Political alliances in the late Roman Republic: A case study of the Catilinarian Conspiracy

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Content

Translations and abbreviations

For all sources except Asconius, I have used The Loeb Classical Library translations throughout this thesis. Passages are cited in translation, important words are given in latin. Names of ancient authors and titles of their work are abbreviated in the footnotes. Below follows a list of all abbreviations used in this thesis.

App. *B. Civ.*	Appian, *Bella civilia*
Asc.	Asconius, ed R. G. Lewis (Oxford 2007)
Cic. *Att.*	Cicero, *Epistulae ad Atticum*
Cic. *Cael.*	Cicero, *Pro Caelio*
Cic. *Cat.*	Cicero, *In Catilinam*
Cic. *Comment. pet.*	Quintus Tulius Cicero, *Commentariolum petitionis*
Cic. *Mur.*	Cicero, *Pro Murena*
Cic. Pis.	Cicero, *In Pisonem*
Cic. *Sest.*	Cicero, *Pro Sestio*
Cic. *Sull*.	Cicero, *Pro Sulla*
Dio *Cass*.	Dio Cassius (Dio)
Liv.	Livy, *Ab urbe condita*
Plut. *Cic*.	Plutarch, *Life of Cicero*
Plut. *Cras*.	Plutarch, *Life of Crassus*
Sall. *Cat.*	Sallust, *Bellum Catilinae*

Introduction

Lucius Sergius Catiline is a Roman politician mostly known for the so-called First and Second Catilinarian conspiracies. These conspiracies, recorded for a large part by his political opponent, the consul Cicero, were a supposed attempt to destroy the Roman Republic in 65 and 63 respectively.[1] In four orations in 63, Cicero exposed Catiline's plans to set fire to Rome, kill the senatorial elite, and together with an army of disgruntled veterans and criminals conquer the city of Rome and re-establish a Sullan-like dictatorship. As the moniker 'Catilinarian conspiracy' suggests, however, Catiline is often shown as the mastermind of a larger group of discontent nobles that worked together to plot the fall of the Republic. Prominent politicians like Julius Caesar and Licinius Crassus were implicated, while even Cicero himself considered working together with Catiline not two years before their intense rivalry.

This political alliance of Catiline, existing of various senators, ex-consuls, and other high-ranking members of the Roman elite, is problematic when looking at some of the current ideas of factionalism and political parties in the Roman Republic. In fact, the very existence of factions or parties in the Roman Republic has been the subject of a heated debate amongst historians about factionalism within the Roman elite for the better part of almost two centuries. With Catiline as a case study, this thesis will shed light on why and how political alliances were formed in the late Republic.

In current historiography, there are two broad frameworks within which historians try to interpret the political alliances that can be found in the late Republic. The first is the idea of a system consisting of the *populares* and *optimates*, two opposing parties. The extent to which these are seen as actual political parties by historians has changed over the years, and it is now generally believed that *popularis* was a label for a type of politician that used the populace as the means to advance his

[1] All years are BCE, unless specified otherwise.

political career.[2] The split between *populares* and *optimates* has for the most part been the view that has dominated historiography until very recently. The second idea is one of a political system that is based on various bonds such as friendships, family ties, and short-lived political alliances based on mutual interests. These two views are not mutually exclusive, and in the historiography we will find that the two-party interpretation is often used alongside the second interpretation of a more loose and dynamic system. However, I will argue based on an analysis of Catiline's politics and political alliance that this first idea of perpetual political parties, factions, or types of politicians which the *populares* and *optimates* perspective suggests, should not be used at all, and that political alliances in the late Republic were both predominantly formed on shared interests, and often short-lived.

A two-party system?

The origin of the dual interpretation of *populares* and *optimates* comes originally from the 19th century German historian Theodor Mommsen. The factions first appear in Mommsens book *History of Rome*, or *Römische Geschichte*. There they are described as two political parties opposing each other. The *populares* wished to better the situation of the plebs and the community, the *optimates* that of the elite.[3] This conclusion is based on the analysis of various ancient sources, mainly Cicero. One specific passage in Cicero's *Pro Sestio* is especially important, where Cicero presents the *optimates* and *populares* as two different types of politicians.

> *There have always been two classes of men in this State who have sought to engage in public affairs and to distinguish themselves in them. Of these two classes, one aimed at being, by repute and in reality, "Friends of the People,"* (populares) *the other "Aristocrats."* (optimates) *Those who wished everything they did and said to be agreeable to the masses were reckoned*

[2] See: *Meier, C. '*Populares*' RE Supplement 10* (1965) 549–615.
[3] Mommsen, T., *Römische Geschichte, Vol. IV* (München 2001, first published 1855) 76.

as "Friends of the People," but those who acted so as to win by their policy the approval of all the best citizens were reckoned as "Aristocrats."[4]

Mommsen believed that these *populares* and *optimates* were opposing political parties, both with their own ideology and political program. But this idea of two political parties that Mommsen put forward got criticised heavily. It has been rightfully pointed out that anything like modern political parties did not exist in the Roman world.[5] However, the general idea of two opposing factions or two different types of politicians remains a central part of the modern framework of Roman politics. Politicians are often still classified as either being part of the *populares* or *optimates*, even if the specific definition changed.

Matthias Gelzer (1969, first published 1912) saw Roman politics as a series of factions based on various dynamical relationships, mostly patronage and *amicitia*.[6] Many of these bonds were forged by advocating in a court trial in favour of someone.[7] Some of the factions that formed were between politicians who had otherwise little to do with each other. There were also factions that endured for longer, says Gelzer. Catiline's conspiracy is one of those.[8] However, he does not go into any detail on what exactly these factions were, how they were formed, and to what extent they can be seen as a coherent whole with the same agenda or simply a loose gathering of politicians with shared interests. While Gelzer was opposed to the idea of factions based on a divide between *populares* and *optimates*, he still used the terms as a description of certain politicians. A *popularis* was a specific type of politician that used different methods to achieve reform, and who was generally in opposition to the conservative senate, the *optimates*. For instance, in his work on Julius

[4] Cic. Sest. 96-97.
[5] Yakobson, A., '*Optimates, populares'* In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia in Classics* (New York 2016)
[6] Gelzer, M.. *The Roman nobility,* translated with an introduction by *R. Seager* (*Oxford 1969,* German ed., 1912) 139.
[7] Gelzer, *The Roman nobility,* 77.
[8] Ibidem, 124.

Caesar, Gelzer continually refers to Caesar as a *popularis*.[9] Interestingly enough, Gelzer himself also recognised that Caesar often does not adhere to the accepted image of the word.[10]

Lily Ross Taylor (1949) returned to Mommsen's party model, although her view was more nuanced. There were no rigid party structures, but according to Taylor one can glean some sort of party program, consisting of land distribution, grain distribution, extension of citizenship, and agrarian legislation for the *populares*.[11] Meier (1965) did not think that *populares* politicians were mainly interested in these types of popular laws. Instead, they could be identified by the way they practised politics, mainly through the people's assemblies. According to Meier, they did pretend they were champions of the people, but their underlying motivations were always more egotistical in nature, either to improve their own position or that of other members of the elite. *Populares* were identified by him through their political method rather than their political agenda.[12] Just like most others before him though, Meier did not fully leave the idea of *populares* and *optimates*, instead redefining them to better fit his views of the reality of Roman politics. His focus was on identifying dissenting behaviour against the aristocratic consensus. Based on this, he created a list of seventy-two men who might be considered under the term *populares*. Many of these were not described by the sources as *populares*, and among them is also Catiline.[13] The problem with Meier's interpretation is that he gives a meaning to the word populares that it did not have during the late Republic. It might be useful to have a label to differentiate a special kind of politician, as Meier shows, but in that case it is not correct to use the term *populares*. It had its own meaning in its time, a meaning that was decidedly not what Meier attributes to it.

[9] Gelzer, M., *Caesar, Politician and Statesman, trans. By Peter Needham* (Harvard 1985, German ed., 1921) 33, 44, 45, 56, 57.
[10] Ibidem, 58.
[11] *Taylor, L. R. Party politics in the age of Caesar. (*Berkeley 1949*)*
[12] A view he shared with Howard H. Scullard. See: Scullard, H. H., From the Gracchi to Nero. A history of Rome from 133B.C. to A.D. 68 (New York 2011, first published 1959)
[13] Meier, C. 'Populares' *RE Supplement 10* (1965) 549–615.

Stepping away from *populares* and *optimates*

A fairly recent in-dept study by Margaret Robb (2010) into the use of the terms *populares* and *optimates* in the ancient sources shows that the words did not have a fixed meaning at all. Each time they were used, be it by Cicero, Sallust, or any other ancient author, the meaning of the word differed. Robb argues that the meaning of the word depended on the context in which it was used.[14] The audience knew depending on about who and in what context the words were used what the meaning was supposed to be. If the terms did not have an exact meaning during the late Republic, their use by modern historians to identify politicians or factions becomes even more questionable. Robb's conclusion is that "the varied usage of the word undermines the assumption that the word clearly and consistently identifies a particular type of politician."[15]

In this she agrees with Robert Morstein-Marx (2006), who identifies a *popularis* as an often young politician that uses 'popular' politics to rise through the ranks and gain recognition. This in itself was not a problem, and they did not necessarily get opposed by the conservative senatorial elite. However, some *populares* where life-long *populares*, which he frames as being populists, those that for their entire career either for personal gain or truly for the betterment of the poor plebs pursued policies through the people's assemblies against the will of the senate. Being a *popularis* was not bad in itself, and Morstein-Marx shows that context matters. There were 'good' and 'bad' *populares*.[16] For example, Cicero often calls his opponents *populares*, by which he means a demagogue that does not truly care for the people. Then in a different speech he calls himself a *popularis*, by which he then means someone who has the best interests of the people in mind.[17] If Cicero or another member of the established elite proposed a grain law, it was a good instance of a

[14] Robb, M. A., 'Beyond Populares and Optimates: Political Language in the Late Republic' *Historia* 213 (Stuttgart 2010) 66-67.
[15] Ibidem, 192.
[16] Morstein-Marx, R, *Mass oratory and political power in the late Roman Republic* (Cambridge 2004) 206.
[17] Ibidem, 207.

populares action. If Catiline or Clodius, or any other enemy of Cicero, proposed a grain law, they were a bad type of *populares*. Morstein-Marx argues that for the people coming to the political gatherings it was not a question of agreeing with the optimate or the *popularis*, which wasn't actually a real category of politician as he explains, but rather the question which of the proposers was really championing the interest of the people. This means that the term cannot actually be used as a label for any specific politician or legislation. Its meaning in the sources was based on who used the word and in what context, and so unless we anachronistically assign some fixed meaning to the word, we cannot use it as a term to describe politics or factions.

This is also the perspective that Mouritsen takes in his recent book *Politics in the Roman Republic* (2017). He says that *optimates* are fairly easy to pin down as the 'establishment party', the conservative elite that tried to hold on to its privileges and prioritised the power of the senate over that of the people's assemblies in order to enforce their will.[18] The *populares* are harder to pin down, says Mouritsen. They might be described as 'progressive' and 'democratic' or 'champions of the people'. The problems with this definition become clear when you take a closer look at the individual politicians. Some, such as the Gracchi, Saturninus, and Sulpicius, fit this description in some way, but that's where the list ends. And then, even these are very different from each other and do not all really fit the idea of someone who champions the peoples interest. Sulpicius for example has no recorded policies that actually helped the people, instead being rather unpopular. If instead we look at Catiline, it certainly seems he was a respected part of the elite, and for a long time he did not have nearly as bad of a reputation as someone like Clodius. Besides this, many examples exist of supposed *optimates* passing 'popular' laws such as grain distributions. Cato, 'the ultimate optimate' as Mouritsen calls him, passed a grain law with full support of the senate. Sulla, also known as one of the greatest *optimates* of the late Republic, redistributed the most land of any politician in the late Republic, which would paradoxically also make him one of the greatest *populares* as the distribution

[18] Mouritsen, H., *Politics in the Roman Republic* (Cambridge 2017) 112.

of land is generally seen as a *populares* action.[19] On the other hand, Caesar, on the opposite end of the spectrum as a supposed *popularis*, reduced the amount of grain recipients in Rome during his dictatorship. Other arguments follow, but Mouritsen makes his point clear. He shows the inherent flaws in trying to put some ideological or political goal or program as definition for the term *populares*.

