

# Moral and Civic Liberty in Sallust's *Bella*, and History as an Education in Virtue

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Sallust's historical monographs, the *Bellum Catilinae* and the *Bellum Iugurthinum*, have been described as "biased" and inaccurate, largely because he does not hesitate, when it suits his purposes, to make moral judgments about political figures and historical periods.<sup>1 2</sup> Such a description mistakes the purpose of the *Bella*, which, like most ancient histories, is not intended to be an unimpassioned narration of facts. History was a moral genre in the classical period, not a scientific one, and the incorporation of moral judgments was therefore natural and appropriate; as Sallust

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, see the Loeb edition of Sallust, especially p. xv in the Introduction and the description on the front fold of the dustcover, which specifically calls Sallust's work "biased." Similarly, A.R. Hands calls Sallust's portrayal of Scaurus, a political figure in *Bellum Iugurthinum*, "peculiarly unbalanced," and suggests that his presentations of other figures, including Cicero, are also determined by his personal opinions of their characters (56).

<sup>2</sup> Another possible reason why critics question Sallust's honesty is because his personal morality is debatable. References to Sallust's character by his contemporaries and by later generations suggest that he was profligate and debauched and that his political career was marked by corruption and bribery. However, in the introduction to the Loeb edition, John C. Rolfe explains, "Accusations of the most outrageous kind were so freely bandied about in Roman political circles that one might naturally attribute many of those made against Sallust to malicious gossip" (ix-x). In his own account of his life, Sallust describes the difficulty of remaining virtuous in a political atmosphere ruled by "insolence, bribery, and greed" (*audacia, largitio, avaritia*), and claims that he was guilty only of ambition and "dissented from the evil customs of the others" (*ab reliquorum malis moribus dissentirem*) (BC 3.3). After a term as governor of Numidia, Sallust was tried for extortion and acquitted through the influence of Caesar. When Caesar was assassinated soon after the trial, Sallust resigned from political life and devoted himself to writing history. Significantly, even those in antiquity who criticize his personal morality do not question the morality of his histories; for instance, Cassius Dio, a third-century historian, accuses Sallust of extortion in Numidia and then, taking the morality of Sallust's histories for granted, accuses him of hypocrisy because "he did not imitate his words in his deeds" ("οὐκ ἐμιμήσατο τῶ ἔργῳ τοὺς λόγους"), i.e., he failed to practice what he preached (43.9). Whether or not Sallust lived up to his own moral principles, then, need not affect one's interpretation and appreciation of his *Bella* as moral histories.



explains in the beginning of the *Bellum Iugurthinum*, the purpose of recalling the achievements of the ancients is to inspire their descendants to imitate them (4.5-7). In his *Bellum Catilinae* and *Bellum Iugurthinum*, Sallust provides an analysis of the corruption of contemporary Rome and offers readers an explanation for Rome's decay from freedom to slavery. Along with a diagnosis of the moral causes for this slavery, Sallust also offers a partial solution. Sallust carefully constructs the *Bella* as educations in virtue for talented young men, who have the potential to become either great statesmen or tyrants like Jugurtha. By training up virtuous and politically adept leaders, Sallust's *Bella* have the potential to restore the freedom and greatness of Rome. The first part of this paper will explore Sallust's understanding of the causes of Rome's decay; the second part will consider how the *Bella* provide an education in virtue by impressing upon readers the consequences of virtue and vice; and the third part will show how Sallust's *Bella* give readers experience in applying moral and political principles to practical situations.

## I.

Freedom, both individual and political, is a major theme in Sallust's historical monographs. Sallust's description of human nature in the preface of the *Bellum Iugurthinum* is marked by radical confidence in man's freedom to determine his own fate, for good or for ill. In fact, Sallust makes the daring claim that "the leader and ruler of the life of mortals is the mind" ("*dux atque imperator vitae mortalium animum est*") [BI 1.3]. Because the human race is composed of soul as well as body, it is possible for mortal men to gain immortal glory through the "extraordinary achievements of the intellect" ("*ingeni egregia facinora*") [BI 2.2]. That most men do not achieve this greatness is due not to the weakness of human nature, but to the sloth and base desires to which they have surrendered themselves. Sallust declares that man's nature is so great and excellent that—far from being ruled by fate—human beings are the rulers of fate (BI



1.5). Of course, Sallust recognizes that human beings have only limited control over “the goods of the body and of fortune” (“*corporis et fortunae bonorum*”) but he insists that the attainment “to glory by the way of virtue” (“*ad gloriam virtutis via*”) cannot be given or taken away by fortune (BI 2.3, 1.3). In determining his own character and attaining glory through virtue, the individual possesses complete freedom.<sup>3</sup>

Sallust’s belief in the human capacity for greatness is the basis of his admiration for the republican form of government. Because men are by nature capable of greatness, the common good is best served, Sallust suggests, when all citizens are free to contribute to the *res publica*. A state ruled by equal laws instead of by tyrants—a state in which all men are able to exercise their moral freedom in the service of the common good—has the possibility of rising to incredible greatness, as Sallust says of Rome itself: “But it is incredible to recall in what a short time the city became great once liberty had been achieved” (“*Sed civitas incredibile memoratu est adepta libertate quantum brevi creverit*”) [BC 7.3]. Sallust is by no means a utopian, however. He knows that, despite their freedom to pursue glory through virtue, most men “descend to laziness and the pleasures of the body” (“*ad inertiam et voluptates corporis pessum datus est*”) until “their strength, time, and natural talent have disappeared through idleness” (“*per socordiam tempus, ingenium diffluxere*”) [BI 1.4]. Worse yet, the radical freedom of human nature makes possible the existence of brilliant and talented men, “with great strength both of mind and of body” (“*magna vi et animi et corporis*”), who choose actively to pursue evil

