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Crista McInnis

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Title: *Ebrius: The Topos of Drunkenness in Cicero's Speeches*

Author: Crista McInnis

Response to this paper by: Michael Leff

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Cicero's speeches are a tremendous asset to the historian interested in the study of argumentation: they preserve a series of rigorous debates from a highly volatile period (81-43 B.C.)¹, are loaded with powerful partisan rhetoric, and were pronounced by an eloquent man who ardently fought to preserve, what he believed to be, the integrity of his nation. Although we are cognizant of their value, we are somewhat disadvantaged in the biased account of these speeches; Cicero, our only extant source for this period, coloured his writings not only with his political beliefs but also with the masterful rhetoric he espoused. Though we must, therefore, be doubly guarded in the historical conclusions that we draw from his material, we are afforded the opportunity to witness powerful polemic, and to study the many devices employed by the orator to convince his audience, being chronologically removed from the passionate debate and, so, somewhat impartial.

Despite our cautionary approach, an examination of the rhetorical devices wielded by Cicero yields substantial results, particularly with regards to invective and abuse. The tradition of Roman invective was a firmly established cultural phenomenon manifest in the political milieu and elsewhere, where references to character flaws, including drunkenness, were commonly accepted as belonging to this genre of discourse. (OCD³ s.v. Invective) Surprisingly, though Cicero's use of invective has been keenly studied, his use of drunkenness has never been examined as a tool of rhetoric, or identified as a rhetorical *topos*. Certain scholars have touched upon individual cases of drunkenness in the context of one or more speeches: these treatments, however, have not examined drunkenness in its own right but have subsumed it within some other rhetorical device.² Exceptionally, commentators and scholars working with the Philippics have treated, somewhat more generously the role which drunkenness plays: the overwhelming frequency that Cicero cites Anthony's supposed debaucheries, however, would seemingly preclude the possibility of the rhetorical nature of drunkenness being overlooked in discussions of the form and theme of the Philippics.³ Still, despite the frequency and regularity of 'drinking

¹ All of the dates in this paper are B.C.

² Rowe (1997) p. 126 cites *Cic. Verr. 5. 27*. where he uses an example of Verres' drinking to illustrate metonymy, and p. 138 where he cites *Cic. Cael. 11*. as an example of homoeoteleuton; Vasaly (1993) p. 156- 190 highlights several references to drinking and protracted banqueting in the *Pro Roscio* and *Pro Caelio* identifying these as belonging to the *topos* of 'country life versus the city life' and explaining that while Cicero himself employs the *topos* in the *Pro Roscio*, he later, in the *Pro Caelio*, berates the prosecution for using such an obvious device. (Esp. p. 158, 164, 173, 180-81, and 185) She does not examine the role of drunkenness specifically. DeLacy (1941) explores at length Cicero's invective against Piso, according great significance to Cicero's use of drunkenness, and identifying it as belonging to the 'commonplace of anti-Epicurean polemic' (p. 54).

³ Lacey (1986) though the role of drinking and drunkenness is not treated in his introduction to the second Philippic, he does index references to drunkenness and vomiting in his commentary, and frequently comments on the rhetorical or satirical nature of Cicero's vocabulary (p. 179, 188, 202, 204-7, 209, 214-15, 219, 221, 233, and 247). Wooten (1983) makes some reference to Cicero's use of drunkenness to characterize the general (p. 55, 64, and 82) explaining that Cicero likely borrowed certain Demosthenic images, such as vomiting, which occur throughout both the second Philippic and the *De Corona*.

passages' in Cicero's speeches, and despite the attention that drunkenness has received in the Philippics, no mention is made of drunkenness as a *topos*.

We shall see that drunkenness, and the entrapments of drinking, are regular features in the speeches of Cicero, appearing in works throughout his career. Most significantly we shall see that the *topos* of drunkenness was a flexible and powerful rhetorical device deployed for character defamation, along partisan lines, at key moments in the crisis of the Republic, and appearing in almost all of Cicero's most significant speeches.

