Haec Fama Valebat: the sexual crimes of Sallust's Catiline

This paper argues that the accusation of *stuprum* leveled by Cicero and Sallust against Catiline and his conspirators fits into the unverifiable language of rumors and tales (*fama*), much like uses of the modern term "fag" by secondary school students today. I begin by examining the language associated with *stupratores*, particularly the definition of *stuprum* in the context of Roman male homosexuality. At *Bellum Catilinae* 14.7, for example, Sallust says that some thought the young conspirators had little sexual modesty or integrity (*pudicitia*) because of their frequent visits to Catiline's house; he thus implies, through his use of the term *pudicitia*, that the sexual crime of *stuprum* has been committed.

A second aim of this paper is to look at Sallust's ambiguous and weak dismissal of the charge, a dismissal that fits within the scope of his moral arguments. He says that this *fama* was popular owing to the remarks some people made about these

matters rather than because of anything that could be proven. This rhetorical ploy—known as paralipsis—underscores a significant advantage of invoking *stuprum*: that a charge of *stuprum* cannot easily be verified and that one can impugn the character of one's enemies merely through its accusation.

Finally, my paper examines the similarities between the ancient uses of the term *stuprum* and the modern English slur "fag." Both terms represent instances of gendered language and make reference to sexual morality, yet neither can be objectively verified.

This paper relies significantly on scholarly studies about Roman homosexuality, particularly Craig Williams's *Roman Homosexuality*, and on what is known about the *Lex Sca(n)tinia*. Williams, surprisingly, does not cite *Bellum Catilinae* 14.7, although both gendered language and the crime of *stuprum* receive extensive discussion in his examination of Roman sexual *mores*.

Bibliography

Adams, J. N. *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982.

Cantarella, Eva. *Bisexuality in the Ancient World.* Translated by Cormac Ó Cuilleanáin. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992.

Edwards, Catharine. *The Politics of Immorality in Ancient Rome.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Pascoe, C. J. *Dude, You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007.

Williams, Craig. *Roman Homosexuality.* 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Visual aids will be used in the form of a PowerPoint with examples from the *Bellum Catilinae* and from relevant works of secondary scholarship. Handouts containing the same texts will be provided as well.