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<sup>3</sup> Although Sallust argues in the preface to *Bellum Iugurthinum* that human beings are not controlled by fortune, he seems to contradict himself in the *Bellum Catilinae*: “But assuredly, fortune is the ruler in everything” (“*Sed profecto fortuna in omni re dominatur*”) [BC 8.1]. Sallust qualifies this statement, however, by explaining that “she honors and obscures all things more out of fancy than out of truth” (“*ea res cunctas ex lubricine magis quam ex vero celebrat obscuratque*”) [BC 8.1]. In other words, fortune controls whether or not great deeds will be honored with fame, but the achievement of greatness depends on the free efforts of the individual. Sallust’s emphasis on the glory due to virtue is primarily a rhetorical device to incite his readers to the pursuit of virtue. That Sallust believes the attainment of virtue is a worthy goal with or without fame is clear from his praise of Cato, who “preferred to be, rather than to seem, good” (“*esse quam videri bonus malebat*”) [BC 54.6].



(BC 5.1). Sallust makes this possibility frighteningly clear in the characters of Jugurtha and Catiline, who possess incredible natural talents but choose to direct them towards evil desires and murderous schemes. The same human freedom that makes possible the greatness of the Roman republic can also lead to conflicts so great they “[throw] into confusion all things divine and human and . . . [make] an end to civic pursuits.”<sup>4</sup>

Sallust’s historical monographs portray the devastation that is worked by Jugurtha’s and Catiline’s misuse of their freedom, but ironically, Jugurtha and Catiline are the ones who suffer the most from their crimes. Although they begin as free agents capable of achieving glory through virtue, they end up enslaved to their passions and to the train of evil events which they themselves have set in motion. For instance, at the beginning of the *Bellum Iugurthinum*, Jugurtha is portrayed as a daring and decisive leader, described as “fierce” (“*acer*”) and “warlike” (“*bellicosus*”) [BI 20.2]. By the end of the war, however, Jugurtha’s repeated reliance on treachery has reduced him to an indecisive<sup>5</sup> and paranoid<sup>6</sup> commander:

He changed his routes and his commanders every day, now went forth against the enemy, now went into the desert; he placed hope in flight often and shortly afterwards in arms . . . (*Itinera praefectosque in dies mutare, modo advorsum hostis, interdum in solitudines pergere, saepe in fuga ac post paulo in armis spem habere . . .*)

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<sup>4</sup> “And this struggle [between the nobility and the commons] threw into confusion all things divine and human, and proceeded to such a point of madness that the war and devastation of Italy made an end to civic pursuits.” (“*Quae contentio divina et humana cuncta permiscuit eoque vecordiae processit, ut studiis civilibus bellum atque vastitas Italiae finem faceret.*”) [BI 5.2]

<sup>5</sup> At one point, weary of the adversities he faces in the war, Jugurtha is persuaded to surrender to the Romans; after he has already been stripped of his army and resources, he resumes the war due to the shame of being conquered and out of a guilty fear of punishment (BI 62).

<sup>6</sup> After the discovery of Bomilcar’s plot against his life, “there was never a quiet day or night for Jugurtha; he did not have sufficient trust in any place or person or time; he feared his citizens and the enemy equally, he was always on the alert and was alarmed at every sound; and rested at night in one place and then another, often in places contrary to the dignity of a king; sometimes, having been roused from sleep, he made an uproar, seizing his arms; he was hounded by such terror it was almost madness” (“*Iugurthae dies aut nox ulla quieta fuit; neque loco neque mortali cuiquam aut tempori satis credere, civis hostisque iuxta metuere, circumspectare omnia et omni strepitu pavescere, alio atque alio loco saepe contra decus regium noctu requiescere, interdum somno excitus arreptis armis tumultum facere, ita formidine quasi vecordia exagitari*”) [BI 72.1-2].



[BI 74.1]

Treachery and bribery, which were his most effective weapons in the early part of the war, become his greatest fear. When a popular official is discovered to have plotted against the king's life, Jugurtha is reduced to flattering the official with a gracious reply, not daring to express his displeasure for fear of provoking a rebellion (BI 72.1). His decision to use his freedom to enslave others has reduced him to flattering his own servants.

Like Jugurtha, Catiline is also reduced to slavery by his passions.<sup>7</sup> The desire to control the republic is said to "invade" or "seize" Catiline,<sup>8</sup> and Sallust declares that his arrogant mind was "driven" ("*agitabatur*") by "the poverty of his household and the consciousness of his crimes" ("*inopia rei familiaris et conscientia scelerum*") [BC 5.7]. The description of how Catiline is tortured by his conscience is one of the most vivid in the book:

For his filthy soul, hostile to gods and men, was able to find rest neither in waking nor in sleeping, his conscience so ravaged his terrified mind. Thence his bloodless complexion, his horrible eyes, his pace now fast, now slow; in short, there was madness in his features and his looks. (*Namque animus impurus, dis hominibus infestus, neque vigiliis neque quietibus sedari poterat; ita conscientia mentem excitam vastabat. Igitur color ei exanguis, foedi oculi, citus modo modo tardus incessus, prorsus in facie voltuque vecordia inerat.*) [BC 15.4-5]

Besides the mental slavery which Catiline endures, he is also goaded by the debts resulting from his prodigality, which "were enormous through all the lands" ("*per omnis terras ingens erat*") [BC 16.4]. Catiline's bodyguard and friends are slaves to the

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<sup>7</sup> One could argue that Catiline was born "with an evil and depraved character" ("*ingenio malo pravoque*") [BC 5.1], and thus had no choice but to pursue evil. However, this argument is contradicted by Sallust's portrayal of his guilt-ridden conscience, which shows that Catiline knew he was doing evil (BC 15.4-5). The forethought and planning which Catiline puts into his conspiracy also suggest an awareness of what he is doing.