The *topoi*, or commonplaces, of ancient oratory were common descriptions, examples or themes, intended to advance, and even to prove, an argument. In no ancient treatise on oratory, however, will you find drunkenness listed among the *topoi* available to the orator; though those *topoi* concerned with 'virtue', 'honour', and 'baseness' may be imagined to have included references to intoxication, and inebriation was recognised as being occasionally significant in argumentation.⁴ How then might we postulate a *topos* current at the end of the Roman Republic? For a *topos* to be considered as a *commonplace*, we should expect a certain regularity of occurrence, and, ideally, we should expect to find it present in the works of a number of orators. Since the *topos* was generally perceived to be an embellishment added to an already developed argument (*Cic. De Invent.* 49-51), an ever-ready armament to be used as the orator made recourse to his memory (*Quint.* 2.1.12; Vasaly 1993, 252), we should expect to find a formulaic quality to the language.

Drunkenness, in the speeches of Cicero, is indeed commonplace. In Cicero's fifty-odd speeches, no fewer than twenty-three resort to descriptions of drunkenness or protracted banqueting at least once in their argumentation for a total of at least seventy-six occurrences.⁵ The number of references to drunkenness becomes even more significant when we consider that they span the entirety of Cicero's career, from his defence of Publius Quinticus in 81 (Kennedy 1972, 151), to the 13th Philippic in 43 (Ker 926, xii), bridging every period of his rhetorical activity; the speeches before his consulship; the consular speeches; the *post reditum* speeches; the triumviral speeches; the Caesarean speeches; and the Philippics. In addition to being long-lasting, the *topos* of drunkenness proved to be flexible enough to accommodate orations delivered in a variety of venues; before the courts (*Rosc. Am*); before the senate (*Cat.* 1; *Pis. Leg. Agr.*); before the people (*Cat.* 2); before the pontifical college (*Dom.*); in Caesar's own home (*Deiot.*) in the presence of an armed guard (*Mil.*); and even in those speeches prepared only for publication (*Phil.* 2; *Ver.* 2). In addition to the many instances where Cicero attacks individuals on account of their tippling, he can also be shown to have defended a number of people on

⁴ Cicero identifies the role which intoxication might play in oratory in his *de Inventione Rhetorica* and in the *Topica*. In neither case is inebriation explored as a possible *topos*, rather, in the first instance, it is shown that intoxication may incite an impulsive act, as opposed to a premeditated one (*Inv. Rhet.* 2.17), which would alter the procedure of both the litigant and the defendant. In the second case, Cicero examines how, at times, the truth is inadvertently revealed by 'persons asleep, intoxicated or insane' (*per somnum, vinum, insaniam Top.* 75).

⁵ The seventy-six occurrences of drunkenness include the following: *Arch.* 13; *Cat.* 1.26; 2.10; 20; 22-23; *Cael.* 27; 35; 44; 49; 67; *Deiot.* 6; 27; *Dom.* 25; *Flac.* 92; *Leg. Agr.* 1.1; *Mil.* 56; 65; *Mur.* 13; 74; *Phil.* 2.6; 30; 42; 62; 63; 67-9; 76; 77; 81; 84; 87; 101; 104-4; 107; 3.12; 20; 24; 31; 35; 5.15; 19-20; 6.4; 12.26; 13.4; 24; 31; *Pis.* 13; 18; 22; 42; 67; 70; *Planc.* 86-87; *Quinct.* 93; *Red. sen.* 12; 13; 14; 15; 16; *Rosc. Am.* 39; 134; *Sest.* 20; 110; 138; *Verr.* 2.1.33; 66; 2.3.23; 33; 62; 160; 2.5.27-28; 63; 81; 87; 92; 94; 96; and 100) I have only included those passages where overt reference is made to a person's excessive drinking habits. There are, in addition to these, many passages where Cicero employs similar vocabulary with satirical, though inferred, references to drinking and drunkenness.

charges of drunkenness, suggesting that this topos was indeed current at the end of the Roman Republic.