So how does Mouritsen think we should identify the *populares* and *optimates*? Mouritsen supposes that all senators belonged to the *optimates*. It was simply by virtue of being part of the elite that this term applied to them. He says that if *optimates* was a category to which all politicians naturally belonged, then *populare*s cannot for obvious reasons have been defined as its opposite.[20] Using Robb, Mouritsen then looks at the various definitions the word has in the ancient sources. In the end he shows that the word has so many meanings that it is the context in which it is used that shows what the orator meant when they used the word. In the end Mouritsen conclusion is that the *populares* party is simply a myth. Although there certainly were politicians who practised 'popular' politics, they cannot be caught in the singular term *populares*, because these did not even exist in the Republic, and any definition we give to it is therefore also wrong. So too is it the case for Cataline, who Mouritsen places as just another member of the elite, just one that had been opposed by other members of the elite to the point where he took drastic actions.

Clearly, in recent years there is a trend towards staying clear from the use of *populares* and *optimates* as labels or indicators for political practise in the late Republic. If *populares* and *optimates* cannot be used to describe politicians or political factions, we should take a look at political factions through the second idea mentioned at the beginning of this introduction, that of a more fluid and dynamic political system.

[19] Mouritsen, *Politics in the Roman Republic*, 113-114.
[20] Ibidem, 118-119.

Already in 1920, Friedrich Münzer wrote a work detailing the dynamic nature of political alliances in the Roman Republic. He focused mostly on the various Roman houses throughout the early to the late Republic. He argued that these family groups were the basis of political parties. For example, he speaks of a Scipionic party.[21] These parties then could have allies from outside the family, but the party itself was based around the interests of the house.[22] It is clear that he does not allude to these parties being anywhere near the level of coherence as modern political parties, because there was for example no shared political agenda. There is a theme of a struggle between democracy versus oligarchy in his work, but the concepts of *populares* and *optimates* are never mentioned, nor are the words even used once. Münzer's interpretation of faction politics is one mostly devoid of ideology, and despite being written much earlier, seems to fit considerably better in Robb and Mouritsen's analysis. The problem with Münzer's interpretation is that his focus on the importance of familial ties does not take into account the significance of alliances formed around specific elections or common political interests. While the importance of familial relationships such as alliances between houses, marriages, and old family ties should not be underestimated, Münzer mostly leaves out patronage, *amicitia*, and other political alliances between individual politicians. Inevitably these alliances do show up, but Münzer does not analyse them in-depth.[23] Catiline's alliance is glossed over quickly, only mentioned shortly as "Catiline and his allies and patrons."[24] Because there were no familial ties to be found between Catiline and his allies, Münzer does not give them the light of day. As I will argue however, it is especially with Catiline that we can start to understand more about political alliances in the late Republic.

Erich Gruen (1995, first published 1974) believed that the idea that Roman politics was divided between *optimates* and *populares*, whether they be parties or politicians, was reductionist.[25]

[21] Münzer, F., *Roman Aristocratic Parties and Families*, translated by Thérése Ridley (Baltimore 1999, first published 1920) 169.
[22] Ibidem, 123, 179, 361.
[23] Ibidem, 294.
[24] Ibidem, 320.
[25] Gruen, E. S., The Last Generation of the Roman Republic (Berkeley 1995, first published 1974) 50.

Gruen portrays political alliances in the late Republic as being based around influential members of the elite, working together with some shared goal or interest in mind. An alliance between Catulus, Lucullus, and Hortensius, was based on a shared antipathy towards Pompeius Magnus.[26] Marcus Porcius Cato gathered around him an alliance based around the opposition to Caesar and Pompeius. Through shrewd politics and strategic alliances, Cato's faction dominated the senate in the 50s. Gruen says houses had indeed been an important part of political loyalty before, but he argues that their significance declined during the late Republic. He says that one could no longer speak of 'Metellan' or 'Scipionic' politics, for example, because membership of the house did not define an individual's political allegiance or attitude anymore.[27] Alliances could more easily shift, now that familial bonds were weaker. Gruen cites many examples of short-lived political alliances, opposition within families, and reconciliation with former enemies. Using examples like Pompeius Magnus, Julius Caesar, and Licinius Crassus, Gruen paints a picture of a political landscape that was constantly changing in the post-Sullan era. Using Catiline, I will further expand on this perspective.

Many more historians have proposed their own theories on the political factions in the Roman Republic, certainly too many to name here.[28] It does show the relative obscurity of the sources, and the way they can be interpreted. The idea of two factions existing in opposition to each other in Roman politics has persisted amongst historians and popular culture until today. If one looks at Wikipedia for example, the page for *populares* calls it a 'political faction in the Roman Republic', and Catiline is cited as an example. Barbara Levick too adheres to the idea of the political split between *populares* and *optimates*, and she sketches Catiline as an opportunist who started out as an optimate, but as he was unable to fulfil his ambitions in the traditional ways he turned more and

[26] Gruen*, The Last Generation of the Roman Republic*, 52.
[27] Ibidem, 59.
[28] More views on this topic: Ferrary, J.L.*,* 'Optimates et populares. Le problème du rôle de l'idéologie dans la politique*.'* In J. M. David and W. Nippel , eds., *Die späte römische Republik: un débat franco-allemand d'histoire et d'historiographie sous la direction de Hinnerk Bruhns* (Rome 1997), Mackie, N., *'*Popularis ideology and popular politics at Rome in the first century BC*.' Rheinisches Museum 135* (1992)

more to popular politics, becoming a *popularis*.[29] As has become clear this is an outdated view on the political system of the Republic.

In the following two chapters, I will use the Catilinarian Conspiracy as a case study to investigate political alliances in the late Republic. The two-party system, or even the division between *populares* and *optimates* in general, is not adequate to explain the way political alliances formed, changed, and dissolved. I will instead argue for a more dynamic system of alliances. Catiline's political alliance of the years 64 and 63 gives us a great example of a more fluid and changing system of political alliances based on shared interests or common goals. We will look at three different groups of interest. First the urban plebs, who will be used to illustrate that Catiline was not a *populares*, nor did he belong to any such party. In the first chapter, I will argue that Catiline did neither have, nor focus on, the support of the urban plebs, which is the general hallmark of a *popularis* politician. The second group of interest is the rural citizenry. The second half of the first chapter will show that Catiline focused his political program on a rural supporter base, in order to target and create an alliance with a large group of citizens that would in return for his promise of help support him in the election. The last group of interest is the Roman elite. By closely examining Catiline's aristocratic supporters in the second chapter, we can get an idea of the motivations of those politicians that formed alliances. Furthermore, we get to see the volatile nature of Catiline's alliance, as allegiances might switch rapidly if new opportunities presented themselves or old ones became less appealing. Put together, this will paint a picture of a dynamic political landscape with ever-changing, short-lived alliances based on shared interests.

[29] Levick, B., *Catiline* (London 2015) 51-52

Context: A timeline of Catiline's politics and the conspiracies

The years after Sulla's dictatorship of 82-79 BCE were a tumultuous time in the Roman Republic. The Sullan settlement had left many unsatisfied, and there was unrest in Italy and the provinces. In Spain, the ex-preator Sertorius had declared independence. In the east, the threat of the famed king Mithridates resurfaced. In Italy, there was unrest among both Sulla's veterans and those who had fallen victim to his reign of terror.[30] It was in this context that the ambitious young politician Lucius Sergius Catilina began climbing the ladder of Roman politics. He became praetor in 68, followed by a two year governorship of the wealthy province of Africa. After returning from Africa, he was accused of extortion, a court case he won but one that made it so he was not able to run for consul in the years 66 and 65.[31] In 64 he was finally able to run for election, against the *homo novus* Cicero, a bid Catiline lost. This loss against Cicero started a rivalry between the two, as Cicero had slandered Catiline in multiple speeches during the elections.[32] The year 63 might have been the last chance for Catiline to be elected as consul. Cicero's attacks had damaged his reputation, and his position amongst the elite had been weakened.

It was in the years 64 and 63 that Catiline was accused by Cicero multiple times of having been part of a plot to kill the consuls of 65, Lucius Aurelianus Cotta and Lucius Manlius Torquatus,.[33] This is known as the First Catilinarian Conspiracy. There is little to no substance to these claims, and so it is highly questionable to what extent this should be believed. Torquatus defended Catiline in the extortion case of 65, which he would hardly have done had he believed that Catiline indeed planned an attempt on his life. Besides Torquatus, Catiline still had the support of several other powerful

[30] Levick, *Catiline*, 29-30.
[31] Asc. 85C.
[32] Shapiro, S., *O Tempora! O Mores!* (Norman 2005) 170., Münzer, *Roman Aristocratic Parties and Families*, 319.
[33] Asc. 92C.

senators during these years, supporters that will be investigated further in the second chapter.[34] Because the events of the First Conspiracy were likely fabricated by Cicero to discredit Catiline, it will not play an important role in my argumentation. The 'conspiracy' of Catiline, when mentioned in this thesis, will always refer to the so-called Second Catilinarian Conspiracy of 63.

In the elections of 63, held in July, Catiline still had a realistic chance of winning the consulship despite Cicero's efforts to discredit him. In this election, Catiline offered the cancelation of debts under the slogan *tabulae novae* (new account books).[35] This gained him support from both the many unhappy veterans and the victims of Sulla's proscriptions, although he does not seem to have been necessarily popular amongst the plebeians in Rome.[36] Sullan colonists and veterans, under the leadership of a Sullan centurion by the name of Manlius, arrived in Rome to support Catiline during these elections.[37] This was to no avail however, and Catiline was still defeated in the elections, with Junius Silanus and Licinius Murena being chosen as consuls for 62.[38] A few months after, on the 21st of October 63, the Sullan veterans under Manlius, having failed to get political support through Catiline, armed themselves in Etruria. In early November, they sent a letter to the senate demanding their issues with debt and corruption be addressed, but their petition was refused.[39] Meanwhile in Rome, the First Catilinarian Oration was delivered by Cicero on the 8th of November, exposing the supposed conspiracy.[40] Catiline, faced with overwhelming opposition and the threat of imprisonment and persecution, decided to flee Rome and join with Manlius. Many of his supporters remained in the city. The next day, Cicero held the Second Oration, warning of the threat of Manlius and the danger within Rome itself.[41] Somewhere in the month after, the consul-designate Murena was

[34] Levick, *Catiline*, 40.
[35] Levick, *Catiline*, 87.
[36] Harrison, I., 'Catiline, Clodius, and Popular Politics at Rome during the 60s and 50s BCE', *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 51 (2008) 103.
[37] Cic. *Mur*. 49., Plut. *Cic*. 14.
[38] Cic. *Mur*. 52-53., Sall. *Cat*. 26.
[39] Sall. *Cat* 33.
[40] Cic. *Cat*. 1.
[41] Cic. *Cat*. 2.

charged in a court case, and defended by Cicero in *Pro Murena*, claiming that Murena's experience was necessary to combat the threat of Catiline and Manlius.[42]

A member of Catiline's alliance that had remained in Rome, Publius Cornelius Lentulus Sura, attempted to get the support of a Gallic tribe, the Allobroges. It is unclear what exactly this support would entail. However, the message to the Allobroges was intercepted by Cicero. Cicero used this as the definitive evidence against Lentulus and the remaining allies of Catiline. They were arrested on the 3rd of December, confessed to the senate, and imprisoned.[43] Cicero delivered the Third Oration the same day, informing the people of the events.[44] Two days later, Cicero delivered the Fourth Oration in the senate, debating the punishment of the Roman citizens that confessed. In that meeting, it was decided that they should receive the death penalty, and they were executed that night.[45] An army raised by Cicero's consular colleague Antonius, a former ally of Catiline, managed to catch Catiline's and Manlius' forces somewhere late January of 62. Catiline's forces were decisively defeated, and he was killed in the battle.[46]

[42] Cic. *Mur*. 79-90.
[43] Cic. *Cat*. 3.15-16., Sall. *Cat*. 47.
[44] Cic. *Cat*. 3.
[45] Sall. *Cat*. 53, 55.
[46] Sall. *Cat*. 59-61., Plut. *Cic*. 22.8.