<sup>8</sup> "After the domination of Lucius Sulla, a tremendous desire seized [Catiline] of taking control of the republic" ("*Hunc post dominationem L. Sullae libido maxuma invaserat rei publicae capiundae . . .*") [BC 5.6].



same passions and crimes, since he purposely chooses as followers “all whom disgrace, poverty, [or] a guilty conscience hounded” (*“omnes quos flagitium, egestasa, conscius animus exagitabat”*) [BC 14.1-3].

Surprisingly, Catiline and his fellow conspirators agree with Sallust that their situation is a form of slavery. Catiline urges his followers to liberate themselves<sup>9</sup> and Catiline’s lieutenant Manlius insists that they are fighting only for “liberty, which no good man relinquishes except along with his life” (*“libertatem, quam nemo bonus nisi cum anima simul amittit”*) [BC 33.4]. Ironically, whereas Sallust shows that the rebels are enslaved to their own passions and crimes, Manlius claims that their slavery is due to the injustice of the state in expecting them to pay their debts (BC 33.1). The liberty which the conspirators desire is license to squander their patrimony and indulge their passions without paying the consequences. This use of the word “*libertas*” is in direct opposition to Cato’s use of the word in his oration against the conspirators. Cato sets the context of his oration by describing the conspirators as men “who had prepared war against their own fatherland, parents, altars, and hearths” (*“qui patriae, parentibus, aris atque focis suis bellum paravere”*) [BC 52.3]. Urging his fellow senators to respond vigorously to the threat, he exclaims:

“But by the immortal gods, I implore you—you who have always valued your houses, villas, statues, paintings more highly than the republic— if you wish to retain these things to which you cling, of whatever kind they are, if you wish to furnish leisure for your pleasures, bestir yourselves before it is too late, and administer the republic. I am not treating of taxes or injustices to our allies; our liberty and lives are in danger.” (*“Sed, per deos immortalis, vos ego appello, qui semper domos, villas, signa, tabulas vostras pluris quam rem publicam fecistis; si ista, cuiuscumque modi sunt, quae amplexamini, retinere, si voluptatibus vostris otium praebere voltis, expergiscimini aliquando et capessite rem publicam. Non agitur de vectigalibus neque de sociorum iniuriis; libertas et anima nostra in dubio est.”*) [BC 52.6]

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<sup>9</sup> “But my soul is inflamed more every day when I consider what the condition of our life will be if we do not liberate ourselves” (*“Ceterum mihi in dies magis animus accenditur, cum considero quae condicio vitae futura sit, nisi nosmet ipsi vindicamus in libertatem”*) [BC 20.6].



In this passage, Cato does not deny that *libertas* includes the freedom to enjoy villas, statues, and paintings, so long as they are lawfully possessed. Yet his understanding of *libertas* is placed within the context of fatherland, parents, altar, and hearth. For Cato, as for Sallust, true liberty consists of the freedom to pursue virtue, a virtue which could be summarized as the fulfilling of one's duties to one's parents, fatherland, and gods. As Sallust explains in the preface to *Bellum Iugurthinum*, such virtue makes one independent even of fortune:

When the mind advances towards glory by the way of virtue, it is abundantly strong and powerful and renowned, nor does it need fortune, which of course can neither give nor take away honesty, industry, and other good things of character from anyone. (*[Animus] ubi ad gloriam virtutis via grassatur, abunde pollens potensque et clarus est neque fortuna eget, quippe probitatem, industriam, aliasque artis bonas neque dare neque eripere cuiquam potest.*) [BI 1.3]

Since Catiline and his fellow conspirators are slaves to vice, not even the "*legis praesidium*"—the "bulwark of the law" which ensures civic liberty and for which they claim to be fighting—can give them true freedom (BC 33.5).

Marius' letter in defense of the conspirators is paralleled by Memmius' speech in the *Bellum Iugurthinum*, in which he urges the commons to defend their rights against the oppression of the nobles. The rhetoric and arguments of Marius and Memmius are similar, but Sallust makes it clear that the commons have a just grievance against the nobles, while Catiline and his conspirators do not.<sup>10</sup> Despite this fundamental difference between the two pieces of rhetoric, Memmius' oration is helpful for understanding one of the premises assumed by Marius in his shorter letter. When Marius equates the conspirators' supposed struggle for liberty with a struggle for the *legis praesidium*, he makes rhetorical use of the idea that political liberty depends on just

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<sup>10</sup> Compare BI 41 with BC 37.