Above, we identified that the ancient commonplaces, by their very nature, called for a certain formulaic expression. Vasaly (1993, 252) has argued that the limited access to notes that an orator had resulted in rhetorical formulae “including familiar diction, often repeated phrases and commonplace arguments (topoi)”. The *topos* of drunkenness falls no less subject to repeated description and stock images than any other commonplace; indeed both the standard vocabulary and the more colourful allusions of alcoholic activity are frequently formulaic. Consider, for example, Cicero's use of the word *convivium* and its derivatives. While the standard meaning of *convivium* in Latin is simply a feast, a banquet or a dinner party, whether public or private, Cicero generally attaches a more pejorative connotation to the word so that it frequently implies debauchery (*nullum pudicum sobrium convivium*, *Ver.* 2.3.160), excessive indulgence (*magnifice splendideque convivium*, *Quinct.* 93) or protracted banqueting (*tempestivis conviviis Arch.* 13; *nocturnes conviviis*, *Rosc. Am.* 134; and *cotidie convivia*, *Ver.* 2.5.81). As a result, the word rarely appears with its more usual meaning in the speeches of Cicero.⁶ Additionally, certain stock images dominate descriptions of the festivities; the banquets are described as *voluptas-*sensual- (*Arch.* 13; *Cat.* 1.26; *Mur.* 13; 74; *Pis.* 42; *Quinct.* 93; *Red. sen.* 14; and *Sest.* 138), *libidinus-* lustful- (*Cael.* 44; *Dom.* 25; *Mur.* 13; *Phil.* 2.104; 3.35; *Pis.* 67; and 70) and *sumptuosus-* extravagant- (*Cael.* 44; *Cat.* 2.20; *Mur.* 13; *Pis.* 67; *Quinct.* 93; and *Rosc. Am.* 134), and the participants are identified as, *ganeo-* debauchees- (*Mur.* 74; *Pis.* 13; *Red. sen.* 14; and *Sest.* 20), *grex-* a herd or a band- (*Cat.* 2.22, *Pis.* 22; and *Red. sen.* 14), and *helluo-* gluttons- (*Dom.* 25; *Pis.* 22; and *Red. sen.* 13). The natural result, then, is that many of these passages bear a striking resemblance to one another.

Perhaps more significant than the repetition of certain words and descriptions, in identifying the formulaic nature of the *topos* in question, is the repetition of certain peculiarities of these drinking bouts, notably the prevalence of dancing, particularly naked dancing, and the prevalence of taverns and stew-houses. To appreciate the significance of both of these elements, one must call to mind some of the eccentricities of Roman invective. Dancing was possessed of a distinctively blemished reputation in the upper echelons of Roman society, being an effeminate trait of actors, mimes and prostitutes: where it was surprising for a woman to dance, and shocking for her to dance well, it was shattering for a man to know how to dance at all (Richlin 1983, 92; *Macrob. Sat.* 3.14.4-15). This, of course, made dancing an excellent choice for invective, alluding to an individual's effeminacy and degeneracy, and explicitly associating them with the scourge of Roman society. No surprise, then, that dancing should wind its way into Cicero's polemical enunciations, where it occurs, in conjunction with drunkenness, no less than 8 times. (*Cat.* 2.22; 2.23; *Deiot.* 26-27; *Mur.* 13; *Phil.* 5.15; *Pis.* 18; *Red. sen.* 13; *Ver.* 2.3.23, and perhaps *Cael.* 35) Of these descriptions 4 involve nudity (*Cat.* 2.23; *Deiot.* 26; *Pis.* 22; and *Ver.* 2.3.23), and 2 have Cicero defending a client against allegations of dancing (*Mur.* 13; *Deiot.* 26-27). Apparently, the formulaic convention of inebriate dancing was also known to Cicero's adversaries.

⁶ To express the idea of more decorous gatherings, Cicero more frequently employs *cena*, *festus*, or *epulus* in the place of *convivium*, although these words also occur occasionally in more suspect passages.