Cicero's orations and Sallust's history

Our knowledge of the events of the Catilinarian Conspiracy is largely dependent on two contemporary sources. First Cicero himself, and second the historian Sallust. Various other sources such as Livy, Plutarch, and Cassius Dio have their own version of events, but since they were writing (long) after the fact they can only be used to confirm what we know from Cicero and Sallust. In order to properly examine Catiline and his political allies, we must be aware of the shortcomings of our sources. Since they are unreliable, we must take care in interpreting them. There is always the question of trustworthiness with ancient sources, but in this case there are some very obvious flaws.

In the case of Cicero, we might notice some plain problems in reliability. An apparent strength of Cicero is that he was personally involved in the events. Unfortunately, this is also Cicero's biggest weakness. Cicero was Catiline's greatest opponent, basically from the elections of 64 onwards all the way to Catiline's death in 62. He had a vested interest in describing the events in such a way that they were favourable to him, and damaging to Catiline. It is no surprise then, that nearly everything Cicero writes about Catiline is negative. Andrew Lintott's first warning to any historian using Cicero is that his texts cannot be treated as authentic history, as there is always a persuasive element that overshadows the truth.[47] Of course, we cannot simply overlook the entirety of Cicero's contributions. It does mean that we will have to examine Cicero's claims, either by comparing them to our other sources, or by deducing their accuracy by examining their context. Even if we cannot trust Cicero for historical accuracy, we can use his writings by carefully considering their context and goal.

The four Catilinarian Orations and the speech *Pro Murena* are Cicero's main contributions to our knowledge of the events of the so-called Conspiracy. These were all political speeches. They had

[47] Lintott, A., *Cicero as Evidence, A Historian's Companion* (Oxford 2008) 3.

a purpose, which was to convince their intended audience of what Cicero wished them to believe. Again, it does not mean that everything in them is necessarily not true. In fact, Cicero would not be able to twist the facts too degree. After all, the people he talked to were living through the same events, and would have most likely already been privy to a lot of what was happening. Secondly, there are no large discrepancies between Cicero and our other sources. It is especially specific events such as secret meetings, plans regarding the conspiracy, and motivations of people that should not be easily believed. These are things Cicero would only know of through rumours or reports, if he knew anything real at all. They are often used to make his case stronger by explicitly stating his enemies evil plans or intentions. Cicero's motivations at the time seem to have been mostly political in nature might be derived from two of his other works. In *Pro Caelio*, given in 56, Cicero presents a more nuanced portrait of Catiline with many positive traits, in stark contrast to his constant negative portrayal during the events of the conspiracy.[48] Moreover, his letters to Atticus, Cicero says he would be willing to defend Catiline in the extortion case of 65.[49] Put together, we can assume the reality of Catiline's behaviour was probably far less unsavoury than Cicero suggests in the four speeches of *In Catilinam*.

The First Oration was held in the senate on the 8th of November 63. Catiline was present at this first speech, and much of it is directly aimed at him. In it, Cicero told Catiline that his plans had been laid bare, and that he should flee Rome. Cicero insists many times that Catiline should leave Rome.[50] The reason why Catiline had not been arrested yet is not entirely clear, but it certainly seems Cicero did not actually have any real evidence of treason. This might have been the reason he insisted on Catiline fleeing Rome. If Catiline left Rome and joined the army of Manlius, this would prove Cicero right and provide the evidence he needed. This is also the first time that Cicero connects Manlius with Catiline, and he warns of Manlius' forces that are gathering in Etruria.[51]

[48] Cic. *Cael*. 10-14.
[49] Cic. *Att*. 1.2.1.
[50] Cic. *Cat*. 1.10., 1.18., 1.20., 1.31., 1.33.
[51] Cic. *Cat*. 1.5.

The Second Oration was delivered before the people the next day, and seems to have been meant to explain the events of the day before to the general population of Rome. Of course, the events as Cicero saw them. Catiline had fled Rome the previous night. Cicero mostly talked about the danger that Catiline's allies in Rome still posed.[52] He also justified his antagonism towards Catiline, and it is interesting that he felt it was necessary to do this.[53] It suggests that there were still plenty of people that did not truly believe in Catiline's conspiracy, or at least not what Cicero was telling them at this *contio*.

The Third Oration was also delivered before the people, on the 3rd of December 63. This was after Catiline's allies in Rome had been captured. Again, it seems this speech was meant to inform the people of the events of the previous days. It is important to be aware of to whom the speeches were given, as we can assume the senate was much better informed than the people, which would force Cicero to be more precise in his recounting of events when talking to the senate.

The Fourth and final Oration was delivered before the senate on the 5th of December. It deals mostly with Catiline's imprisoned allies. Cicero argues that they should be killed, but Caesar disagrees.[54] After Cicero's speech, it is decided they will indeed be executed., as Sallust tells us.[55]

Besides Cicero, our second contemporary source is Sallust. His monograph on the Catilinarian conspiracy, titled *Bellum Catilinae*, is the first of two monographs by Sallust. Sallust's account roughly matches that of Cicero. Like Cicero, Sallust is almost solely negative in his descriptions of Catiline. It begs the question to what extent Sallust was influenced by the Ciceronan account of the events. The influence of the four Catilinarian Orations can be detected in some places in Sallust. Cicero's *Pro Sulla*, a speech in defence of a supposed Catilinarian Conspirator delivered in 62, seems to have had a particularly big impact on Sallust's conception the alleged First Catilinarian

[52] Cic. *Cat*. 2.17.
[53] Cic. *Cat*. 2.14-15.
[54] Cic. *Cat*. 4.7.
[55] Sall. *Cat*. 53, 55.

Conspiracy of 65.[56] Sallust might have been an eyewitness to some or many of the events in 63, since he would have been around 23 years old in that year. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that Sallust is talking about events that he witnessed in person. John Ramsey speculates he was not present in Rome in 64-63, perhaps being in military service.[57] Sallust does seem to reproduce some contemporary documents that he may have found in his research. A letter from Catiline to Catulus, and Lentulus Sura's note to Catiline, the latter of which will be analysed in the second chapter. Concerning Sallust, we need to take into account his general view on the world and the Roman Republic. Sallust saw the Republic and the Roman people, both elite and plebs, as corrupt. According to Ramsey, Sallust decided on writing the monograph because it suited his purpose of examining the moral degeneracy in the late Republic.[58] Considering this, it makes sense that Sallust does not question Cicero's narrative, because it fits within his view of Roman society and the degrading moral values. In his description of events and the people involved, this should definitely be taken into account.

[56] Ramsey, J. T., *The War with Catiline. The War with Jugurtha.* Loeb Classical Library Cambridge (Cambridge 2013) 5.
[57] Ramsey, *The War with Catiline,* 6.
[58]Ramsey, *The War with Catiline,* XXXVII.

Chapter 1: Urban plebs and rural rebels

When talking about Roman politicians in the *populares* debate there is a tendency to focus on the politicians and the legislation. After all, this is the perspective that we get from the sources, and it is also that which seems most relevant when looking at a political topic such as factionalism or party structures in the Roman Republic. Indeed, it would be tempting to only take the same approach in this thesis. However, as is common in the discipline of history, a focus on the upper layers of society might mean the neglect of the by far largest part of the population. In the case of the Roman Republic, this is the urban plebs and the rural populace. It is these two groups that will be the main focus of this chapter. I will use the study of his support in the different layers of society to disprove the notion that Catiline was simply a *populares* politician, or that any such party was active in the Republic. In the end, this will point us to a more dynamic and fluid alliance system rather than one based on ideology or parties. By examining what part of the population that supported Catiline, this chapter will firstly undermine the idea that Catiline can be defined as a *popularis*, by looking at his support amongst the urban plebs, and secondly begin to argue for a system of dynamic alliances by looking at his support amongst the rural Etrurian population.

1.1 Catiline and the urban plebs

Firstly, let us take a look at the part of the population that is supposed to be the target audience of the demagoguing *popularis* politician: the plebs of Rome. In virtually all interpretations of the concept or word *populares* that we have seen in the introduction, a focus on politics involving the urban population is a common thread. Whether it be a genuine interest in bettering the situation of the common people, or using their popularity for their own gain, the cornerstone of any definition of *populares* politicians is anchored a bid for popular support. Since Catiline is so often defined as a *popularis*, it is important for us to establish that this concept cannot be used in our explanation of neither himself nor his political alliance. Therefore, we need to first find out if Catiline had a large

following amongst the urban plebs. Secondly, we need to take a look at whether or not he did try to gain their support through his actions or legislation.

If we believe Cicero, Catiline did claim that he was the representative of the poor and indebted. In the *Pro Murena*, Cicero talks about a speech Catiline is supposed to have given in a meeting with fellow conspirators.

> *You remember how the report of a speech which that evil cut-throat* (Catiline) *was said to have made in a meeting at his home spread throughout the city: that the only trustworthy protector of the poor able to be found was poor himself.*[59]

Although there is no way to verify whether this is exactly true, it does mean that Cicero did portray Catiline as someone who championed the cause of the poor.

Sallust gives us the transcript of a letter where Catiline himself claims too he was representing the needs of the poor. In the letter, that which was read in the senate and which we can assume is most likely authentic, Catiline wrote*: "*I took up the general cause of the unfortunate in keeping with my usual custom."[60] From these two passages, it certainly seems Catiline was at least trying to cater to the needs of the urban poor, although they do not actually tell us anything about whether he was actually popular amongst them.

So, the question about his actual popularity remains. Both Cicero and Sallust say that Catiline in Rome gathered around him a large quantity of supporters. Sallust talks of "throngs of all depraved and criminal sorts", Cicero of a "huge crowd of desperate men".[61] Does this mean that he actually enjoyed the support of a large part of the urban plebs, however? I will argue this was not the case, and Catiline does not conform to this crucial *populares* stereotype. That Catiline lacked popular support among the Roman plebs is also something that is argued by Ian Harrison in his article

[59] Cic. *Mur*. 50.
[60] Sall. *Cat*. 35.
[61] Sall. *Cat*. 14, Cic. *Cat*. 2.8.

Catiline, Clodius, and Popular Politics at Rome during the 60s and 50s BCE.[62] Although I agree in principal with many of his arguments, my analysis will involve more primary sources and supports a different conclusion. Harrison argues from the perspective of a two-party model, as his main point is is that Catiline was not an actual *populares* as he lacked support amongst the urban plebs, in contrast to Clodius. I argue that there was no such divide in the first place, and that the fact Catiline did not have a large following amongst the urban plebs instead points at a more dynamic political system that is not clearly divided between two parties or types of politicians.