laws.<sup>11</sup> Correspondingly, the importance of law in safeguarding political liberty is the underlying principle which determines most of the arguments and rhetoric of Memmius' speech. For instance, Memmius' primary accusation against the nobles is that they have undermined the laws and hijacked the legitimate offices of the republic for their own ends. He describes their tyranny as the times "when kingdoms, provinces, laws, rights, courts, war and peace—in short, all things divine and human—[are] in the hands of a few men" (*"cum regna, provinciae, leges, iura, iudicia, bella atque paces, postremo divina et humana omnia penes paucos erant"*) [BI 31.20]. Significantly, Memmius explains to his audience that he does not urge them to defend their rights by violence, but to address the corruption in the senate through legal investigations (BI 31.18). As long as the commons possess a degree of political power, it is "more unbecoming for [the commons] to have inflicted [violence] than for [the nobles] to have suffered [it]" (*"magis vos fecisse quam illis accidisse indignum est"*) [BI 31.18]. Since law is the best defense of liberty, violent secession, which overturns the law, should be used only as a last resort.<sup>12</sup> After all, even though their forefathers "twice occupied the Aventine with arms in a secession in order to obtain their rights and establish their sovereignty" (*"parandi iuris et maiestatis constituendae gratia bis per secessionem armati Aventinum occupavere"*), Memmius says, "in truth, not law but the will of the [nobles] put an end to both slaughters" (*"utriusque cladis non lex verum libido eorum finem fecit"*)

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<sup>11</sup> Of course, Marius and his fellow conspirators consider a just law to be one which permits them to indulge in licentious passions without consequences. In particular, the conspirators wish to see enacted a law for the abolishment of debts, such as was enacted by the Valerian law of 86 BC. See BC 33.1-5 and note 1 on p. 56 of the Loeb edition of Sallust.

<sup>12</sup> Memmius seems to suggest that violent resistance would be necessary if an oppressive government possessed not only the ability to do evil with impunity, but also the legal authority to do so. "For in regard to those men, they have so much of relentlessness that it is too little to have done evil with impunity; unless thereafter the permission to perpetrate [evil] is wrung [from you]; and to you perpetual anxiety will be left when you understand that you must either be slaves or retain liberty by force" (*"Nam et illis, quantum importunitatis habent, parum est impune male fecisse, nisi deinde faciendi licentia eripitur, et vobis aeterna sollicitudo remanebit, cum intelletis aut serviundum esse aut per manus libertatem retinendam"*) [BI 31.22].





[BI 31.17, 31.7].

Sallust certainly agrees with Memmius that just laws are necessary for the establishment of liberty in a society. In his description of the founding of Rome, he emphasizes the importance of law and of legitimate authority for ensuring a free society, whether it be a monarchy or a republic.<sup>13</sup> However, Sallust also makes it clear that *legis praesidium* is not enough for liberty, because genuine freedom depends on the possession of virtue. If an individual or a nation lacks good morals, not even the best laws can protect it from slavery to passion and crime. Consequently, Sallust declares that early Rome was just and good as much because of the nature and morals of the people as by their laws: “Therefore good morals were cultivated at home and abroad. . . . justice and honesty prevailed among them not because of laws so much as by their nature/character” (“*Igitur domi militiaeque boni mores colebantur. . . . ius bonumque apud eos non legibus magis quam natura valebat*”) [BC 9.1]. Freedom was lost not because of a defect in Roman laws, but because of the decline of Roman virtue, when “the nobility began to exchange their dignity, and the people to exchange their liberty, for inordinate desire, [and] every one for himself cheated, robbed, plundered” (“*coepere nobilitas dignitatem, populus libertatem in lubidinem votere, sibi quisque ducere, trahere, rapere*”) [BI 41.5].

The importance of virtue as the foundation of Roman greatness is a point to which Sallust returns again and again, not only in his comments as a narrator but also in the words and deeds of his characters. In fact, Sallust specifically says that his portrayals of Cato and Caesar are intended to be examples of how “the extraordinary

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<sup>13</sup> “They had a government founded on law, which was called a monarchy. . . . Later, when the rule of the kings, which at first promoted the preservation of liberty and the advancement of the state, had twisted itself into arrogance and despotism, the custom having been altered, they made for themselves public offices of a year’s duration and appointed two commanders-in-chief” (“*Imperium legitimum, nomen imperi regium habebant. . . . Post ubi regium imperium, quod initio conservandae libertatis atque augendae rei publicae fuerat, in superbiam dominationemque se convortit, immutato more annua imperia binosque imperatores sibi fecere. . .*”) [BC 6.6-7].



virtue of a few citizens" (*"paucorum civium egregiam virtutem"*) was the foundation of Rome's greatness (BC 53.4). As Cato explains in his oration against the conspirators,

"Do not suppose our ancestors made a great republic out of an insignificant state by arms. . . . But there were other things which made them great, which we do not have at all: industry at home, a just rule abroad, a free mind in taking counsel, not burdened by crime and lust." (*"Nolite existumare maiores nostros armis rem publicam ex parva magnam fecisse. . . . Sed alia fuere, quae illos magnos fecere, quae nobis nulla sunt: domi industria, foris iustum imperium, animus in consulundo liber, neque delicto neque lubrico obnoxius."*) [BC 52.21]

Cato and Caesar may be the only models of virtue in Sallust's two historical monographs, but the *Bella* are full of negative models, the most obvious being Catiline and Jugurtha themselves. The corrupt senators in the *Bellum Iugurthinum* are other examples of how individual vice leads to political slavery. Bribed by Jugurtha, most of the senators support Jugurtha's seizure of the kingdom of Numidia, which the late King Micipsa had divided between his sons, Adherbal and Hiempsal, and Jugurtha, the illegitimate son of Micipsa's brother. Although the exiled Adherbal appeals to the senate in person to avenge Jugurtha's murder of Hiempsal and seizure of the kingdom, most of the senators "with influence, voice, in short in all ways, were striving on behalf of the crime and outrage of a foreigner as if for their own glory" (*"gratia, voce, denique omnibus modis pro alieno scelere et flagitio sua quasi pro gloria nitebantur"*) [BI 15.2]. Instead of punishing Jugurtha for his crimes, the senate re-divides the kingdom between Adherbal and Jugurtha, a move which simply encourages Jugurtha's lust for power. The senate does eventually declare war on Jugurtha, but only once he has made himself the sole ruler of Numidia after torturing and killing Adherbal. Jugurtha is defeated only with great difficulty, in a war that was "great and violent and attended by diverse victories" (*"magnum et atrox variaque victoria"*) [BI 5.1].