Likewise, allusions to taverns, pubs and brothels in Roman oratory were considerably more loaded than similar references today. The eating and drinking houses in the cities of ancient Rome fulfilled an important need of the urban poor, the sanitary preparation of food and availability of hot water, but for the elite these same establishments were highly suspect. (Kleberg 1957, 93) In addition to being described as dark, smoky and stinking, these taverns were frequented by questionable elements of society, prostitutes, gamblers, and evidently drunks. Furthermore, these taverns were also the meeting places of many of the *collegia*, or guilds, in Rome, and so could be construed as being potentially politically subversive. Cicero's invective of debauchery made frequent allusion to these 'speak-easies'; at least twelve references to various types of taverns occur when describing the drunken escapades of his opponents. (*Mil.* 65; *Phil.* 2.69; 77; 105; 3.20; 24; *Pis.* 13; 18; *Rosc. Am.* 134; and *Sest.* 20). The attacks range in severity, with words suggesting fairly mild rebukes (*deversorum*), and others steeped in the strongest connotations (*popina, ganea, gurgistum*) A passage from Cicero's invective against Piso shows just how potent the *topos* of drunkenness could be when implicating Roman 'watering holes'.

Do you remember... how you were emerging from some mean hovel (*gurgustio*)...and how, when from your malodorous lips you had exhaled the fumes of that disgusting tavern (*popinam*), you pleaded your enfeebled health, and alleged that you were in the habit of taking some sort of vinous remedies to support it? ...we stood for a while in the reek and fume of your stew-houses (*ganeorum*), until at length you drove us thence by your impudent replies and your disgusting eructations. (*Pis.* 13, trans. Watts 1931, 157)

Although this is the only occasion, in the speeches of Cicero, that we find all three of the most infamous types of tavern in the same description, it is nevertheless indicative of the effect of the formulaic use of cabarets in the *topos* of drunkenness.

That drunkenness acts, in the speeches of Cicero, as a rhetorical *topos*, can now be confidently assumed, and that it is a tool of invective can hardly be challenged. It remains to be seen however, how Cicero used this commonplace, to which he made such frequent recourse. While this device was, at times, a simple tool of litigation, aimed at discrediting the witness, the evidence or the prosecution, it was more frequently part of the political phraseology of the partisan disputes that occupied the end of the Roman republic.

Wirszubski (1954, 1961) has significantly advanced our knowledge of the subtleties and implications of the partisan slogans in use at the close of the Republic. Particularly, in the case of *audax*, or audacity, he has shown that Cicero and the Optimates reserved this 'politically coloured judgment' for members of the Populares who were imagined to be real or potential subverters of the social and political norms, namely Saturninus, Autronius, Vatinius, Catiline, Clodius, Gabinius, Piso, Anthony, and Caesar (Wirszubski 1961, 15,18). A quick survey of the occurrences of our *topos*, outside of the purely judicial examples, show Cicero using the great majority of these references (approximately two thirds of our examples) to incriminate Catiline, Clodius, Gabinius, Piso and Anthony. However, before turning to the 'audacious' political subverters who also share the defect of drunken behaviour, if we hope to show that drunkenness is a commonplace with distinctively partisan connotations, we should first attempt to contend with those individuals whom Cicero does not characterize as inebriate, Saturninus, Autronius, Vatinius, and Caesar.

These men, with the exception of Caesar and Vatinius, played minor roles in the political turmoil of the late republic, and their personalities receive little attention in the sources;

Saturninus is called *audacia Saturnini* in *In Vatinius* 23, and then is dropped from the discourse altogether, leaving little time for allusion to drunkenness (Wirszubski 1961, 16). Autronius is used as a foil in the *Pro Sulla*, where Cicero is called upon to defend a former Catalinarian. He is briefly characterized, and although no specific reference to drunkenness is made, the vocabulary used is distinctly reminiscent of that employed to expound the drunkenness of others; *libidosus*, *stuprorum*, and *improbissimis*.

