

Against Catiline 1: passages

Consider what Cicero might be trying to do: what is hoping the senate will feel/do? What arguments does he use in favour of his aims?

“You, Catiline, ought long ago to have been taken to your death, and on a consul's order. It is on yourself that the destruction which you have long been plotting for all of us ought to be visited. [3] The distinguished chief pontiff, Publius Scipio, as a mere private citizen killed Tiberius Gracchus, when Gracchus was causing a mild disturbance in our country: so are we, as consuls, to put up with Catiline, when he is aiming to devastate the entire world with fire and slaughter? (2-3, tr. Berry)

“In fact, I notice that there are here in the senate several of those who were with you. [9] Immortal gods! Where in the world are we? What country do we inhabit? In what city do we live? Here, conscript [pg 160] fathers, here amongst our very number, in this, the most revered and important council in the world, there exist men who are plotting the massacre of all of us and the destruction of this city—and even of the entire world.” (8-9)

“But now you are openly attacking the country as a whole. You are calling to destruction and devastation the temples of the immortal gods, the houses of the city, the lives of all Roman citizens, and finally the whole of Italy. Even so, I will not yet venture to carry out my first duty and act as befits my office and the strict traditions of our ancestors: instead, I shall act in a way which is more lenient, but also more conducive to the national security. For if I order your execution, all the other members of the conspiracy will remain within the state; but if you leave Rome, as I have long been urging you to do, the voluminous, pernicious dregs of society—your companions—will be flushed out of the city.” (12)

“Well, Catiline? Surely you cannot be hesitating to do on my orders what you were already doing anyway of your own free will? The consul orders a public enemy to get out of Rome. Into exile, you enquire? That is not what I am ordering—but if you ask my opinion, it is what I advise. At Rome, Catiline, what is there, at the present time, that can possibly give you any pleasure? Aside from your degraded fellow conspirators, there is not a single person in this city who does not fear you, not a single person who does not hate you.” (13)

“A short while ago, you walked into the senate. Who out of that packed gathering of people, and out of so many of your friends and connections, offered you a single word of greeting? If no one else in history has ever been treated like that, do you really wait for the insult to be expressed in words, when you have been crushed by the strongest verdict—that of utter silence? And what about the fact that, when you entered the chamber, these benches suddenly emptied? That all the consulars, men whom you had many times marked down for assassination, left the area of benches near you empty and unoccupied the moment you took your seat? How, I ask you, do you feel about that?” (16)