After his first dealings with the senate, when Jugurtha saw that, contrary to his fears, the senate was practically rewarding him for his crimes, "he regarded as certain



what he had received from his friends in Numantia—that in Rome, all things are for sale” (“*certum esse ratus, quod ex amicis apud Numantiam acceperat, omnia Romae venalia esse*”) [BI 20.1]. This is the second time the phrase “*omnia Romae venalia esse*” is used in the *Bellum Iugurthinum*, and it will appear again when Jugurtha employs still more bribery to thwart Memmius’ attempts to reform the corrupt senate (BI 33-4).<sup>14</sup> In one of the most memorable lines of the book, Sallust relates:

But after [Jugurtha] had gone out of Rome, it is held that, after looking back at the city frequently in silence, he finally had said, “A city for sale and soon to perish if it finds a buyer!” (*Sed postquam Roma egressus est, fertur saepe eo tacitus respiciens postremo dixisse, “Urbem venalem et mature perituram, si emptorem invenerit!”*) [BI 35.10]

The image evoked by these lines is of the Roman republic transformed into a slave in the market, to be purchased by the highest bidder. Rome has fallen from being the ruler of the world to being a slave at the beck and call of foreign powers. As Memmius tells his audience, “the republic is for sale at home and abroad” (“*domi militiaeque res publica venalis fuit*”)—not only is there oppression within the republic by the different factions, but any foreign nation with enough wealth can purchase the consciences of the nobility and drive the Roman people to their own destruction (BI 31.25). The private vices of the citizens are destroying not only their own moral liberty but also the liberty of the Roman republic.

## II.

Despite the negative tone of Sallust’s narratives, he did not write the *Bella* simply to complain about contemporary Roman society or to condemn his contemporaries for their corruption and licentiousness. On the contrary, Sallust sees his *Bella* as offering at least a partial solution to the problems of his day. This is made clear by his preface to

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<sup>14</sup> The phrases “*omnia Romae venalia esse*” or “*Romae omnia venire*” are used in the *Bellum Iugurthinum* at 8.1, 20.1, 28.1, and 35.10.



the *Bellum Iugurthinum*, in which he says that even his critics, if they reflect, must judge that “greater gain will come to the republic from [his] leisure” —that is, from the time Sallust spends writing history—“than from the activities of others” (“*maiusque commodum ex otio meo quam ex aliorum negotiis rei publicae venturum*”) [BI 4.4]. Sallust explains this statement by telling how the great leaders of Rome were inspired to pursue virtue by the memory of the achievements of their ancestors:

For I have often heard Quintus Maximus and Publius Scipio, besides other famous men of our state, who were accustomed to speak thus: when they regarded the images of their ancestors, their soul was exceedingly kindled for virtue; to be sure, [they did not mean] that either the wax or the figure had such power in them; rather, this flame springs up in the breast for extraordinary men because of the memory of the deeds accomplished [by their ancestors], nor is it extinguished until [their own] virtue has equaled the fame and glory of [their ancestors]. (*Nam saepe ego audivi Q. Maxumum, P. Scipionem, praeterea civitatis nostrae praeclaros viros solitos ita dicere, cum maiorum imagines intuerentur, vehementissime sibi animum ad virtutem accendi. Scilicet non ceram illam neque figuram tantam vim in sese habere, sed memoria rerum gestarum eam flammam egregiis viris in pectore crescere neque prius sedari, quam virtus eorum famam atque gloriam adaequaverit.*) [BI 4.5]

In this passage, “*memoria rerum gestarum*” literally means “the memory of the deeds accomplished [by their ancestors].” However, the phrase “*res gestae*” is regularly used in Latin as a synonym for “history” because the historian gives an account of “things accomplished.” By using this phrase, Sallust is comparing his history of the Jugurthine War with the wax images that inspired virtue in the great men of the past. Through his account of the *res gestae* of previous eras, Sallust hopes to inspire his readers to pursue virtue, in order to undo at least in a small way Rome’s slavery to luxury and sloth.

Sallust’s metaphor of history as a wax figure that inspires virtue by “*memoria rerum gestarum*” is eloquent and memorable, but the immediate charm of the image can conceal the full extent of Sallust’s reflection on education. A careful study of the *Bella* reveals that Sallust is constantly reflecting on different types of education and



eventually outlines his own theory of the ideal education for potential leaders. Sallust's interest in education is most evident in the preface to the *Bellum Catilinae*:

But for a long time there was conflict among mortals whether military affairs were benefited more by strength of body or by excellence of mind. For before you begin, there is need of deliberation, and when you have consulted, there is need of prompt action. . . . Accordingly, in the beginning kings took different courses, some training the mind, and others the body. . . . in the end, by danger and affairs it became clear that the mind is more powerful in war. (*Sed diu magnum inter mortalis certamen fuit vine corporis an virtute animi res militaris magis procederet. Nam et prius quam incipias, consulto, et ubi consulueris, mature facto opus est. . . . Igitur initio reges . . . divorsi pars ingenium, alii corpus exercebant. . . . demum periculo atque negotiis compertum est in bello plurimum ingenium posse.*) [BC 1.5-2.2]

Sallust continues by explaining that mental excellence is also of primary importance in peace, but unfortunately most rulers yield to intellectual sloth as soon as the danger of war is past.