Unfortunately, as Harrison also points out, a problem exists with the primary source material.[63] It is virtually exclusively Cicero that gives us contemporary information on this topic, and he is undeniably biased. In his speeches against Catiline, Cicero claims that not Catiline but he himself is the one that has the support of the plebs.[64] We can assume that Cicero would not admit, if this were the case, that he did not have the backing of the majority of the population. However, we must also consider that the plebs did not necessarily need to be outspoken backers of Cicero. As long as they were not clearly supporting Catiline, they could be considered by Cicero to be on the 'right' side.

In the first oration against Catiline, where Catiline himself was also present, Cicero claims that 'the populace is panic stricken' (*timor populi*) and 'all loyal citizens have rallied to the standard' (*concursus bonorum omnium*).[65] That he specifically mentions loyal citizens implies the existence of a part of the population that did not rally to Cicero's banner, which would in this case be those supporting Catiline and his conspiracy. However, I would argue that with the 'panicked populace' Cicero refers to the general population of Rome, while the loyal citizens, and so also the disloyal ones, refer to the Roman elite. The use of the word *bonorum* hints at this, as this is also how Cicero often refers to the 'good' part of the Roman elite in other texts. [66] Cicero talks here not of the general

[62] Harrison, *Catiline, Clodius, and Popular Politics at Rome during the 60s and 50s BCE*
[63] Harrison, *Catiline, Clodius, and Popular Politics,* 98.
[64] Cic. *Cat*. 1.21.
[65] Cic. *Cat*. 1.1.
[66] See Robb, *Beyond Populares and Optimates*, for analysis of the use of the word *boni* by Cicero to refer to the Roman elite.

population of Rome, but of a split within the Roman elite. What would follow from this is that Cicero says here that the general population did not support Catiline. Rather the opposite, they were panicked by the news of the uncovered conspiracy. There was definitely a part of the elite that was in league with Catiline, as we will see in the next chapter, but this does not prove that Catiline also had popular support.

Later in the first oration, Cicero encourages Catiline to leave the city. Here Cicero says to Catiline: "Take all your men (*omnis tuos*) with you or, if you cannot take them all, take as many as you can. Cleanse the city."[67] If Cicero believed that Catiline had the support of a large part of the urban plebs, this would have been a rather odd thing to say, as it can hardly be expected he would take half of the city's population with him. If, as I argue, Catiline instead only had a rather limited number of followers in Rome, this makes a lot more sense. In the second speech, which is given after Catiline has left the city for Etruria, Cicero again asks for those left behind by Catiline to leave the city.[68] Harrison argues that the phrasing of this passage suggests Cicero might be speaking about Catilina's aristocratic followers here as well.[69] I would agree with him on this, and also add that at the beginning of the speech, when Cicero also talks shortly about those left behind by Catilina, he says: "But the men he has left behind! What debts they have! What power! What distinguished birth!"[70] This definitely confirms Harrisons conclusion. Again, Cicero talks not about the general Roman plebs, but about the part of the elite that supports Catiline.

That Cicero thinks, or at least claims, that Catiline does not enjoy the support of the Roman populace becomes even more evident towards the end of the first speech. Cicero tells Catiline:

[67] Cic. *Cat*. 1.10.
[68] Cic. Cat. 2.27.
[69] Harrison, *Catiline, Clodius, and Popular Politics,* 98.
[70] Cic. *Cat*. 2.4.

*There is not here outside of that conspiracy (*coniurationem*) of ruined men a single person who does not fear you, not one who does not hate you.*[71]

Here, Cicero claims directly that Catiline had only little support in Rome. We have to consider that this a political speech in the senate, and it might have been advantageous for Cicero to paint Catiline as a black sheep with little support. On the other hand, the main point of Cicero's orations was to point out the danger Catiline supposedly posed to the Republic. If Catiline had indeed enjoyed the support of the masses, that would have definitely strengthened Cicero's main point, and he might not have chosen to withhold such a strong argument. I would argue that Cicero certainly exaggerates when he says there is not a single person that supports Catiline, but also that there is certainly an underlying truth to it. The use of the word *coniurationem* in this passage, meaning conspiracy, plot, or band of conspirators, implies merely a limited number of people. It is also referred to in other instances, such as the parts of the first speech were Catiline's followers are called a 'reckless band of criminals',[72] and a bit later 'a band of evil men'.[73] Again, from the wording we can infer only small numbers. I do not want to fail to mention that in a list of the six different types of people that have joined Catiline according to Cicero, given in the second speech, he notably leaves out the urban plebs.[74] This is consistent with what we have seen before, and reinforces the idea that Catiline did not have extensive support amongst the plebs.

Some other passages in Cicero that seem to contradict the idea that Catiline had limited support of the urban plebs have to be addressed, however. In the second speech, Cicero tells of a "huge crowd of desperate men from the countryside as well as from the city" that Catiline gathered

[71] Cic. *Cat*. 1.13. "In qua nemo est extra istam coniurationem perditorum hominum qui te non metuat, nemo qui non oderit."
[72] Cic. *Cat*. 1.23.
[73] Cic. *Cat*. 1.25.
[74] Cic. *Cat*. 2.18-23. According to Cicero, the six groups from which Catiline has recruited his forces are: 1. Those with heavy debts and large estates, but who do not want to sell those estates 2. Those that are overwhelmed by debts and want to gain power through a revolution 3. Veterans of Sulla, among whom is Manlius 4. An assortment of lazy troublemakers and failed men 5. Criminals and killers 6. The group to which Catiline belongs, gamblers, adulterers and lechers.

around him, most of whom where in debt.[75] A little later he says "If the criminal bands of desperate men leave Rome, how happy we shall be!"[76] These passages seem to suggest a much more substantial number of followers, and one could definitely use them to try and prove that Catiline did indeed have a large following under the urban plebs. Some arguments can be made against this. Firstly, the context shows that these men Cicero talks about were not the urban poor at all. They had "squandered their inheritances (…) mortgaged their estates (..) and their credit has now started to run out; but the expensive tastes that they had in their days of plenty still remain."[77] These young men named by Cicero then were not plebs, but rather impoverished nobles or landowners. As Catiline had campaigned for consul with the political agenda of debt cancelation, it is easy to understand why those of the elite or the rural free population that were down on their luck due to the economic struggles were willing to throw their lot in with him. We have already seen in the first chapter that a not insignificant part of the main body of Catiline's alliance was there because of the promise of debt cancelation, which could happen if Catiline was elected with their support.

Additionally, Harrison argues that for the urban poor, debt cancelation might have been largely irrelevant, as he deems it unlikely they would have been able to secure 'officially' regulated loans that could be affected by legislation of debt cancellation.[78] Indeed, Catiline's political agenda does not seem to have been focused on the urban plebs at all. This might also provide a partial explanation for what we have seen from Cicero about the lack of popular support for Catilina. Furthermore, it is a strong argument against the idea of any type of *populares* agenda. Catiline was with his political program not primarily focused on the urban poor in Rome, but on fellow members of the aristocracy. Why he did not try to win the support of the plebs can only be speculated on. In any case, that he did not focus on promoting legislation for helping the urban poor supplements the argument that Catiline does not conform to the concept of a *popularis*, but rather focused his efforts

[75] Cic. *Cat*. 2.8.
[76] Cic. *Cat*. 2.9-10.
[77] Cic. *Cat*. 2.10.
[78] Harrison, *Catiline, Clodius, and Popular Politics,* 99.

on cultivating a political alliance with other aristocrats. So, from what we have seen thus far, Catiline did neither have a large following amongst the plebs, nor did he even focus his efforts on gaining it.

To confirm or refute the picture we have gotten from Cicero, we will have to take a look at other primary sources. The most informative of these is Sallust, as he is the only other extensive contemporary source. Although unlike Cicero Sallust was free from any direct involvement in the affairs concerning Catiline, it is clear he was heavily influenced by Cicero's narrative. Sallust has a strong negative opinion of Catiline, placing him firmly within his moral framework of the corruption of the Republic and its people.[79] With that in mind, let us take a look at Sallust' work. In contrast to Cicero, Sallust does seem to write that Catiline had the support of the Roman plebs. One passage specifically has been used to argue Catiline had been supported by urban plebs.[80] The passage reads as follows:

> *This insanity was not just confined to those who were privy to the plot, but the whole body of the commons* (cuncta plebis) *out of eagerness for change approved Catiline's undertakings.*[81]

It cannot be denied that if we were to take Sallust at face value here, it is clear we must change our view on Catiline's support amongst the urban population. However, there is good reason to be critical of Sallust's account here.

First of all, Sallust generalises the entirety of the urban population into one single entity. We can hardly assume that they were of one mind in their support for any single politician. Following the passage described above, Sallust further stereotypes the whole of the urban plebs. That they supported Catiline was "according to their usual custom", and following this announcement Sallust goes on a long rant against the urban plebs. They had a wish for turmoil, they all envied the elite and exalted the disreputable, they hated the old, and they were shameless and impudent.[82] Sallust lets

[79] Ramsey, *The War with Catiline,* XXXVII.
[80] Yavetz, Z., 'The failure of Catiline's conspiracy', *Historia* 12 (1963) 488. Yavetz uses Sallust to argue that virtually all of the Roman plebs supported Catiline.
[81] Sall. *Cat*. 37
[82] Sall. *Cat*. 37

his ideology of a corrupted Roman society shine through rather obviously here. The always rowdy and revolutionary plebs could, in his narrative, hardly do anything else then support the morally corrupt Catiline. Here it is also a good time to remember that during the Catilinarian Conspiracy, there is no evidence at any point of any public uprising or large unrest within Rome. When Catiline is 'exposed' by Cicero, he does not rouse his supporters in the city, which might be expected if most of his powerbase had been amongst the Roman plebs, but instead flees to Etruria were he joins the army of Manlius. If, as Sallust claims, the 'whole body of the commons' in Rome approved of Catiline's plans, why do we not see any evidence of this in the actual events of the Catilinarian Conspiracy? Sallust tries to resolve this obvious clash of his ideology with reality by claiming that "after the disclosure of the plot, the commons, who at first out of their eagerness for revolution were all too supportive of war, changed their mind and denounced the designs of Catiline."[83] The obvious remark here is that Sallust again generalises the entirety of the Roman plebs as one entity, and it is hardly believable that just because Cicero gave another oration with more accusations against Catiline, the entire common populace of Rome suddenly changed sides to the point where they "extolled Cicero to the sky", as he tells us.[84] In my opinion, we have adequate reason to suggest that Sallust is exaggerating in his account of the popular support Catiline had amongst the Roman plebs.

I do not want to claim that Catiline did not have any support at all. As we have seen, both Cicero and Sallust clearly mention large groups of people in Rome that can be classified as his followers. Appian too says Catiline put together a group of senators, equites, ordinary citizens, foreign residents, and slaves.[85] Plutarch says that when Catiline left the city to join with Manlius, he took with him 300 men.[86] When after this the leading conspirators in Rome were executed by Cicero, there were still "many members of the conspiracy (…) assembled in the forum."[87] Sallust tells us that

[83] Sall. *Cat*. 48.
[84] Sall. *Cat*. 48.
[85] App. *B*. *Civ*. 2.2.
[86] Plut. *Cic*. 16.
[87] Plut. *Cic*. 22.

