, next to the silver, prepared to do battle. Antonius having feigned illness, either out of cowardice or embarrassment, had trusted his army to Marcus Petreius who gave the signal and began to advance slowly and the army of the enemy (hostis) did the same. Once the distance had been closed enough for a skirmish, the two forces rushed upon each other. “When Catiline saw that his army was routed and that he was left with a mere handful of men, mindful of his birth and former rank he plunged into the thickest of the enemy (hostis) and there fell fighting, his body pierced through and through.” (*Bel Cat.* 56.1-60.7) “[Marcus Petreius] joined battle with the rebels and in a very bloody contest cut down Catiline and three thousand others as they fought most bravely; for not one of them fled, but every man fell at his post.” (*Historiae Romanae* 37.40.1) For Rome it was indeed a bloody and tearful victory as Catiline had shown himself to be a mad man.

*Catiline vero longe suis inter hostium cadavera repertus  
est, paululum etiam spirans ferociamque animi, quam  
habuerat vivos, in voltu retinens.*

Catiline was found truly far in advance of them among the corpses of the enemy, still breathing a little and not holding back fierce spirit in his face which he had in life. (*Bel. Cat.* 61.4)

Flavio Biondo in his *Italy Illuminated* (1474) recalled the event “In the top corner of the large principal plain of Tuscany is the city of Pistoia, in whose territory Catiline’s army was defeated, as we learn from many ancient writers.” (*Italy Illuminated* 1.2.25) Not a man of free birth left alive, Sallust declared that these men “had valued their own lives no more highly than those of their enemies (hostium)...But the army of the Roman people gained no joyful nor bloodless victory, for all the most valiant had either fallen in the fight or come off with sever wounds...turning over the bodies of the rebels (hostilia) found now a friend, now a guest or kinsman; some also recognized their personal enemies. Thus the whole army was variously affected with sorrow and grief, rejoicing and lamentation.” (*Bel. Cat.* 61.6-9) Antonius reportedly sent Catiline’s head to the city and he himself was acclaimed imperator for the victory.” (*Historiae Romanae* 37.40.2) Livy says that Antonius took “his laurel-wreathed fasces with him into his province. There he was crushed by the Dardani.” (*Ab Urbe Condita* 14.303) After this, Cicero himself became the subject of charges for the execution of the prisoners. “This charge, though technically brought against him, was really directed at the Senate. For its members were violently denounced before the populace...on the ground that they had no right to condemn any citizen to death without the consent of the people.” (*Historiae Romanae* 37.42.2-3) This charge failed to bring any result as the Senate at the time had granted immunity to all who were involved. Cicero was later exiled for this very act,

however, by Publius Clodius Pulcher in 58 B.C. and, after that, was himself executed in 43 B.C.

#### IV. The Argument

In a manifestly uncritical way, Aleksandr Blok took Catiline not as a revolutionary archetype, but as a symbol of violence against the state abstracted from its motive force. (Kalb 414) For him, it was analogous that if Catiline attacked the powers that be, and Lenin attacked the powers that be, then Catiline must have been a revolutionary, since Lenin was one. Remarkably, Kalb said Catiline was running for consul on a “populist platform.” (Kalb 416) “By asserting this familiarity Blok aims in ‘Catiline’ to situate the Bolshevik revolution in a momentous lineage.” (Kalb 416) In truth, however, it was Cato who would rightly be described as the leader of the commons. “Cato belonged to the family of the Porcii and emulated the great Cato, except that he had enjoyed a better Greek education than the former. He diligently promoted the interest of the *plebs*, and admired no man, but was thoroughly devoted to the commonweal. Suspicious of unlimited power, he hated anyone who had grown above his fellows, but loved anyone of the common people through pity for his weakness. He was becoming the friend of the people such as no one else, and indulged in outspokenness in behalf of the right, even when it involved danger.” (*Historiae Romanae* 37.22.1-4) Everyone has praised Cato’s virtues. After him, it was Caesar who captivated the masses. Sallust compared Cato’s and Caesar’s virtues, “In birth then, in years and in eloquence, they were about equal...Caesar was held great because of his benefactions and lavish generosity, Cato for the uprightness of his life...Caesar gained glory by giving, helping, and forgiving; Cato by never stooping to bribery. One a refuge for the unfortunate, the

other a scourge for the wicked...[Caesar] longed for great power, an army, a new war to give scope to his brilliant merit. Cato, on the contrary, cultivated self-control, propriety, but above all austerity. He did not vie with the rich in riches nor in intrigue with the intriguer...He preferred to be, rather than to seem virtuous.” (*Bel. Cat.* 54.1-6) In short, Caesar bribed people with gifts, Cato stood as a role model.