That Sallust believes it is more important to train the mind than to train the body should surprise no one, given his comment in the *Bellum Iugurthinum* that “a handsome appearance, great wealth [and] strength of body in addition, and all other things of this sort decay in a short time; but the splendid achievements of the intellect are immortal like the soul” (“*praeclara facies, magnae divitiae, ad hoc vis corporis et alia omnia huiusmodi brevi dilabuntur, at ingeni egregia facinora sicuti anima immortalia sunt*”) [BI 2.2]. Sallust's reflections on the relative value of different educations go well beyond such elementary observations, however, especially in his descriptions of the early training of the various characters in the *Bella*, and in the speeches of several characters.

Sallust's descriptions of Marius' and Jugurtha's educations are particularly significant in light of his emphasis in the preface of the *Bellum Catilinae* on training the intellect. Sallust speaks approvingly of Jugurtha's purely physical education:

When [Jugurtha] had first grown up . . . he did not give himself over to be corrupted by luxury or sloth, but as is the custom of that race, he rode, he cast the javelin, he competed at full speed with his age-fellows . . . in addition, he spent



much of his time in hunting . . . (*Qui ubi primum adolevit . . . non se luxu neque inertiae corrumpendum dedit, sed, uti mos gentis illius est, equitare, iaculari, cursu cum aequalibus certare . . . ad hoc pleraque tempora in venando agere . . .*) [BI 6.1]

Sallust gives a similarly positive portrayal of Marius' education:

[W]hen first he reached the age capable of military service, he trained himself in active service, not in Greek eloquence nor in the elegance of the city; thus among good arts his unspoiled mind soon matured. (*[U]bi primum aetas militiae patiens fuit, stipendiis faciundis, non Graeca facundia neque urbanis munditiis sese exercuit; ita inter artis bonas integrum ingenium brevi adolevit.*) [BI 63.3]

Later in the book, when addressing the commons which have elected him to the office of consul, Marius claims that his industry, fortitude, and moderation are due to the practical, military education he received. He expresses his scorn for "Greek letters" ("*litteras Graecas*"), commenting, "it was little pleasing [to me] to learn them, since with respect to virtue they had profited their teachers not at all" ("*parum placebat eas discere, quippe quae ad virtutem doctoribus nihil profuerant*") [BI 85.13-14, 32-33].<sup>15</sup>

Strangely enough, Sallust agrees with Marius to a certain extent. Roman or Numidian military training are excellent ways to gain habits of fortitude, industry, and moderation, as well as an understanding of military strategy, which could be critically important for a Roman leader. Considering how many of their contemporaries gave themselves over to debauchery and idleness, the education that Marius and Jugurtha received was comparatively excellent. Nevertheless, the fact that Marius was driven headlong by his ambition for the consulship (BI 63.6) and that Jugurtha became a cruel and ruthless tyrant is evidence that the physical and practical education of a soldier is insufficient for virtue—and therefore, insufficient for leadership.

Besides evaluating the worth of military training, Sallust also explores the value

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<sup>15</sup> "*Graeca facundia*" (Greek eloquence) refers to the art of rhetoric as formulated by the Greeks. The term is not infrequently used in a negative sense by Roman authors who were suspicious of cultural borrowings from Greece. "*Litteris Graecis et Latinis*" (Greek and Latin letters) is a more neutral term in itself, referring simply to a course of study in the Greek and Latin languages and literatures (Kadleck).



of an education in Greek eloquence. His conclusion is that training in Greek letters—even if combined with military discipline—is also insufficient for producing virtuous statesmen, although the rhetorical power it gives one is certainly important for leadership.<sup>16</sup> Sulla is the example Sallust provides of a military leader who was also trained in Greek letters. Sallust explains that Sulla “was extremely well-versed equally in Greek and Latin letters, with an incredible mind . . . eloquent, clever, and quickly a friend” (*“litteris Graecis et Latinis iuxta atque doctissime eruditus, animo ingenti . . . facundus, callidus, et amicitia facilis”*) [BI 95.3]. Nevertheless, Sulla was “desirous of pleasure but more desirous of glory” (*“cupidus voluptatum sed gloriae cupidior”*), vices which are inconsistent with Sallust’s vision of a virtuous leader (BI 95.3). As his final verdict, Sallust refers to the dictatorship which Sulla would later exercise, saying, “For the thing which he did later, I am uncertain whether one should be ashamed or rather grieved to treat of it” (*“Nam postea quae fecerit, incertum habeo pudeat an pigeat magis disserere”*) [BI 95.4]. In the end, neither military training nor Greek letters nor a combination of the two is sufficient for virtuous leadership.

Sallust’s critical evaluation of military training and Greek letters demonstrates just how much he expects from his *Bella* in terms of an education in virtue. Despite his comparison of history to the waxen images of one’s ancestors, Sallust did not write his histories as inspiring stories of virtuous leadership. Rather, he wished to construct texts that not only incite the soul towards virtue but also actively train the soul in political prudence, just as military discipline trains the body in strength and Greek letters train the mind in intelligence. In light of the political context in which Sallust was writing, it is probable that his intended audience is ambitious young men who have the potential for virtuous leadership but are in danger of succumbing to desire for *regnum*, or

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<sup>16</sup> Even Marius, who claims to despise Greek eloquence, could not have risen to power except by his use of rhetoric. His speech to the commons is full of Greek rhetorical devices; for instance, when he claims that “[his] words are not well chosen” he is employing a type of apophasis (BI 85.31).



tyrannical power. Sallust knows from experience the power which “corrupt ambition” (“*ambitione corrupta*”) can have over inexperienced youth, and he also knows that corrupt statesmen like Catiline especially try to attract talented young men as their followers (BC 3.4, 14.4-6). Both the *Bellum Catilinae* and the *Bellum Iugurthinum* were written within the first four years after Caesar’s assassination in 44 BC. During this period of political upheaval, as Octavian and Marcus Antonius struggled for control of Rome, it would be all too easy for ambitious young men to be corrupted by the bribery and power-struggles around them. At the same time, virtuous leaders were desperately needed during this transition period from republic to empire. The future of Rome depended upon the formation of potential leaders.