The character of Vatinius is considerably more developed in Cicero's speeches, with an entire speech devoted to his cross-examination (*in Vatinius*). In this case, as with Saturninus, Autronius and Fimbria, no mention is made of Vatinius' drunkenness, real or contrived. There is an extended passage that treats Vatinius' misconduct at a funeral banquet (*In Vat.* 30-32), his misconduct having nothing to do with intemperance or extravagance, but rather inappropriate dress. Rather than trying to read into this banquet some obscure allusion to drunkenness, for Cicero's vocabulary could not be less suggestive of such a thing (He refers to the banquet throughout the passage as *cena*, *epulus*, only once employing the more charged expression *convivium*.), we should perhaps understand that this man did not pose a significant threat to Cicero's political convictions. Indeed, both men were supporters of Pompeius, they were later reconciled and eventually became friends (OCD³ s.v. Vatinius).

The one significant person who is recognised by Wirszubski as politically charged, but who does not appear in our catalogue of men characterized by drunkenness is Caesar. Both ancient and modern historiography have highlighted the temperance of the dictator (*Suet. Iul.* 53; Austin 1985, 32), and it is unlikely that Cicero would have been able to successfully level charges of drunkenness against an individual possessed of such uncontested sobriety, regardless of his political persuasion. Despite its rhetorical value and highly flexible nature, the *topos* of drunkenness had limits.

We turn now to the 'infamous' characters of the Roman republic; those men hated and feared by the Optimates. Arguably, the most significant speeches that Cicero delivered in his fight for the republic were those that attacked the persons of Catiline, Clodius, Gabinius, Piso and Anthony, and in each of these we find several instances of protracted tipping. We are confronted now with the overwhelming number of passages where Cicero employs drunkenness as political commentary. There are five insinuations of inebriety pronounced against Clodius (eight if we count also those charges levelled at his sister), four against Catiline, seven against Piso, four against Gabinius and twenty-six against Anthony. Furthermore, Cicero makes five general references to drinking in order to distinguish between the type of man who should govern, and the type of man who, decidedly, should not (presumably the Populares). Of our original seventy-six occurrences of the *topos* of drunkenness, fully fifty-four can be shown to have partisan political colouring.⁷

In two of the five passages where Cicero expounds generally upon the revelry of his political rivals he shows, quite clearly, that he finds these men, the Populares, completely unsuited to public life.

⁷ In addition to the seven litigious, and the fifty-four political uses of the *topos* of drunkenness, there are approximately fifteen references to Verres' drinking. It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine how Cicero employed inebriety in his characterization of Verres, since cannot be placed among the ranks of the Populares in the same way that Catiline, Clodius, Piso, Gabienus, and Anthony can.

But who can bear this- that cowards should lie in wait for brave men, fools for the wise, the drunken for the sober, the sluggards for the watchful? These men, I tell you, reclining at their banquets, embracing harlots, stupid with wine (*vino languidi*), stuffed with food, crowned with wreaths, smothered with unguents, weakened by vice, belch forth in their conversation the murder of good men (*bonorum*) and the burning of the city... All foreign enemies on land and sea have been pacified...civil war remains; within are plots; within is danger; within is an enemy. Luxury (*luxuria*) madness (*amentia*) crime are the enemies we have to fight. (*Cat.* 2.10-11; trans. Lord 1937, 59)

Cicero betrays his partisanship by referring to the 'they' and the 'we': indeed there is no clearer indication of the Optimates in Cicero's writing than references to 'the good men' (*boni*). Furthermore, what Cicero is obviously concerned with is not drunkenness, but madness, stupidity and extravagance; traits that the Optimates believed the Populares to espouse; traits of demagoguery; traits illustrated by drunkenness. These associations are made even clearer in Cicero's first speech on the agrarian law, a motion put forward and supported by the members of the democratic party.