Blok impetuously compared Catiline to Tacitus. “A few decades after Christ it fell to the lot of Tacitus...A few decades before Christ, it had fallen to the lot of poor Catiline.” (Blok 294) Blok said, “Sulla was a free and easy-going man.” (Blok 296) And “that Catiline was a lover of the people or dreamed of universal equality, there can, of course, be no question.” (Blok 300) Blok complained that Cicero drowned Catiline in a flood of lawyer’s oratory, but what Catiline heard was nothing compared to Cicero’s panegyrics delivered to the people and to the Senate which he did not hear. Oratory such as this:

*Ex hac enim parte pudor pugnat, illinc petulantia;*

*Hinc pudicitia, illinc stuprum;*

*Hinc constantia, illinc furor;*

*Hinc honestas, illinc turpitude;*

*Hinc continentia, illinc libido;*

*Hinc denique aequitas, temperantia, fortitudo, prudentia*

*virtutes omnes cerant cum iniquitate, luxuria, ignavia,*

*temeritate, cum vitiis omnibus; postremo copia cum egestate,*

*bona denique spes cum omnium rerum desperatione confligit.*

For from this part fights decency, over there wantonness;

Hence modesty, thence defilement;  
 Hence constancy, thence madness;  
 Hence honor, thence turpitude;  
 Hence continence, thence lust;  
 and finally, from hence fairness, temperance, fortitude,  
 prudence, all virtues, contend with inequality, luxury, laziness,  
 thoughtlessness, against all vices; in the end abundance fights  
 indigence, and finally, good wishes against everything  
 hopeless.

(2 *In Cat.* 25).

For him, Sallust was actually the real criminal, “He left a very bad memory. He managed to squeeze all the juice out of a rich country through bribes and extortion.” (Blok 295) There’s no arguing with someone who maintains the most absurd positions in the face of all evidence to the contrary. For Blok, Catiline is Christ arisen, followed by the real Christ arisen, followed by the V. I. Lenin, and again, Christ arisen! The fact that Blok was no follower of Lenin’s seriously undermines his argument. Not being Bolsheviks, both Blok and Kalb are hard pressed to vindicate Catiline by drawing correspondences between Catiline and Lenin. In his poem *The Twelve* (1918), which Bloc claimed had been written in support of the revolution, he wrote:

“Our sons have gone / to serve the Reds / to serve the Reds  
 / to risk their heads! /...So they march with sovereign tread  
 ... /Behind them limps the hungry dog,/ and wrapped in

wild snow at their head / carrying a blood-red flag.../ ahead  
of them goes Jesus Christ.”

Though Blok says, “Catiline was a revolutionary with all his spirit and all his being.” (Blok 300) Leon Trotsky disputed that Blok understood this. In his critique of Blok’s poem *The Twelve*, Trotsky said, “Blok was not a poet of the revolution...Throughout all his changes, Blok remained a true decadent, if one were to take his word in a large historic sense, in the sense of the contrast between decadent individualism and the individualism of the rising bourgeoisie...‘The Twelve’ does not sing the Revolution, but Russia, in spite of the Revolution...To be sure, Blok is not one of ours, but he reached toward us. And in doing so, he broke down.” (Trotsky 118) After *The Twelve*, Aleksandr Blok never published again.

Sallust’s voice didn’t crack, Blok’s voice did. In his *Catiline*, Blok claims that Catiline underwent a ‘metamorphosis.’ “Such a person is a madman, a maniac, possessed.” (Blok 300) Just as Sallust himself recorded, “His guilt-stained soul, at odds with gods and men, could find rest neither waking nor sleeping, so cruelly did conscience ravage his overwrought mind. Hence his pallid complexion, his bloodshot eyes, his gait now slow; in short, his face and his every glance showed the madman.” (*Bel. Cat.* 15.4-5) At least for the moment, Sallust, Blok and Freud can agree: “Unbridled gratification of all desires forces itself into the foreground as the most alluring guiding principle of life.” (Freud 29) Once accustomed to the high life, Catiline now deprived of it “was found [to have] become neurotic because [he could not] tolerate the degree of privation that society imposes on [him].” (Freud 46) Catiline became neurotic because he had lost a luxurious

lifestyle he had been accustomed too. Not only that, he had accustomed himself to self-gratification through violence.