Lentulus, one of the main conspirators, had gathered a "large force" in Rome.[88] After having dealt with the main conspirators however, Cicero apparently does not believe he is in danger any longer, because he leaves his escort behind and walks through the forum where he is now greeted with "cries and clapping of hands"[89] as it seems the remaining population was all too happy the danger had passed. The 300 men mentioned by Plutarch is also a relatively small number. Certainly, we can assume Catiline did have a following in Rome that was not insignificant, but it still seems from most sources that this number was trivial compared to the total population of Rome. The reason for this becomes especially clear when one compares Catiline with Clodius, as was the goal of Harrisons article.

Firstly, Clodius, in contrast to Catiline, proposed a series of measures that were directly aimed at improving the lives of the urban plebs. Secondly, he promoted himself as a defender of the popular *libertas*, again in contrast to Catiline. Thirdly, Clodius focused on becoming tribune, an office that embodied the will of the common people, whereas we have already seen Catiline's aim was to become consul. Especially Clodius' *lex Clodia frumentaria*, which allowed for free grain distributions in Rome, gained him immense popularity amongst the plebs.[90] Whereas we have to try particularly hard to find convincing evidence of urban support in Rome outside of the elite for Catiline, with Clodius there is abundant proof of extensive support amongst the urban plebs.[91] If Catiline had as much support as Clodius, we would expect to see a similar density of evidence.

If we look at the evidence presented by primary sources, and we see the clear contrast to the truly 'popular' Clodius, I would argue that there is insufficient proof to portray Catiline as a *populares* politician that thrived in Rome due to his popularity among the urban plebs. If we consider that we have seen Catiline depicted as a typical *populares* in the historiography, it does bring into question the entire two-party system, as he does not fit into it at all. He neither focused his

[88] Sall. *Cat*. 43.
[89] Plut. *Cic*. 22.
[90] Harrison, *Catiline, Clodius, and Popular Politics,* 111.
[91] Ibidem, 113-114.

legislation on the urban plebs, nor did he actually have a large following amongst them. Now that we have established we cannot understand Catiline through the old dual system, we can take a look at the alternative. Namely, a system of dynamic and fluid alliances.

1.2 Manlius and the Etrurians

Catiline could not win the consuls election with only a handful of fellow members of the elite. He also needed the support of a large number of people that could vote for him. As we have seen earlier, when his conspiracy was uncovered Catiline did not start an uprising in Rome, but instead left the city for the Etrurian countryside. It is there that we will encounter Catiline's real non-elite allies.

In 63, the year of the uncovering of the Second Catilinarian Conspiracy, the economy of Italy was in shambles, as it had been for some time. The constant conflict of the years before had created widespread indebtedness and shortage of currency. After his victory in the civil war in 81, Sulla punished those areas in Italy that had supported his opponents. These areas were mainly Etruria and Northern Italy. Here, the original inhabitants were dispossessed and much of the land was redistributed amongst Sulla's veterans. The original inhabitants often remained as tenants or laborers however, becoming a growing source of unrest.[92] Spartacus' slave revolt of 73-71 had further left the countryside in ruins, and pirates and a new war against the kingdom of Pontus only compounded these economic issues.[93] It is in these circumstances that a growing movement of unhappy citizens called for reform and legislation from the Roman senate. This movement was a strange and seemingly contradictory collection of different groups that were not satisfied by the Sullan settlement. A ragtag alliance of Sullan veterans, victims of Sulla's proscriptions, and general malcontent and indebted citizens had gathered in Etruria under the leadership of the Sullan centurion Manlius.[94]

[92] Shapiro, *O tempora! O mores!.* 152.
[93] Macdonald, C., *In Catilinam. Pro Murena. Pro Sulla. Pro Flacco.* Loeb Classical Library 324 (Harvard 1976) 10.
[94] Sall. *Cat*. 28.

Again, we must settle for mostly Cicero and Sallust to provide us with information, and we should apply the same scepticism to their accounts of Manlius and his rebels as we did to that of their accounts of conspiracy in Rome. Furthermore, we should keep in mind that both Sallust and Cicero were writing from the city of Rome and thus only had the Roman perspective. Despite the shortcomings of the sources, I will attempt to show the connection between Manlius and Catiline, as well as the motivations for their alliance.

The Etrurian alliance was a varied group of unhappy citizens led by the former soldier Gaius Manlius. Manlius himself is relatively mysterious figure, and little can be said for certain about him. He had been a distinguished centurion serving under Sulla, and lived in one of the veteran colonies in Etruria, where he and other Sullan veterans had been allotted land after the civil war.[95] As previously said, the people he represented came from a variety of backgrounds. First of all, there were his fellow veterans. They had lost much of the wealth gained during Sulla's eastern campaigns and the civil war.[96] Apparently, the life of a farmer did not suite the former soldiers, as many of them were now in debt.[97] Secondly, there were those who had lost their wealth and land during Sulla's reign, presumably being victims of proscriptions and land redistributions.[98] Lastly, there was a group of people that is mostly described as being a general assortment of indebted, criminals, and troublemakers.[99]

So, what did they want, and why did they ally themselves with Catiline? If we believe Cicero and Sallust, these men were out for power and wealth. For example, Sallust and Cicero claim the veterans and some other members of Manlius' army wanted to go back to the glory days of Sulla, robbing, plundering, and profiting of war.[100] This seems doubtful to me. First of all, most of these

[95] Brunt, P. A., *Italian manpower, 225 B.C.-A.D. 14* (Oxford 1987, first published 1971) 300-312.

[96] Cic. *Cat*. 2.20, Sall. *Cat*. 28.
[97] Sall. *Cat*. 33.
[98] Sall. *Cat*. 28.
[99] Cic. *Cat*. 2.19, 2.21.
[100] Cic. *Cat*. 2.20, Sall. *Cat*. 16, 28.

veterans must have been relatively old at this point, as the civil war had ended about eighteen years prior. More importantly, through Sallust we have access to a letter Manlius sent to the senate somewhere around early November of 63. In it, Manlius makes clear that they were not seeking conflict with Rome. Rather, they have taken arms as a protest against the bad treatment they had received from moneylenders and the urban praetor.

> *We call gods and men to witness, general, that we have taken up arms, not against our native land nor to bring danger upon others, but to protect our own persons from outrage; for wretched and destitute, thanks to the violent cruelty of moneylenders* (faeneratorum)*, a great many of us are deprived of our native land, but all are without repute as well as fortune. None of us has been allowed to avail ourselves of the law after the usage of our forefathers or to retain our personal liberty after being stripped of our patrimony, such has been the inhumanity of moneylenders and the praetor.* [101]

Manlius outlines the grievances of the people he represents, and he references various laws that were broken or ignored which worsened their conditions. At the end of the letter, Manlius implores the senate to take action and restore the protection of the law.[102] Indeed, it seems here that Manlius' only took action as a last desperate measure. Sallust gives another clue that the Etrurian rebels were not merely opportunists and criminals, which it seems is what all of our ancient sources wish to convince us of. Two decrees were issued by the senate, the first of which offered a huge reward for anyone who had crucial information on the conspiracy, the second of which would pardon anyone that would lay down their arms. According to Sallust, not a single individual betrayed the conspiracy or left Manlius' camp.[103] It is only after the remaining lead conspirators in Rome are apprehended that a large part of Catiline and Manlius' army leaves them.[104] Evidently, these were

[101] Sall. *Cat* 33. The urban praetor presided over suits involving debts. It is suggested that he was either corrupt or simply did not listen to the complaint of the Etrurians.
[102] Sall. *Cat* 33.
[103] Sall. *Cat* 36.
[104] Sall. *Cat* 57.

people protesting, wanting their voices to be heard. Moreover, they were acting mostly independent from Catiline, and only joined forces because they had shared interests.

To understand the shared interests Manlius and the people he represented and Catilina, we should go back a little in time. The aforementioned letter by Manlius was written in November of 63. In response to it, the senate replied that if they wished to ask something they should lay down their arms and come to Rome as suppliants.[105] On the surface a reasonable request, but both Cicero and Sallust tell us that Manlius and his veterans had already been in Rome earlier that year. It was during the election for the consulship in mid 63 that we find them in the company of Catiline, campaigning in Rome. Cicero tells of Catiline "surrounded by an army of colonists from Arretium and Faesulae, a throng with here and there men of a very different type, victims of disaster at the time of Sulla."[106] Plutarch places Manlius himself in Rome too: "These men, I say, with Manlius for a leader, one of the men who had served with distinction under Sulla, associated themselves with Catiline and came to Rome to take part in the consular elections."[107] Two things can be taken from this. First, that they had been in Rome, but clearly had not been listened to. Second, that they had supported Catiline in the elections.

Catiline's and Manlius' alliance can then be explained as follow. We know Catiline was a proponent of debt cancelation, and from the letter from Manlius we can see the largest grievance he and his people had was their debt. Although there are no sources to attest to this, we can assume from the fact Manlius felt he was forced to take up arms in November to gain the attention of the senate that his previous petitions had been ignored. The alliance between Manlius and Catiline now begins to make sense. As Manlius and the Etrurians had been ignored prior to the elections of 63, it is only logical that he thought to ally himself with a prominent politician that could propose legislation

[105] Sal. *Cat*. 34.
[106] Cic. *Mur*. 49.
[107] Plut. *Cic*. 14.

for debt cancellation. From Catiline's perspective, the malcontent Etrurians were an opportunity to gain extra support in the election.

Especially so since Cicero, who was opposing Catiline and supporting his rival Murena in the elections of 63, had granted a delayed triumph to Lucinius Lucullus. Although he had failed in his conquest of Armenia in 69-68, Cicero still gave Lucullus his triumph in 63, which resulted in Lucullus' veterans being present in Rome and supporting Murena during the elections of that year.[108] The support of veterans during consular elections was a powerful tool for any candidate, and we can assume this is what Catiline was after when allying himself with Manlius. Cicero tells us:

> *Do you really think that this help and assistance for the consulship is unimportant? I mean the goodwill of the soldiers and their voting power which derives its strength from their very number, from their influence with their friends and, most important of all, from the great weight that they carry with the whole people of Rome in electing a consul.* [109]

This must have been the case both for Murena, about whom Cicero writes here, as well as Catiline. It is interesting to note that it is only during the elections of 63 that Catiline started to campaign with his slogan *novae tabulae*, or new account books, that advocated for debt cancelation.[110] Clearly, Catiline thought that he needed the extra support that this political program could get him during these elections. The Etrurians, of which many were Sullan veterans, provided much needed voting power to counterbalance Cicero's and Lucullus' support for Murena. If we work from a system of dynamic alliances, this ad-hoc cooperation between Catiline and Manlius fits perfectly.

It would go too far to speculate on Catiline's long term motives for his alliance with Manlius in 63. He might have allied himself with the Etrurians already with a plan to use them as his army to overthrow the established consuls, or it might be that he originally merely intended them as support during the elections. The former is the perspective that the ancient sources take. Cicero, Sallust,

[108] Cic. *Mur*. 37.
[109] Cic. *Mur*. 38.
[110] Shapiro, *O Tempora! O Mores!*, 175.

Plutarch, and Appian all write from the basis that Catiline was planning his armed resurrection for a long time, and that Manlius was merely one of Catiline's lackeys.[111] However, I would argue based on his letter to the senate that Manlius was much more independent from Catiline than is generally assumed. The fact that he appealed to the senate independently in November certainly seems to suggest this. Secondly, I would argue that because we have two sources that place the Etrurian veterans in Rome during the election, it seems much more the case that Catiline used them initially for legitimate support, rather than as a military force. Promising them the cancelation of their debts, Catiline offered a good incentive to them to help get him in office. Of course, it is entirely possible Catiline also had their military potential in mind. In any case, the failure of Catiline to win the consulship also meant the failure of Manlius and the Etrurians to get them the political support they needed. They armed themselves as a last resort, and sent their final letter of appeal to the senate. Their relationship with Catiline that had started during or before the election had not disappeared however, and for Catiline Manlius' army presented one last opportunity to gain the political power he had desired for so long.