By the immortal gods! Do such ideas appear to you to be sober men's plans or the dreams of men drunk with wine (*vinolentorum*)? Do they look like the deliberate opinions of wise men or the raving wishes of madmen (*furiosorum*) See now in the next article, how the infamous glutton (*helluo*) is stirring up trouble in the Republic... (*Leg. Agr.* 1.1, trans. by Freese 1930, 343)

Cicero here expresses precisely the same concerns; madness, stupidity, and extravagance. His political use of drunkenness, then, is not limited to personal invective, but is also a figurative manifestation of what the Optimates felt about the Populares; mad, raving, demagogues all!

Certainly the world that Cicero knew was a dangerous one. He witnessed ceaseless political tension and civil war, had been exiled from the city and recalled, and waited along with the rest of Rome's citizens to see the final outcome. We have seen that danger and tension peppered Cicero's use of drunkenness, but more frequently drinking, drunkenness, and the inevitable morning after, afforded Cicero the opportunity to incorporate a great deal of comic relief into an otherwise serious and prolonged debate. In particular, examples from Cicero's invective against Piso, and against Anthony are illustrative of the shockingly comical characterization he was capable of. A particularly ribald banquet of Piso's apparently had the participants enjoying unbridled potations (*intemperantissimas perpotationes*), and while Gabinius danced naked executing his whirling gyrations (*saltatorium versaret orbem*) none could say whether Piso, in the company of his Greeklings, spent more time 'in drinking, or in vomiting, or in excreting his potations' (*in quo nemo potest dicere utrum iste plus biberit an vomuerit an effuderit*). (*Pis.* 22 trans. by. Watts 1931, 163) Anthony is portrayed in an equally depraved episode. After berating him for his cruelty and avariciousness, Cicero turns his attention to the general's utter lack of decorum.

...you had swilled down so much wine at Hippias' wedding that you had to sick it all up under the eyes of the Roman people the next day. What a disgusting performance, even to hear about, never mind to see! If this had happened to you at a feast as you gulped down great draughts of wine, wouldn't anyone think it disgusting? But in a gathering of the Roman people, doing public business as Master of the Horse, where a belch would be disgusting, Antonius here threw up, and filled his own lap, and the whole dais with gobbets of food reeking with wine. (*Phil.* 2.63. trans. by Lacey 1986, 100-101)

The shocking images of both of these passages, and of the many others like them, must have earned Cicero disgusted smiles and muffled laughs. Even within these passages of distinctly low-brow humour, however, there is an echo of the more serious rebukes that such images were intended to provoke; Piso and his 'bosom friends' are completely immoderate and acting rabidly; Anthony's unbridled appetite interferes with his public life, and with his political responsibilities. Despite these shocking words and comic images, Cicero is launching a serious political assault.

This research has attempted to show that drunkenness, in the speeches of Cicero, is a rhetorical *topos*; recurring, regular, inventive and effective. Furthermore it has tried to situate this device in the political climate from which it issued, examining the traditions and uses of invective and examining the political phraseology rampant at the end of the republic. This approach has engendered a significant conclusion; drunkenness, in the political speeches of Cicero, was a politically coloured vice, it was a figurative manifestation of the Optimates' abhorrence of the Populares. As drunkenness could be easily made to illustrate madness, stupidity, excess and other dire consequences of demagoguery, it was frequently adopted by Cicero and the 'good men' to attack the tactics of the democrats. Furthermore, the inescapable humour and disgust which stemmed from talking about the inevitable effects of unlimited potations (bodily fluids and the like) allowed the Optimates to ridicule their detractors while nevertheless offering a commentary on their policies. The political use of drunkenness in the speeches of Cicero was an attempt to demonstrate the unsuitability of the Populares for government and public life. As a rhetorical device, and not simply a tool of personal invective, nor even a representation of biographical fact, the role of drunkenness must be re-examined in the historiographical tradition. It is hoped that a clearer understanding of the language of Roman political discourse at the end of the republic will increase our understanding of the role of political terminology and *topoi*.

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