As a commentary upon a commentary, Kalb's analysis of Blok's essay, and consequently of the Catiline affair and the Bolshevik revolution, is in a precarious position. Since Kalb is neither a Latinist, nor a Marxist, her ability to contribute a meaningful commentary on the *Bellum Catilinae* and to draw correspondences between it and the Bolshevik revolution, is dubious. Indeed she sought to explain Blok, not Catiline. Although she compared Catiline both to Christ and to Bolshevism; she never mentioned Lenin or Marx by name and made no annotations to any classical text. Although she does have some remarks on Ovid, he has said nothing on the Catiline affair. Kalb's argument that Catiline was a calumniated man and, "a precursor to Jesus Christ," is absurd. Catiline could not have been a Bolshevik because any class analysis would place him in the category of the nobles of Rome.

According to Karl Marx, "The wage-laborer lives only by the sale of his labor-power." (*Capital* 33) He was a discontent, but he was not motivated by any *class consciousness*. He was not the leader of a proletarian vanguard political party. These were men who had lost all they had through riotous living and attempted to steal back what they had just finished throwing away. After the exhaustion of all legal means, they withdrew from Rome and hurled themselves against it and, being annihilated, as it were, to the very last man. It would be difficult to elaborate a completely dialectical and historical materialist interpretation of Catiline himself. He is of the noble class it is true, but he is not the vanguard of any class and has no political principles to speak of and does not articulate any particular political program besides placing himself at the helm of state

and benefiting his friends and harming his enemies. Catiline is not a reformer; he does not motivate the oppressed to rise in arms as a social movement of their entire class in the way Spartacus did, but instead conspired among his personal associates, formed a cabal, and attempted a *putsch*.

One could take the view that Catiline, having already lost his great fortune, had descended in class to the *proletarii*. Hutchinson takes the position that Catiline was a revolutionary who intended to “strike at the heart of Roman capitalism.” (Hutchinson 15) He continued: “It is clear that Catiline was proposing not merely a change in government and policy but a social and economic revolution.” (Hutchinson 56-57) But this was clearly not the case, for, although he was financially ruined, he suffered no political disability on account of this and ran for consul twice, in 64 and again in 63. Catiline promised to cancel the debts of certain members of the ruling class and to confiscate the property of others, but he makes no mention of abolishing *capitalism*—if he even perceived of it. Sulla’s expropriations of land and property followed by disposal of that property *sub hasta* were fraudulent. The auctions were rigged and the profits were channeled back to Sulla and his agents. The populace benefited little from these enterprises.

Hutchinson represents a nostalgic leftist malaise, which, having already been smeared with the reputation of Catiline, seek to embrace it, co-opt it, and revise it in order to give it a more palatable interpretation. Vindicating Catiline is, nevertheless, utterly pathological. Though some may feel somehow vindicated by Hutchinson’s interpretation of the *Bellum Catilinae*; Catiline was no doubt a scandalous creature and anyone compared to him should consider his reputation smeared. He was a supporter of

Sulla and his proscriptions and benefited from them. He was also a cannibal. “After the domination of Lucius Sulla the man had been seized with a mighty desire of getting control of the government, recking little by what manner he should achieve it, provided he made himself supreme.” (*Bel. Cat.* 5.6) His actions would be best described as an attempted *putsch*, not a revolution.

A revolution is progressive. It seeks by nature to overturn an old oppressive order and replace it with a new freer order. Catiline sought to re-establish an old and hated political regime. Catiline’s program didn’t intend to benefit even his own class in its entirety, but only himself and his conspirators. He, furthermore, made no allusion to any *bone fide* theory of justice, sacred moral, or commonly held value. Blok’s analogy between the conspirators of the *Bellum Catilinae* to the revolutionaries of the Bolshevik revolution proves that Blok was beyond the pale of the Russian working class. He was a dilettante to the very end. He sang bleary eyed of the old Russia, and it ruined him. The *Bellum Catilinae* was an outgrowth of Catiline’s conspiracy. The Bolshevik revolution was not a conspiracy, but a mass movement of the truly oppressed transformed into a civil war whereby the oppressed class as a whole supplanted the ruling class as a whole. Catiline was no V. I. Lenin, but he was no Spartacus either. In truth, Judith Kalb, as Blok did before her, thinks she may more easily overcome Lenin if Catiline overcomes him first.