1.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, how can we understand Catiline's following among the different parts of the Roman population? We get a picture of Catiline who, although still having a relatively large group of aristocratic supporters in Rome, did not actually enjoy the support of a large portion of the urban plebs. If we were looking at Catiline through the perspective of the two-party system of *populares* and *optimates*, this would prove to be a problem. After all, a staple of the *populares*, as the name suggests, is the support of the urban populace. However, free from this dual system, it becomes easier to understand why Catiline did not have the support of the plebs, and instead was supported by a variety of people from the periphery of Rome. As Catiline had failed in all elections prior to the one of 63, he needed every advantage he could get. With a campaign focused on debt relief, he was

[111] Cic. *Cat*. 7., Plut. *Cic*. 14-15., Sall. *Cat*. 21., App. *B. Civ*. 7.

able to get the support of the Etrurians, who had already for a long time been discontent due to abuses by the local elite and the praetor. Indeed, it seems this was an alliance based on colliding interests, and not necessarily one based on ideology. Catiline only started his call for debt relief shortly before the election of 63, and as such this was seemingly a method to gain the support of the Etrurians. Although Catiline might claim that he was a champion of the poor and unfortunate, as we read in the sources, I would argue that because he does not seem to have had much support amongst the plebs, and that his political agenda was instead focused on the rural alliance of Manlius, we can assume that Catiline was more focused on opportunity than ideology.

Chapter 2: Catiline's allies among the elite

Catiline's core political alliance was a group of well-known senators and equites in Rome. This group is what Cicero, Sallust, and the other primary sources refer to as the 'conspirators'.[112] It is questionable whether there truly was a grand conspiracy to overthrow the Republic from the start, as Cicero claimed. Catiline seems to have tried to get the consulship primarily through a legitimate way in the elections, for which he enlisted the help of Manlius and the Etrurians, as we have seen in the previous chapter. Of course, the support of the plebian Manlius and the Etrurians alone could never gain him in the consulship. In the oligarchic Roman Republic, it was support among the elite that was instrumental in winning an election. For this purpose, Catiline had gathered around himself a substantial number of senators and equites to help him realise his political ambitions. Although the sources call them conspirators, I will refer to them as political allies, as that is what they essentially were. If we want to explain the inner workings of Catiline's political alliance, we must try to find possible motivations for why these people worked together with Catiline. This chapter will be about Catiline's allies among the elite, their reason for joining his alliance, and how this reflects on our perspective of the formation of political alliances in the late Republic in general.

If one is to follow the views of Mommson, Taylor, and those other historians who have defined Roman politics in the late Republic by a division between two parties, it might be expected that we find a homogenous alliance with many *populares*-type politicians amongst his followers. After all, a *popularis* politician would hardly be able to secure the support of many *optimates*, as they had, depending on the used definition, either an entirely different ideology or a different way of practising politics. Whatever definition we use, there always exists a conflict of interest. As we will find out, it is hard to point out any supporters of Catiline who can easily be defined as *populares*. This is of course perfectly logical if we work from the assumption that such a division between two

[112] Cic. *Cat*. 1.12, Sall. *Cat*. 18.

parties, or two types of politicians, did not exist. Another explanation must be found then, and I will argue in this chapter that Catiline's political alliance was much more fluid and dynamic, which will also have wider implications for factions in the Roman Republic in general. The investigation of Catiline's political allies will be done on a case by case basis, to show the variety of politicians and motivations that can be found there.

First, let us address the issue of the primary sources frame those working with Catiline. Cicero calls those working with Catiline *coniuratorum* and *comitum*, conspirators and accomplices.[113] Together, they were supposedly in a *coniuratio*, a conspiracy or plot.[114] Sallust too uses these words.[115] If we take Cicero and Sallust at face value, it seems almost madness that anyone would support Catiline at all. Cicero accuses him of being involved in a number of horrible crimes, ranging from sleeping with a priestess of Vesta to the murder of multiple people during the proscriptions.[116] In his first speech against Catiline, Cicero, though most certainly hyperbolically, accuses Catiline of being involved in "every crime and scandal" of the previous years.[117] According to Sallust, there had even been rumours circulating that Catiline and his fellow conspirators drank human blood in some sort of ritual.[118] Naturally, this seems hardly believable, but it does give an indication of the amount of slander Catiline had to deal with.

I would argue that his supposed depravity and plans for violence were greatly exaggerated, and that Catiline and the conspirators were simply members of a political alliance that had common interests in mind. As his main political opponent, Cicero can hardly be seen as a trustworthy source regarding Catiline's personality and intentions. In fact, after Catiline had been defeated, Cicero

[113] Cic. *Cat*. 1.12
[114] Cic. *Cat*. 1.13
[115] Sall. *Cat*. 18.
[116] Sall. *Cat*. 15, Asc. 84C.
[117] Cic. *Cat*. 18. "For some years now you have been behind every crime, involved in every scandal. No one but you has killed a host of citizens and oppressed and plundered the allies unpunished and scot-free. Not only have you been able to ignore the laws and law-courts but you have been able to overturn and shatter them."
[118] Sall. *Cat*. 22.

nuances his view of Catiline and talks about the qualities he had.[119] This is of course in stark contrast to the four Orations, in which he is exclusively cynical about Catiline's intentions. It suggests that at least some if not most of Cicero's accusations were solely made to discredit Catiline before the elections. Although Cicero makes it seem Catiline had been conspiring to bring down the Republic for a long time, the actual events of this so-called conspiracy seem to contradict this. Catiline only joined Manlius after his multiple attempts at legitimately gaining the consulship had failed, and when Cicero pressured him in the first Oration under threat of arrest to leave the city.[120] Certainly, we cannot guess at the exact intentions of Catiline if he had achieved the consulship, and some of the accusations that Cicero throws against Catiline might have been true. [121] Ultimately, we only have the knowledge of what actually happened, and that is also what is most relevant to this investigation. What we see is that the conspiracy was a political alliance of various Roman elites, who worked together based on shared interests, even if the end goal might be obscure.

2.1 Catiline before the elections of 64

Catiline had been a respected member of the elite for most of his career, having good relations with many prominent senators. There had admittedly been some controversy surrounding him, such as the extortion case after his governorship of Africa.[122] The case was dismissed however, although it is unclear whether or not he was actually innocent.[123] In this court case, Catiline was defended by the consul Lucius Manlius Torquatus, who was a powerful and well-respected senator from one of the oldest Roman houses, and even Cicero considered coming to his defense.[124] Hardly something that would we would expect to see had Catiline been a political outsider. Münzer argues that Catiline's loss during the elections in 64 could be seen not only as a defeat for Catiline himself,

[119] Cic. *Cael*. 10-14.
[120] Sall. *Cat*. 31. Sallust relays to us Catiline's reaction to Cicero's first oration against Catiline: "Inasmuch as I have been cornered and am being driven to desperation by my enemies, I shall put out the fire besetting me with demolition."
[121] This viewpoint is shared by others. See for example: Münzer, *Roman Aristocratic Parties and Families*, 320.
[122] Asc. 85C.
[123] Quintus Tullius Cicero claims Catiline was acquitted through bribery. Cic. *Comment. pet.* 10.
[124] Cic. *Att.* 1.2.1.

but for the whole patrician class, as both the *homo novus* Cicero as well as the plebeian noble Antonius were chosen instead.[125] Overall it is fair to say that up until the elections of 64, and perhaps even 63, Catiline was by no means a controversial figure within Roman politics. He was embedded within the elite, simply one of many participating in the political game.

Still, it is undeniable that Catiline fell from grace rapidly in 63. For example, we can take a look at L. Torquatus' who defended Catiline in the court case in 65. Torquatus had also been the target of the alleged First Catilinarian Conspiracy, an event which was mentioned in the timeline. This First Conspiracy was the alleged attempt by Catiline to murder the consuls of 65, Cotta and Torquatus.[126] Now, there is most likely little truth to this, as it can hardly be believed that Torquatus would defend Catiline in a court case if there had been any such attempt. In any case, Torquatus was clearly on good terms with Catiline during this time for him to aid Catiline in the extortion case. Interestingly enough however, it appears Torquatus joined Cicero's camp the next year, perhaps after public opinion had turned against Catiline. Cicero recommended the senate award him the title of Imperator in 64, and it has been suggested he played an active role in suppressing Catiline's allies in Rome.[127] It is a first sign that allegiances of politicians could change swiftly. Whereas it seems Catiline had been a respected member of the senate with the support of men like Torquatus, in only a short period of time this all shifted, most likely due to Cicero's orations and the shift in public opinion.

Cicero himself actually considered defending Catiline in the aforementioned extortion case. In one of his letters to his friend Atticus, Cicero wrote:

> *At the moment I am proposing to defend my fellow candidate Catiline. We have the jury we want, with full cooperation from the prosecution. If he is acquitted I hope he will be more*

[125] Münzer, *Roman Aristocratic Parties and Families*, 319.
[126] Asc. 92C. It is further alluded to in multiple speeches by Cicero: Cic. *Cat*. 1.15, Cic. *Mur*. 81. Cic. *Sull*. 11-13, 67-68.
[127] Cic. *Pis*. 44. For the claim that he helped suppress the conspiracy, see: Anthon, C., Smith, W., *A New Classical Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography, Mythology and Geography* (New York 1860) 903.

inclined to work with me in the campaign. But should it go otherwise, I shall bear it philosophically. [128]

Not only did Cicero consider defending Catiline in court, he suggests here that he and Catiline could become partners in the coming elections of 64 for the consulship of 63. If we consider the intense rivalry and the horrible accusations Cicero throws at Catiline only two years later, this can certainly be considered surprising. Clearly at this point, Catiline was in Cicero's eyes simply another politician that he could work together with. In the actual elections of 64, Cicero ended up running against Catiline. That they did not end up working together for that consulship is not all too surprising considering the last part of the passage, as Cicero evidently did not see the arrangement as set in stone. This letter is another strong sign of the flexibility of political alliances in the Roman Republic. Cicero was willing to stand for consul together with Catiline here, writing in 65, but already during the elections of 64 they were opponents for the office of consul. Another year later, and we see they have suddenly become sworn enemies during and after the elections of 63. This reveals part of the ever-changing nature of the political landscape.

2.2 Catiline's political alliance of 64 and 63

It is of course the elections of 63 and the events of the so-called Second Catilinarian Conspiracy that are our main focus. So, let us take a look at the main members of Catiline's political alliance during this period, a group of which Cicero might have been a part had he decided to stand for the consulship together with Catiline. However, it is already during the elections of the year 64 that we can catch sight of Catiline's political allies. In early June of 64, Catiline gathered an assembly of senators and equites that were willing to support him. They are listed by Sallust in his description of the meeting. Among them were ex-consuls Publius Lentulus Sura and Publius Autronius Paetus,

[128] Cic. *Att*. 1.2.1.

and various other senators such as Lucius Cassius Longinus, who would be Catiline's partner in the elections of 64.[129] More will be said about them later in the chapter.