Sallust’s “Speech to Caesar” — a work which, if authentic, was probably delivered in 46 BC, two years before Caesar’s assassination—makes explicit Sallust’s concern for the education of the young. The oration as a whole is remarkable for its foreshadowing of themes in the *Bella*, especially in its insistence that “every man is the architect of his own fortune” (“*fabrum esse suae quemque fortunae*”) and its description of how the desire for luxury and riches leads to personal slavery and to a corrupt political order in which civic offices are *venalia*, “up for sale” (“Speech” 1.2, 8.2-3).<sup>17</sup> Sallust devotes the first half of the oration to advice on conducting war in a merciful way; the second half, to establishing peace in Italy. To do this, Sallust declares that it is necessary to check the current customs, namely,

that mere youths think it most sweet to waste their own and others’ substance

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<sup>17</sup> This speech is a “doubtful work,” but it has been judged authentic by a number of critics. In his two-part study of the subject, Hugh Last provides a particularly convincing discussion of the authenticity of Sallust’s two *suasoriae* to Caesar. Last concludes that the first *suasoria* (“Speech to Caesar”) may well be authentic, but that the second (“Letter to Caesar”) is almost certainly an imitation of the first by a later author (162). When one takes into account the common thematic ground shared by the speech and the *Bella*—the type of common ground which suggests the organic development of a single author’s concerns more than the mechanical copying of a later imitator—the authenticity of the first *suasoria* becomes even more probable. See Hugh Last, *On the Sallustian Suasoriae I and II*, in *Classical Quarterly* 17.2, 87-100, and 17.3/4, 151-162.





[and] deny nothing to their lust and the soliciting of others, and that they consider this conduct to be virtue and greatness of soul, and judge decency and restraint to be the same as weak-mindedness (*ut homines adulescentuli sua atque aliena consumere, nihil libidinei atque aliis rogantibus denegare pulcherrimum putent, eam virtutem et magnitudinem animi, pudorem atque modestiam pro socordia aestiment*). ["Speech" 5.5]

Sallust continues: "if the pursuits and habits of young men remain the same, assuredly that extraordinary fame of yours, along with the city of Rome, will soon perish" ("*sin eadem studia artesque iuventuti erunt, ne ista egregia tua fama simul cum urbe Roma brevi concidet*") ["Speech" 6.1]. Besides illustrating Sallust's knowledge of human nature in appealing to Caesar's ambitious nature as well as his desire to preserve Rome, this sentence shows what importance Sallust placed upon the education of the young. This concern, which dominates the second half of the oration, a few years later led him to write the *Bella* as educations in virtue for young leaders.

As noted above, Sallust begins the *Bellum Iugurthinum* by comparing his history to the wax images that incite great men to imitate the virtue of their ancestors. However, a fundamental difference between the wax images and the historical characters that Sallust describes in his *Bella* is that the former are models of virtue, while the latter are mostly models of vice. In fact, even Caesar and Cato, Sallust's supposed models of virtue, do not receive unambiguous praise.<sup>18</sup> The explanation for this cannot be that Sallust had few great men to portray in such a corrupt era, because he could have chosen any historical period to write about. Rather, the *Bella* strongly resemble

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<sup>18</sup> Sallust's treatment of Caesar and Cato in the *Bellum Catilinae* is strangely ambiguous, and William Batstone has argued cogently that Sallust does not give unqualified praise to either character. Sallust classes Caesar and Cato together for their "remarkable virtue" ("*ingenti virtute*"), but he says they were of "opposing morals" ("*divorsis moribus*") [BC 53.6]. Caesar's desire for "great command for himself, an army, and a new war where his virtue could stand out" ("*sibi magnum imperium, exercitum, bellum novom . . . ubi virtus enitescere posset*") is reminiscent of the ambition of men like Jugurtha and Catiline (BC 53.4). On the other hand, Cato's severity could probably have benefited from being combined with the "gentleness and mercy" ("*mansuetudine et misericordia*") which Caesar possesses (54.2). See Batstone's "The Antithesis of Virtue: Sallust's *Synkrisis* and the Crisis of the Late Republic" for a detailed examination of Sallust's characterization of Caesar and Cato.



cautionary tales intended to warn young men away from the temptation to tyranny. From his reflections on human nature, Sallust seems to have concluded that fear of the tyrant's fate would be more effective in motivating the soul towards virtue than desire for virtue itself, however gloriously portrayed. And indeed, if Sallust's vivid descriptions of Catiline's and Jugurtha's psychological and political ruin do not convince his audience of the undesirability of *regnum*, or tyrannical power, nothing will.<sup>19</sup>

Although Sallust does not give unambiguous examples of characters who have achieved glory through virtue, Sallust is quite thorough in his description and praise of this glory.<sup>20</sup> After all, if he succeeds in convincing ambitious young men of the undesirability of the life of a tyrant, it is important that he provide them with another, more noble goal to pursue. Accordingly, Sallust begins both the *Bellum Catilinae* and the *Bellum Iugurthinum* with praise for the capacity of the human intellect to achieve glory through virtue: "For the glory belonging to riches and beauty is fleeting and frail; virtue remains illustrious and imperishable" ("*Nam divitiarum et formae gloria fluxa atque fragilis est, virtus clara aeternaque habetur*") [BC 1.4]. This glory can be achieved in many ways. Sallust declares that "the arts of the mind by which the highest fame is prepared are many and diverse" ("*multae variaeque sint artes animi, quibus summa claritudo paratur*"); both the commanding of an army and the writing of histories are ways of advancing

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<sup>19</sup> See BC 15.4-5 and BI 72.1-2.