Wilkins’ monograph is an attempted deconstruction, so popular within academia these days. For instance, she seeks to prove that if Sallust used the word *hostis* (enemy) to describe Catiline, and Catiline used the same word to refer to the government, then Sallust was guilty or blurring the distinction between right and wrong. The central

argument of her work is an apparent error in Sallust's chronology, though she denies it after suggesting it. The central precept of her methodology, however, is to functionally deny that Sallust was a historian and affirm that history can be discovered somewhere outside him as an extant source. She goes on and on using phrases to the effect that Sallust intended to "depict" or "portray" Catiline this way or that way. In so doing, however, Wilkins actually depicts and portrays Sallust as an author who disregarded historical veracity as means of justifying praise of Catiline. Her revisionist operation revolves primarily around her excessive preoccupation with forensic philological concerns while at the same time denying Sallust's objectivity which she initially impugned by his chronological mistake. Not that there is anything wrong with forensic philology *per se*, but Wilkins uses it to assert that Sallust invented both the first conspiracy and the infamous oath. Wilkins, furthermore, does not vet the many extant codices of the *Bellum Catilinae*, discuss any of Sallust's other works, or examine any other extant sources, but asserts that Sallust needed to invent the first conspiracy in order to justify a later passage where Catiline departed Rome "with the fasces and other emblems of authority." (*Bel Cat.* 36.1)

By denying objectivity to Sallust and simultaneously discovering *real* history through pinpoint philological parsing; Wilkins supposes to induce the reader into believing that objectivity actually does exist, and, not only that, it resides with her; and that it can be found in her work and by her methodology, but she remains hard pressed to find history from within written sources which she denied veracity to at the outset. If Sallust's monograph is a fictive work, on the grounds that he intentionally included events that never took place, then all extrapolated evidence must likewise be held in doubt because

the all the facts have been drawn from the same poison well. “We question why, since Catiline had the chance of being elected to the consulship, he was reduced to revolutionary action.” (Wilkins 7)

It is clear from the several narratives that Catiline intended to become not only consul, but dictator by whatever means. It would have been best for him if he could have attained this by being elected to the position, but he intended to seize the *fasces* by any means, including that of violence. The fact that when Catiline finally did withdraw, at Cicero’s indulgence, and assumed the outward symbols of a consul, proves that he was a pretender to the office. By having himself preceded by *lictors* bearing the *fasces*, he tried to appear as if he were the consul elect, nay, the *dictator* self-appointed! By so doing, Catiline insinuated that he had somehow been illegitimately deprived of a political position that would have been rightly his and would brook no contenders. But he had not been unjustly deprived of a lawful office. Catiline had not been elected. Thus Catiline, in fact, behaved highly undemocratically, indeed autocratically. By assuming the outward symbols of an office that was not rightly his, Catiline broke the law. “I knew that the arms, the axes, the fasces, the trumpets, the military standards, that silver eagle for which he had even built a shrine in his own home had been sent on ahead.” (2 *In Cat.* 13) Hook or by crook, Catiline intended to be not only consul, but *dictator*. Whether by election or *putsch*, he himself presumed to decide the election by and for his own self.

Catiline was also a dissembler. As Plato tells us, “The height of injustice is to seem just without being so.” (*Republic* 2.361a) And so it went with Catiline’s pleading accents and his repetitive assertions that he only sought justice. This behavior, then, is not so remarkable for if one is “unjust and have procured [the] reputation for justice a

godlike life is promised.” (*Republic* 2:365b) A dissembler attempts to create a discrepancy between appearance and reality. Catiline tried to appear to be both just and wise, though in reality he was neither. His dissemblance, however, must have been somewhat effective, since he had attracted a number of followers, and indeed still attracts apologists.

The error that was made by the dramatists, in relating the story of Catiline, was through their excessive use of *poetic license*. In Harris’ introduction to Jonson’s play she cites Jonson’s own remark, “We should enjoy the same license or free power to illustrate and heighten our invention as the ancients did.” (Jonson xliii ) Ben Jonson applied his poetic license appropriately. He developed his invention within the parameters that scholarship ought to allow by staying close to the extant sources and attempting to illustrate upon them. Ibsen, however, applied his poetic license inappropriately by treating the historical persona as a mouthpiece for the views of the author. Ibsen boldly disregarded the extant historical sources. In his introduction to his 1875 edition of the play Ibsen’s statement, “There nevertheless must have been a good deal that was great or significant about the man whom the majority’s indefatigable advocate, Cicero, did not find expedient to tackle until things had taken such a turn that there was no longer any danger connected with the attack,” are offered without foundation. (Ibsen 246) Ibsen doesn’t even deny that Catiline raped the Vestal Virgin, and, in fact, joyfully incorporated the event into his play.