If we can believe Sallust in this account, it seems this was the first time Catiline gathered these men together. Sallust writes:

> *When Catiline saw assembled before him the men whom I mentioned a short time ago, although he had often had many discussions with them individually, still, since he thought that it would be advantageous to address and encourage the entire body, he withdrew to an out-of-the-way room in the house, and there, after sending far away all witnesses, he delivered a speech of this sort.*[130]

It is interesting to note that this seems to be the first time these people meet as a group, or at least be spoken to by Catiline as one body. They all had a separate relationship with Catiline, which might be expected from members of the elite, but now he gathered them together. It seems we can see Catiline forging his political alliance here. Sallust then relates the speech given to these men, although one can assume most if not all has been fabricated. Writing many years later, it is highly unlikely Sallust was able to get an account of what was said. Sallust himself also admits this as he says Catiline "delivered a speech of this sort."[131] It is thus also no surprise that the speech fits well within the wider narrative that Sallust has constructed of the conspiracy. Some interesting aspects can be noted however. The goal of the 'conspiracy' at this point, even according to Sallust, was to get Catiline to win the elections and become consul.[132] In the narrative of a morally corrupted Catiline who merely wishes for violence, the fact that the goal of the conspiracy initially is simply to gain the consulship makes this seem the most trustworthy piece of information from the speech. Of course, once Catiline would have become consul, Sallust describes the evil things Catiline was planning. For

[129] Sall. *Cat*. 17.
[130] Sall. *Cat*. 20.
[131] Sall. *Cat*. 20.
[132] Sall. *Cat*. 20.

example, how Catiline would massacre the wealthy and there would be plunder and spoils of war. Two commanders, Pisa in Spain and Publius Sittius in Mauretania, were apparently members in the plot and ready to act.[133] These motives for the supposed conspiracy seem questionable however. Why would there be a need for war after the consulship had been achieved, especially if the goal of the whole ordeal was to gain the consulship.

Furthermore, there does not seem to be any logical cause for this sudden call for violence. Although he is anachronistically portrayed as a violent revolutionary, there is no good reason for us to believe that any plans for violence started anywhere before the loss in the elections of 63. As previously discussed, Catiline was a respected member of the elite at this point. It is only after July 63 that we can see concrete evidence for a rebellion, in the form of Manlius' army. Rather, the explanation for this political alliance might be much simpler. The objective of the gathered senators and equites was to get Catiline into office, as Sallust also tells us, a position from he would be able to influence politics and repay those that had supported him.

2.3 The 'conspirators'

That brings us to the members of Catiline's political alliance, of which some have already been mentioned. These men are described as subordinates to Catiline in this conspiracy.[134] After all, the primary sources write from the perspective that Catiline is the mastermind behind this great conspiracy. In this section, I will argue that instead of some sort of party or faction with Catiline at its head, the 'conspirators' were instead members of a political alliance who shared either a common goal or were able to help each other achieve their own goals. So, who were these men that had joined Catiline's political alliance in 64? For many of the named people by our sources, very little is

[133] Sall. *Cat.* 21.
[134] For instance: Sall. *Cat*. 39. Sallust says here that the ringleader in Rome, Publius Lentulus Sura, was "Doing as Catiline instructed." "Sicuti Catilina praeceperat"

known. From those we that we do know more about however, we can draw some interesting conclusions.

The most prominent member in the alliance besides Catiline was Publius Lentulus Sura. Lentulus was a man of high birth who had fallen on hard times, as he had been expelled from the senate. [135] One of the censors that expelled him was Gnaius Cornelius Lentulus Clodianus, a member of his own *gens*.[136] He had been reinstated, but his fortunes might have been on the decline, although it is uncertain whether he was actually in debt.[137] That he had been expelled by a member of his own house is interesting to note, because it suggests that we are not talking about family politics here, but rather independent actions by individual politicians.

Cicero claims Lentulus thought he was fated to become ruler of Rome, as he believed in a Sibylline prophesy that predicted a 'third Cornelius' after Cinna and Sulla that would rule Rome.[138] This seems to be in conflict with Catiline's plans. Claude Kananack argues that Lentulus was far more independent than Cicero and Sallust suggest. For instance, it appears Lentulus was solely responsible for the approaching of the Allobroges tribe, an event that was the final straw that turned the rest of the senate against Catiline.[139] The possible alliance between Gauls and Catiline was a powerful tool for Cicero, who used the image of the sacking of Rome from 390 to provoke the senate into action.[140] Further strengthening the idea that Lentulus and Catiline were associates rather than Lentulus being subordinate is a letter from Lentulus in Rome to Catiline in Etruria that was intercepted by Cicero, who used it to prove the connection between the two and start the prosecution of Catiline's allies in Rome.

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[135] Plut. *Cic*. 17.
[136] Gruen, *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic*, 59.
[137] Kananack, C. H. E., R*econsidering "The Conspiracy of Catiline": Participants, Concepts, and Terminology in Cicero and Sallust* (Ann Arbor 2012) 97.
[138] Cic. *Cat*. 3.9, 4.2. Other sources also mention the prophesy: Sall. *Cat*. 47., Plut. *Cic*. 17., App. *B. Civ*. 2.4.
[139] Kananack, *Reconsidering "The Conspiracy of Catiline",* 102.
[140] Cic. *Cat*. 3.22.

You will know who I am from the man whom I have sent to you. Be resolute and take stock of your position. See what you must now do and take care that you get the support of everyone, even the lowest.[141]

This letter is passed on by both Sallust and Cicero, and seems to have been authentic. [142] Note that Lentulus speaks not of a shared plan, but only of 'you' and 'your'. Furthermore, it is Lentulus that gives advice to Catiline, in such a way that one might almost call them orders. According to Kananack, the language and grammatical construction of the letter also implies that Lentulus was not Catiline's subordinate.[143] Additionally, Kananack argues that Lentulus' motive to join with Catiline might have been the aforementioned prophesy, as Lentulus may have believed Catiline could offer the opportunity for him to fulfil it and gain power in Rome.[144] Unfortunately, it remains speculation, but the prophesy is mentioned in connection to Lentulus not only by Cicero, but also by Sallust, Plutarch, and Appian. Whether or not Lentulus' motive was the prophesy or something else, his independence from Catiline shows that he had his own agenda. He had his own goals, whether they be political or religious in nature, or a mix of the two, and it was the alliance with Catiline that could help achieve those goals.

Some of the others attending the meeting in 64 most likely joined due to financial struggles, as Catiline promised debt cancelation. There was Quintus Curius, a man from high birth who had been expelled from the senate for his immorality in 70. He was an avid gambler, and he had lost much of his wealth.[145] He was named as a close friend of Catiline by Quintus Tullius Cicero.[146] According to Sallust, he boasted about regaining his status and wealth during the elections of 64.[147]

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[141] Cic. *Cat*. 3.12.
[142] Sallusts words the message slightly differently, but its essence remains the same. Sall. *Cat*. 44. For an analysis of the difference between the two versions and why they are most likely authentic, see Kananack, *Reconsidering "The Conspiracy of Catiline"*, 106-113
[143] Kananack, *Reconsidering "The Conspiracy of Catiline"*, 118.
[144] Kananack, *Reconsidering "The Conspiracy of Catiline",* 143.
[145] Sall. *Cat*. 23.
[146] Cic. *Comment. pet.* 10.
[147] Sall. *Cat*. 23.

Presumably, he hoped that with Catiline as consul, he could be reinstated in the senate. One of the few woman that is mentioned as being an integral part of Catiline's alliance was someone called Sempronia, wife to D. Junius Brutus and (step)mother to D. Junius Brutus Albinus, the future assassin of Caesar. She was apparently rather ambitious, had been accessory to a murder, and most importantly, was in significant debt.[148] Many more unnamed impoverished members of the upper classes had joined with Catiline due to his agenda of debt cancelation. These were already briefly discussed in the previous chapter. As Cicero says:

> *There was not a single man overwhelmed by debt, whether in Rome or in the furthest corner of Italy, whom he did not enrol in this incredible alliance of crime.*[149]

Although most certainly hyperbolic in this instance, the most common characteristic that Cicero uses when describing Catiline's fellow conspirators in Rome is their debt.[150] For most of the people that allied themselves with Catiline, then, it was his focus on debt cancelation that most likely attracted them. Looking from Catiline's perspective, we can assume that this was exactly what he had hoped for when he started campaigning for consul with his campaign of *novae tabulae*. Quintus Curius was boasting about how he would regain his lost power and wealth, and this is exactly what Catiline would have promised.[151] In return for their support in the election(s), Catiline promised to use his position as consul to help their debt problems. This makes it a political alliance based on mutual benefaction, rather than one of ideology.

2.4 Antonius and Sulla

Using two examples, I will further prove that not only was Catiline's alliance one of convenience rather than ideology, it was specially this aspect that made political factions in the Roman Republic so dynamic. The first of these case studies is C. Antonius Hybrida. Antonius had

[148] Sall. *Cat*. 25.
[149] Cic. *Cat*. 2.8.
[150] Cic. *Cat*. 2.4., Cic, *Cat*. 2.10
[151] Sall. *Cat*. 23.

been, like Lentulus and Curius, expelled from the senate. However, he managed to get elected praetor in 66 and was rehabilitated.[152] Cicero attacked Antonius in his speech *In Toga Candida* given before the election of 64, grouping him together with Catiline as unworthy candidates. [153]

Cicero tried to further defame Antonius during the elections, but in the end Antonius was still elected as Cicero's colleague consul.[154] As Antonius was likely Catiline's friend, the sources hint at a possible collusion between the two.[155] This of course was cause for concern for Cicero. He claims Antonius had made promises to Catiline before the elections of 63.[156] Furthermore, the meeting before the elections of 64 was supposedly hosted by both Antonius and Catiline.[157] If this is true, Antonius and Catiline had kept up their political bond during this year. Nonetheless, when Catiline is forced to flee Rome and joins with Manlius at the end of 63, it is Antonius that raises an army and marches to Etruria to defeat Catiline.[158]

Suddenly, Antonius is in Cicero's camp, and has switched his allegiances to the point that he leads an army to defeat his former friend and ally. So what happened? According Sallust and Plutarch, Cicero was able to buy Antonius' loyalty by swapping his own proconsular appointment as governor of the rich province of Macedonia with Antonius.[159] Clearly, Antonius' loyalty to Catiline did not run deep. Cicero would not have trusted Antonius to lead the army against Catiline if he suspected the two might still be working together. This makes sense if we look at this political alliance from a pragmatic standpoint. For Antonius, a better offer had come along, not to mention that at this point Catiline's ventures looked rather doomed. Allying himself with Cicero was at that point the most logical choice. Some years later, Antonius was still accused of participation in the conspiracy, and convicted. Cicero defended his former consular colleague in this case, which shows

[152] Cic. *Comment. pet.* 7-10., Cic. *Att*. 1.1.1.
[153] *Asc*. 83C. Full passage quoted o page 48.
[154] Cic. *Comment. pet.* 8-10, 28., Asc. 82-84C.
[155] Asc. 83C., Cic. *Cat*. 3.14, Cic. *Mur.* 49., Plut. *Cic.* 12., Dio Cass. 37.30.3.
[156] Cic. *Mur*. 49.
[157] Asc. 83C
[158] Sall. *Cat*. 59.
[159] Sall. *Cat*. 26., Plut. *Cic*. 12.

that for Cicero too it was not about what had actually happened, but rather what was politically most advantageous.[160] After all, Cicero himself had accused Antonius of colluding with Catiline during the actual events. What we see here is the political dynamic in action, with switching alliances based on shared interests.