For all the revisionists have to say with respect to the Catiline affair, the fact that none have successfully escaped the narration of Catiline’s moral crimes suggests a motive on their part. Not only is it a project of drama in general, but of

deconstructionism as a whole, to challenge the mores of society, but do any of these authors sincerely suggest that a man who committed a human sacrifice, raped women and boys, a *bone fide* cannibal, can be a hero of history? Some simply deny the events took place; others simply refuse to reconcile the event. Sallust says that Catiline and his conspirators passed bowls of human blood and that they drank from these in the presence of others. Where do bowls of human blood come from, if not from a human sacrifice? Its true Polydore notes that the Scythians drank from clay cups their own blood, along with the blood of those with whom they made a treaty, mixed with wine in order to ratify a treaty. But Catiline and his conspirators were far too disrespectful to use any blood of their own. Besides that, Cassius Dio says the blood came from a human sacrifice, is that not enough?

To insinuate that Sallust invented this is also to declare the *Bellum Catilinae*, to be, at least in part, a work of fiction. It denies Sallust his role as a historian; only a scribbler of monographs I suppose? The fact that Wilkins purports to vindicate Catiline in the beginning of her monograph and then admits at the end that Sallust presented a complex character (Wilkins 137) is hardly surprising since Cicero himself had already noted this very fact. “No I do not believe that there has ever existed on earth so strange a portent, such a fusion of natural tastes and desires that were contradictory, divergent, and at war amongst themselves...at the very time when he gathered round him every wicked and reckless man from every land, still held fast many good men and true by a kind of semblance of pretend virtue.” (*Pro Caelio* 5.12-14)

## V. Conclusion

G.W.F Hegel's master-slave dialectic in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) may elucidate the dialectical struggle of Catiline among those of his own class, but he is not the Roman spirit. The history of the *Bellum Catilinae* is not a universal history of Rome. His movement could not be considered a national movement, an actualization of the national spirit, because it is not a qualitatively better development. It was positively a development for the worse. Rome united around Lucius Brutus, the founder of the Roman Republic, the man who ran out the Tarquinius Etruscan kings. Brutus was a revolutionary. Rome hailed him. This was not so with Catiline. The first decree of the Senate which added ten years banishment to the penalties established for bribery, which Dio Cassius says was instituted on the insistence of Cicero, may have been the chain placed around Catiline's neck which held him in thrall. "Catiline, accordingly, believed that this decree had been passed on his account, as was indeed the case." (*Historiae Romanae* 37.29.1) But it was Catiline's bad acts which caused Cicero to make a motion for this law and for the Senate to approve it. And even if this did happen, there's no reason Catiline could not have withdrawn and accepted this as his punishment. He was still quite young, waiting another ten years to attain a great honor, legally, should not have been a problem for him. But it was his arrogance that drove him onward until the point of no return had been reached.

A psychoanalytic view may yield even more insight into the character of Catiline and yield even more insight into his character. Catiline was a man of action man to be sure. Although he was accused of violating both his daughter and the Vestal and a number of other crimes, Hardy says: "As to the other crimes perhaps justly attributed to Catiline, many obviously depended on mere rumor, had never been judicially

investigated and were given inconsistently by other authorities.” (Hardy 8) Hutchinson noted: “There is no mention of the murder of Gratidianus in Sallust or in Cicero’s four orations against Catiline.” (Hutchinson 41) It does seem rather odd that two of Catiline’s contemporary enemies would have overlooked this murder if it indeed happened. According to Appian, “Nobody had ventured to lay hands on him, because facts were not yet accurately known.” (*Civil Wars* 2.3) Hutchinson noted, “He did not even deign to defend himself against charges of the greatest personal infamy.” Hutchinson went on to declare that it was a common practice in Rome to charge someone with imaginary crimes and that this was an outgrowth of the rhetorical schools who taught their pupils to speak with “Colors, a certain way of presenting the most insignificant facts, mixed with useful lies.” (Hutchinson 31) Though this may be true of the rhetorical schools, Cicero was one who made many of these charges. Did Hutchinson intend to suggest obliquely that either Cicero, or Sallust, were themselves pupils of those rhetorical schools, and not the teachers of them? If its true that Catiline was contemptuous of public opinion, as Hutchinson says, that could have only been because he was confident that the accusations, would not have been believed by the Senate where the true power resided. Appian said, “Catiline was a person of not, by reason of his great celebrity, and high birth, but a madman, for it was believed that he killed his own son because of his own love for Aurelia Orestilla, who was not willing to marry a man who had a son.” (*Civil Wars*, 2.2)

Sallust himself became the victim of calumny. On account of the fact that Sallust wrote that Pompey had “an honest face but a shameless character,” Lenaeus remarked in a satire that Sallust was “a debauchee, a gormandizer, a spendthrift, and a tippler, a man

whose life and writing were monstrous, and who was besides being an ignorant pilferer of the language of the ancients and of Cato in particular.” (*De Grammaticis* 15) Cicero and countless others fell victim to these kinds of remarks. Philiscus said of Cicero, “Surely you would not prefer to have joined Catiline...to have performed none of the duties laid upon you...and thus remain at home as the reward for your wickedness, instead of saving your country and being exiled.” (*Historiae Romanae* 38)

Even Lynn Harold Harris chimed in with her missives. Accusing Ben Jonson of getting the facts all wrong on account of “living in an uncritical age” she said, “Not only the evil that men do lives after them, but much that they never even thought of doing. Catiline had the misfortune to have two prejudiced biographers, and has suffered unjustly in consequence.” (Jonson xxvii) But where is the proof that Catiline suffered unjustly? There is as much proof of injustice against Catiline as there is for Harris’ remarks that Catiline employed the slaves in his rebellion. “The slaves were to rise” (Jonson xxvi) vis-à-vis Sallust: “He refused to enroll slaves, a great number whom flocked to him at first, because he had confidence in the strength of the conspiracy and at the same time thought it inconsistent with his designs to appear to have given runaway slaves a share in a citizens’ cause.” (*Bel. Cat.* 56.4-5) According to Harris, insofar as Ben Jonson’s *Catiline* “follows sources it is not in the main true to history.” (Jonson xxiii) Is it possible to be true to history by rejecting them? Harris subtly contradicts her self by maintaining that Jonson’s play was is not a tragedy because, according to Aristotle’s definition, the tragic hero must somehow be respectable, or virtuous. With this remark, Harris confirms Calitine’s villainous reputation while at the same time denying the truth Sallust’s interpretation of him. Harris says, “Sallust’s account was undoubtedly

considered beyond reproach then, especially as Plutarch, Cassius Dio, Appian, Florus, and the other authorities agree substantially with it. But to us of today that very agreement is suspicious. As Merimée points out, the accounts are so painstakingly alike that the conjecture at once arises that they have all been drawn in the main from one source.” (Jonson: xxiii)

It is not enough to say that the historians that came after Sallust simply followed his work. If this were true then why would Sallust say that Antonius could not meet Catiline on the battle field because he was sick with gout, while Cassius Dio said that Antonius only feigned illness because he didn't wish to fight his comrade? If Sallust produced the primary history of *de conviratione Catiline*, and all historians relied on him, and Cicero in addition to him, then how is it that C. MacDonald was able to discover eight different accounts of the charges made against Catiline? Harris says the charges were too consistent, Hardy says not consistent enough. The law of the excluded middle dictates that a statement must be either true or false. This kind of sophistical attack erases not only Sallust's testimony, but the testimony of all the other ancient sources as well. Since neither Harris' nor Hutchinson's assertions could be true, then Sallust's assertions must be true, rather all the ancient sources must be considered true and of philosophical and historical value (principle of generosity) insofar as all the apologists for Catiline are all wrong.

Harris, relying on Shakespeare's phrase, supposes to “Give the devil his due,” (*Henry IV* 1) insofar as Catiline was the “logical product of his age.” (Jonson xxiv-xxvi) But Cicero, Cato, and Sallust, nay, all the classical authors, in agreement on the criminality of Catiline, were the logical products of their age too. Ibsen held that “there

nevertheless must have been a good deal that was great.” But even a broken clock is right twice per day. Catiline was great at being bad, but this is not the proper use of the term “great” since, for applied to Catiline “great” would mean despicable. C. MacDonald says that “he was no more dangerous or important than a number of other men.” Indeed, it appears that Caesar and Crassus may have been worse than Catiline, since Catiline, it had been suggested, was working upon their orders. Or take this guy Lentulus as an example; or Cethegus who “constantly complained of the inaction of his associates.” (*Bel. Cat.* 43.3) Cicero said, “Catiline was the only one out of all these men to be feared and he only so as he was within the walls of Rome.” (3 *In Cat.* 16) Catiline was indeed the most important criminal in Rome at the time. Caesar and Crassus, if they were indeed backing him, could not have acted against the republic without him and Cicero asserts that it was imperative that Catiline be removed from the seat of the government. C. MacDonald and Cassius Dio do agree, however, that the importance of the conspiracy was exaggerated. “He [Catiline] gained a greater name than his deeds deserved.” (*Historiae Romanae* 37.42.1) The history of this affair did not survive the ages by accident, but through its importance. His reputation exceeded his deeds because his intentions had been thwarted. If Catiline had succeeded, then, his deeds, I suppose, may have equaled his reputation if there was anyone left to report them. In the last analysis, however, the apologists for Catiline are the patrons of a scoundrel (φιλοπονηρος, love of the base) for they “seek out the losers in court...and imagine that with their friendship [they] will become more experienced and formidable...[they] admit the truth of the rest of what is said about him by people, but some points [they] do not believe.” (Theophrastus 29)

For Catiline's apologists, it is just as Homer said:

Νυν μεν δη μάλα παγχυ κακος κακον ηγηλαζει

ως αιει τον ομοιον αγει θεος ως τον ομοιον.