The second example is Publius Cornelius Sulla, who was allegedly a part of both the First and Second Conspiracy, but was defended by Cicero when he was later accused of his participation in these events. P. Sulla was a nephew of Lucius Cornelius Sulla, the dictator of 82-79. He was elected to the consulship in 66 together with Publius Autronius Paetus in 66, but immediately accused by the son of Lucius Manlius Torquatus of electoral malpractice. He was found guilty and convicted, and the vacant consulships went to Lucius Aurelius Cotta and Torquatus.[161] Interesting to note is that this is the same Torquatus that defended Catiline during that consulship in a different case, see 1.1 in this chapter. Besides losing the consulship, P. Sulla was also banned from ever holding office in the Republic again.[162] We might assume that this was the reason for his involvement in Catiline's campaign, and Cicero tells us Sulla felt disgraced after his position had been taken away.[163] A bill was proposed by his half-brother that would allow him to be rehabilitated, but it failed to garner enough support as the senate was unwilling to assist in passing it.[164] By participating in Catiline's political alliance, Sulla perhaps hoped to gain the support necessary to regain his status and position. Unfortunately this is mostly speculation, as there is little further evidence of his involvement in the actual events of the Conspiracy, and it is unclear what exactly his role was.

Sulla was put to trial in 62 for participating in the First and Second Conspiracy, but this does not necessarily mean he was actually involved.[165] In this trial, he was defended by Cicero, whose defence in the speech *Pro Sulla* eventually helped acquit him. We can see some similarity with

[160] Cic. *Att*. 2.12.2, Dio. Cass. 38.10.
[161] Macdonald, *In Catilinam 1-4,* 302-303.
[162] Cic. *Sull*. 91., Sall. *Cat*. 18., Asc. 75C, 88C.
[163] Cic. *Sull*. 15.
[164] Macdonald, *In Catilinam 1-4,* 304.
[165] Cic. *Sull*. 11.

Antonius here, as again a former ally of Catiline is defended by Cicero. As circumstances changed, so did political alliances. After Catiline's death, it was not necessary for Cicero to pursue the supposed 'conspirators', as it was no longer political advantageous. It might be impossible to find the exact reasons for his new friendship with Sulla and Antonius, but we can see clearly from the defence of his two former enemies that Cicero did not adhere to some strict form of factionalism, but rather chose his allies based on opportunity and convenience.

2.5 Caesar and Crassus

> *But Catilina and Antonius, despite having led the most disgraceful lives of all of them, even so had much power at their disposal. For both had entered an electoral pact to keep Cicero out of the consulship, enjoying very strong support from M. Crassus and C. Caesar.* [166]

From this passage in *In Toga Candida*, it is clear Crassus and Caesar supported Catiline in the election of 64. It is unclear to what extent this support reached. It is suggested by historians that Caesar and Crassus were indeed working together during this time, and that their support for Catiline in 64 is sufficiently believable.[167] The speech was a reaction by Cicero after he heard about the meeting discussed earlier in this chapter, were Catiline gathered his various supporters for the first time. Cicero says in the speech that Catiline gathered "in the house of a certain person of noble rank, a well-known and recognized figure in this business of funding largesse."[168] Asconius, in a commentary on Cicero's *In Toga Candida*, says that Cicero here means the house of either Caesar or Crassus, and that indeed seems likely considering the description. If this is true, than we have a strong link between the beginning of Catiline's political alliance and either of these men. Asconius also gives the reason for Caesar's and Crassus' support for Catiline, as they had been "the most

[166] Asc. 83C.
[167] Münzer, *Roman Aristocratic Parties and Families*, 251., Ward, A. M., 'Cicero's Fight against Crassus and Caesar in 65 and 64 B.C.' *Historia* 21 (1972) 250.
[168] Asc. 83C.

determined and powerful of Cicero's adversaries."[169] Caesars and Crassus' support for Catiline at the time of these elections seems to have been an attempt to thwart Cicero.

Although Crassus and Caesar were involved with Catiline in the elections of 64, this does not mean they necessarily remained part of his alliance during and after the elections of 63. What we can say, is that they were certainly implicated by their enemies in the supposed conspiracy of that year. During the senate meeting after the conspirators in Rome had been imprisoned, a certain Lucius Tarquinius testified that Crassus had been privy to Catiline's plans of insurrection, and that Crassus had sent word to Catiline to move his army to Rome. According to Sallust, many senators believed this to be true but refused to implicate Crassus, as he was both too powerful a man to deal with and many were in his debt. Crassus himself claimed it was Cicero who had convinced Lucius Tarquinius to implicate him.[170] Other sources also imply Crassus was suspected of still being part of Catiline's inner circle.[171]

Caesar too was implicated in the plot, although Sallust tells us these accusations were false.[172] Caesar was in heavy debt, which would certainly be in line with other members of Catiline's alliance, as that is a characteristic that we have seen most of them had in common. Moreover, Caesar defended the conspirators during the senate meeting were they were discussing punishment, as he argued they did not deserve the death penalty.[173]

Concerning the possible involvement of Crassus and Caesar, some interesting insights can be gleaned. If Crassus was indeed involved in Catiline's plans after the election of 63, it further shows the intricacies of Roman politics. Perhaps Crassus saw Catiline's plans as an opportunity to gain a favourable position if he was to win the civil war, as Sallust claims.[174] In any case, the connection

[169] Asc. 83C.
[170] Sall. *Cat*. 48.
[171] Plut. *Cic*.15., Plut. *Cras*. 13.
[172] Sall. *Cat*. 49.
[173] Sall. *Cat* 51.
[174] Sall. *Cat*. 17.

between the two would be dictated not by some sort of ideological common ground, but rather by mutual political or financial interest. In the end however, it is highly unlikely Crassus remained a real supporter of Catiline for long after the elections of 64. First of all, Catiline's main political agenda of debt cancelation can hardly have been appealing to Crassus. Secondly, Crassus supplied information on Catiline's plans after the election of 63 to Cicero, warning him of Catiline's intentions to take Rome by force.[175] It seems here that Crassus, seeing that Cicero had turned the narrative against Catiline, no longer saw Catiline as a valid political ally. Although initially their alliance had been mutually beneficial, Crassus now simply switched sides as the odds stacked against Catiline. As far as Caesar is concerned, although he did argue that the conspirators should not be given the death penalty, he did say they should be imprisoned for life, and their property taken away.[176] Clearly, Caesar did want to distance himself from Catiline and his allies, regardless of whether or not he had actively participated in the plot after 64. So, Caesar and Crassus seem to have originally been supportive of Catiline until the elections of 64, as their antagonism towards Cicero coincided with Catiline's run for consul against him. It is the question whether Catiline failed due to the lost support of Crassus and Caesar or that after Catiline's fall from grace they both distanced themselves from him. In any case, it further shows the dynamic nature of political alliances within the Republic.

2.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, what can we say about Catiline's political allies, their reason for joining his alliance, and how this reflects on our perspective of the formation of political alliances in the late Republic in general. To begin with, Catiline had been a normal member of the Roman nobility, as his relationship with people like Torquatus and Cicero in 65 shows. That Cicero was willing to work together with Catiline in 65, and become his worst rival in 64 and 63, is the first sign that political alliances might swiftly change. The members of Catiline's alliance had a large variety of motivations

[175] Plut. *Cic*.15., Plut. *Cras*. 13.
[176] Cic. *Cat*. 4.7-10., Sall. *Cat*. 51., Plut. *Cic*. 21.

for their cooperation. There does not seem to be any ideological or factional factor binding them together, which one might expect working from a two-party perspective perspective. Rather, the goal of the alliance was to get Catiline into the consuls office so that he could in turn pay back those that helped him get there. Lentulus independence and separate agenda from Catiline further strengthens the idea that we are dealing with a political alliance based on a loosely shared interests. Loyalty was also not guaranteed, and allegiances could quickly change. Both Sulla and Antonius changed sides to Cicero when this turned out to be more convenient. Crassus and Caesar initially supported Catiline to thwart Cicero, but when this failed and Catiline's plans failed they also pulled away. All of this together paints a picture of a political landscape with relatively loose alliances with either common goals or shared interests. They might change if new opportunities appeared or old ones became less appealing, creating a dynamic and constantly changing system.

Conclusion

Having examined in-depth Catiline's alliance of 64-63 as a case study, we have seen his lack of support amongst the urban plebs, his political allies, and his collusion with Manlius. This has given us insight into the way political alliance worked in this period, and can give an answer to the question how and why political alliances were formed in the late Republic. Rather than what might be expected in a two-party system, a division between *populares* and *optimates*, Catiline's alliance is not formed along clear ideological lines. Although some of its members remain through the years, others switch sides to his enemy Cicero, or simply leave when the alliance is no longer convenient. So, even in this short snapshot of two to three years, we see a political landscape of changing political alliances, a fluid system were it is mostly pragmatic decisions that decided which part of a particular political conflict or election one ended up. These alliances could be short-term, and members might leave if better opportunities presented themselves. All-in-all, I argue that in this period we can see a system of fluid and changing political alliances based on shared interests, rather than a two-party system or dual split between two clashing types of politicians.

Catiline did not conform to any definition of *popularis*. He did not have any large following amongst the urban plebs, did not use the peoples assemblies, nor did he focus any legislation on gaining their support. Even if he claimed he was championing the cause of the urban poor, in reality it was fellow aristocrats and the indebted rural citizenry that was his main focus. Conversely, he can also not be classified as an optimate, as when he left Rome for Manlius, he was in conflict with the majority of the senate, and Cicero's orations assured he was not accepted as a part of the established nobility in 64 and 63. So, Catiline definitely does not fit in the dual *populares* and *optimates* system.

His cooperation with Manlius further shows both that there was no real split based on ideology or political practise, and that alliances were more based on shared interests. Catiline focused his political program on debt cancellation, in order to target and create an alliance with a

large group of citizens that would support him in the election. They had been discontent for a long period of time, and Catiline saw them as an opportunity to gain support in the elections of 63. Their relationship was mutually beneficial, an alliance formed so that both could achieve their respective goals. This is the main theme that we can see throughout the events of the Catilinarian Conspiracy, and strongly points to a dynamic and fluid system of political alliances.

Catiline's alliance in Rome can tell us much about the nature of political alliances in the late Republic in general. If we consider that even Cicero was contemplating helping Catiline in the extortion case in 65, it becomes clear that the rivalry between the two in 64-63 was not based on a party divide or any ideological animosity. They were simply political opponents. The members of Catiline's alliance had a large variety of motivations for their cooperation with him. There does not seem to be any ideological or factional factor binding them together, which one might expect working from a two-party perspective. Rather, the goal of the alliance was to get Catiline into the consuls office so that he could in turn pay back those that helped him get there. Lentulus' independence from Catiline, and his separate agenda, shows that the alliance was not a homogenous whole that had the same goal, but instead more like a loose confederation that could profit of off working with each other. Loyalty was also not guaranteed, and allegiances could quickly change. Both Sulla and Antonius changed sides to Cicero when this turned out to be more convenient. Crassus and Caesar initially supported Catiline to thwart Cicero, but when Catiline's plans failed they also pulled away.

If we embrace this perspective of political alliances or factions in the late Republic, we can start to speculate on what impact this might have on how we view the events of this period that led to the fall of the Republic. There would not have necessarily been a conflict between 'democrats'/'populists' and aristocrats, as the two-party system would have us believe, but rather an internal conflict within he elite. Volatile alliances, switching allegiances, and escalating political violence must have influenced the stability of the Republic. If we no longer look through the two-

party lens, the large conflicts that have been described as *populares* versus *optimates*, such as the civil wars between Marius and Sulla and Caesar and Pompeius can be re-examined. Free from the old party perspective, this allows for a better examination of the motives and dynamics within these conflict that led to the fall of the Republic. The party-system, much like the family structures of the early Republic touched on in the introduction, granted some sort of structure in the chaos of the late Republic. Events and alliances were placed within this structure. However, if the dynamic alliance system gives a new perspective to alliances such as the Triumvirates, which were no formed around ideology but around powerful men, and which could fall apart quickly and violently. This would of course require further investigation, and a study of political alliances during the civil wars can further expand on the concept of loose and fluid political alliances.

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