Now, on the one hand, in its entirety, bad guides

the bad, thus always God leads like to like.

(*Odyssey* 17.218)

The charges made against Catiline were more than rhetorical quips. Many thoroughly substantiated charges were made against him; but Catiline was not an ordinary subversive, he was a noble. He was a man of extraordinary political power and had not surrounded himself with what Harris referred to as “a motley crowd,” but with senators and knights. Cato, during his speech against the conspirators captured in Rome, said: “Citizens of the highest rank have conspired to fire their native city.” (*Bel. Cat.* 52.24)

Catiline relied on the difficulty of combating conspiracy hatched within ones own native city: in this case, the challenge was to Cicero as the leading man of the πολις, to prove a conspiracy and cause the powers that be to act upon it. “Conspiracies planned against one's native city are less dangerous for those who plan them ...In organizing them there are not many dangers, for a citizen can make preparations to acquire power...It should be understood that this occurs in a republic where some corruption already exists...Everyone has read about the conspiracy of Catiline described by Sallust and knows how, after the conspiracy was discovered, Catiline not only remained in Rome but came to the Senate and said insulting things both to the Senate and to the consul.” (*Discourses* 273) By no means was Cicero ruling by dicat. Convincing the Senate that a conspiracy was afoot was a difficult task.

Whoever Cicero was; no matter what class or party he belonged to, he was the defender of the republic. By all authorities defending the republic at this time was a thing of virtue. “Cicero, who had been hitherto distinguished only for eloquence, was now in everybody’s mouth as a man of action and was considered unquestionably the savior of his country on the eve of its destruction, for which reason the thanks of the assembly were bestowed upon him, amid general acclamations. At the instance of Cato the people saluted him as Father of his country” (*Civil Wars* 2.7). The republic was a qualitatively better development over the monarchy that had preceded it. The dictatorships of Cinna and Sulla had threatened its very existence. It was right to defend it. “Go over with me, please, the events of the night before last. You will appreciate now that my concern for the safety of the Republic is much deeper than is yours for its destruction.” (1 *In Catilinam* 8) Thus Cicero makes plain his true vested interests.

Understanding this is the key to understanding why Catiline has become a negative archetype in the history of western civilizations. He is an arch villain not only of history, but of drama and poetry as well. Catiline had not yet passed the prime of his life, although he was rapidly approaching it. In many ways he still retained the character of a very young man who is “passionate, hot tempered and carried away by impulse...owing to [his] ambition.” (*Rhetoric* 2.12.3) He was careless with his money to “which he [attached] only the slightest value because [he] had never experienced want.” (*Rhetoric* 2.12.6) According to Aristotle, young men “are more courageous, for they are full of passion and hope...are high-minded, for they have not yet been humbled by life nor have they experienced the force of necessity; further there is high-mindedness in thinking oneself worthy of great things...they prefer the noble to the useful; their life is

guided by their character (ἠθος) rather than by calculation...and do everything to excess.” (*Rhetoric* 2.12.9-11)

For instance, although Wilkins asserts that Catiline “performs admirably, but for an ignoble cause,” he was not brave. Although Aristotle says that the noblest form of death is death in battle, and that the courageous man fearlessly confronts a noble death, as Catiline seemed to do, Catiline was not courageous man, but a mad man. (*Nicomachean Ethics* 3.6.8-3.7.7) During his defeat at Pistoria, Catiline showed no fear “for it is a necessary incentive to fear that there should remain some hope of being saved.” (*Rhetoric* 2.5.14) So, for Catiline, it was just as Aristotle said it would be for a man who is being beaten to death, as Catiline was about to be at the time he exhorted his comrades, has no fear since he necessarily had already lost all hope. Thus Catiline was neither courageous nor noble, because, although he died in battle, he did not do so fearlessly, but out of the sense of having lost all hope. Catiline, rather, was a man to be feared insofar as he was injustice possessed of power. Cicero and Cato were the real heroes for preventing Catiline for gaining power and preserving the Republic. The moral of the story that was handed down to us through the ages, then, was the correct one and attempt to alter its conclusions are love of the base.

“Now let us make the fantastic supposition that Rome were not a human dwelling place, but a mental entity with just as long and varied a past history: that is, in which nothing once constructed had perished, and all the earlier stages of development had survived alongside the latest.” (Freud 17) This is history. History as it is and was recorded and preserved in books.

*Historia vero testis temporum, lux veritas, vita memoriae,  
magistra vitae, nuntia vertustatis.*

History is the true test of time, light of truth, life of memory, teacher of life, messenger of antiquity.” (*De Oratore* 2.9.36)

History, thus construed, is the memory of humanity. Books as concrete objects do not constitute the memory of humanity, only the potential for social memory. Like the archeological remains of Rome, books on a shelf only lay side-by-side. Not only must the books themselves be preserved the books themselves must be studied again and again. The past must communicate itself to the living in order to fulfill its function. The world is evermore filling itself with more and more books, more and more information accumulates everyday and we must choose which ones to study. We must separate the good from the bad, the relevant from the irrelevant. The ancients transmitted this story to us as a means of teaching by bad example and we must respect that, diminishing neither their reputations as scholars nor the importance of their teachings. The very fact that these works survived and are the topic of debates even today testifies to their enduring importance. They may not be easily dismissed. Their teachings not easily negated. For “to accord praise which genius of a bad man bribes us into bestowing is to sin against the sacred character of history.” (Mommsen 110) Rehabilitating Catiline with the historical canon, then, is an assault on the integrity of history. The historical process is a great responsibility, as Cicero noted. On the responsibilities of the historian, Cicero said, “History’s first law is that an author must not dare to tell anything but the truth. And it’s second that he must make bold to tell the whole truth.” (*De Oratore* 2.14.62) Today,

without overturning Cicero's maxims, we recognize that there is more to history in that we must apply our scientific capability and our rational faculty to study of history. Understanding our great social responsibility as historians we have developed theories of history so that we may best apply the lessons of the past, that the mistakes of the past be not repeated.

Though Bolsheviks did promise, and effectuate, an economic leveling, it was the social relations of the class system which they sought to transform. It is the social relations of the class system that hold the proletariat in bondage today, as it did then. None but the boldest sycophant, or rabid fascist, would suggest that the proletariat has made itself oppressed, then or now, through robbing and squandering, loose morals and disordered thinking. Since it was vice, not virtue, his class standing and the social relations between members of his own class and from his class to the other classes, that made Catiline who he was, in a general sense, he could not have acted differently than he did. He was a product of the social relations of his time. He was the material product of his age to be sure, but it was his class standing which determined how he reacted within it. His was not a moment of revolution, but of reaction. His was a movement in the opposite direction, from progress to reaction. The patrician class, having first supplanted the monarchy, had itself tumbled. Having at one time granted concessions to the plebians, the patricians began to lose even more power. Cinna, Sulla and Catiline, all patricians, sought to restore the supremacy of the patrician class but could only do so through the establishment of a quasi-monarchy, a tyranny. It was Cicero and Cato who held the middle ground. They represented the progressive wing of the ruling classes. Catiline did not.

As a historical movement worthy of Rome's national spirit it was for the *servi* and the *proletarii* to rise and overturn the old order, both the patricians and the plebians. That would have been a progressive historical development. Rome's national spirit could only have been actualized through the success of the class struggle which gnawed at its vitals. Rome underwent a historical development when the aristocrats through off chains of the monarchy and again when the bourgeoisie, the plebs, won the right to share power with the patricians, but the struggles of the slave class and the proletariat had failed. The Catilinarian conspiracy was not a moment in the process of class struggle on the part of the oppressed classes, but was, indeed, a moment in the process of the development of reaction on the part of the oppressors. The process of the ascension of reaction, the ascension of the Roman tyrants, the Emperors, was embryonic at the time of the *Bellum Catiline*, but would come to the fore 36 years later with the ascension of Octavian as Augustus Caesar (27 B.C.). The decisive historical moment in turning the progressive movement into a movement of reaction was the defeat of Spartacus at the river Silarus. Though the Roman republic could have continued the exile of Cicero signaled that the Republic had come to an end. It was not the assassination of Caesar or Cicero, or even the ascension of Octavian, which sealed Rome's fate as a culture in decline, but was in fact exile of Cicero which played that role. For it was the exile of Cicero that truly demonstrated that democracy in Rome had come to an end. Through the process, then, of the examination and re-examination of this topic, Catiline, once again, assumes his proper place in history, as a villain, not a hero.

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