<sup>20</sup> Although Sallust emphasizes the glory due to virtue in order to attract readers to the virtuous life, he also tempers his praise of glory with a warning against making it one's sole aim. Cato is described as pursuing virtue for virtue's sake: "he preferred to be rather than to seem good; thus the less he sought glory, the more it followed him" ("*esse quam videri bonus malebat; ita quo minus petebat gloriam, eo magis illum sequebatur*") [BC 54.6]. However, Sallust seems to be more worried about avarice than ambition in his readers. As he explains at the beginning of the *Bellum Catilinae*, "the good and the ignoble man alike long for glory, honor, and power for themselves; but the former advances by the true path, the later, because he is destitute of good qualities, competes with tricks and falsehoods" ("*gloriam, honorem, imperium bonus et ignavis aequae sibi exoptant; sed ille vera via nititur, huic quia bonae artes desunt, dolis atque fallaciis contendit*") [BC 11.1-2].



“towards glory by the way of virtue” (“*ad gloriam virtutis via*”) [BI 1.2, 2.4].<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, of the many ways in which human beings can achieve glory, Sallust argues that public office is undesirable in such corrupt times. The only way one could reform the state, he declares, is by force, which is “unfitting” (“*importunum*”) to use against one’s “fatherland or parents/subjects”<sup>22</sup> (“*patriam aut parentes*”), especially since “all changes in the affairs of state foretell slaughter, exile, and other hostile things” (“*omnes rerum mutationes caedem, fugam, aliaque hostilia portendant*”) [BI 3.2]. Sallust is responding to potential critics of his decision to withdraw from public affairs. He explains that, instead of wasting his time “greet[ing] the populace and seek[ing] favor with banquets”<sup>23</sup> (“*salutare plebem et convivii gratiam quaerere*”), he is devoting himself to “the so great and so useful labor” (“*tanto tamque utili labori*”) of recording the history of the Roman people (BI 4.3). Since Sallust writes the *Bella* in order to train young leaders in political prudence, his withdrawal from active political life is not a withdrawal from concern for the Roman state. Rather, the leisure he has gained allows him to write the *Bella* as attempts to reform the morals of the Roman people by education instead of by force.

### III.

Curiously, Sallust’s praise of the private life and his scorn for useless political activity are not recurring themes in either of the *Bella*. Once he has defended his own

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<sup>21</sup> By “arts of the mind” Sallust seems to refer to any pursuit that requires the exercise of the intellect. The only examples he mentions in the preface of the *Bellum Iugurthinum* are the writing of history and “magistracies and military commands, finally every care of public things” (“*magistratus et imperia, postremo omnis cura rerum publicarum*”) [BI 3.1]. In the beginning of the *Bellum Catilinae*, Sallust may imply that agriculture, navigation, and architecture are also arts of the mind, although he does not use that term. “Men who plow, who navigate, who build, depend upon excellence/virtue in all respects” (“*Quae homines arant, navigant, aedificant, virtuti omnia parent*”) [BC 2.7].

<sup>22</sup> “*Parentes*” means either “parents” or “subjects,” depending on whether it is the accusative plural of the noun “*parens, parentis*” or a substantive use of the accusative plural present active participle of the verb “*pareo*.”

<sup>23</sup> In other words, campaigning for political office.



withdrawal from public affairs, he does not seem interested in dissuading others from engaging in political life. Instead, he devotes himself to constructing his histories in such a way as to give future political leaders the proper education for their difficult task. The *Bella* are texts that prompt their readers to engage in moral reasoning about the political situations portrayed in the histories. Even Sallust's writing style plays a part in developing readers' attentiveness. Un-Ciceronian in the extreme, Sallust's style is characterized by *brevitas*, *variatio* and *inconcinntitas*—that is, brevity, variety, and dissymmetry. He achieves these effects by a heavy use of archaic terms and spellings, a conscious employment of non-parallel structures (e.g., pairing an adjective with a prepositional phrase), a bold use of grammar and syntax in ways contrary to common usage, and extensive use of ellipsis and asyndeton. The result is abrupt, rapid prose that keeps the reader on his toes by its unexpected twists and turns.

More important than his writing style is Sallust's way of presenting the events in the *Bella*. Sallust's most effective tool for educating his readers in political prudence is the many speeches in the *Bella*. There are six orations or letters in the *Bellum Catilinae*<sup>24</sup> and seven in the *Bellum Iugurthinum*,<sup>25</sup> and each is highly persuasive in terms of its rhetoric. Nevertheless, Sallust hardly ever comments on the speeches, not even to prevent readers from being deceived by sophisticated rhetoricians. In fact, after the contradictory speeches of Caesar and Cato in the *Bellum Catilinae* (BC 51, 52), Sallust actually praises both characters at length. Only careful political reasoning can enable the reader to judge between Caesar's and Cato's diametrically opposed arguments regarding how to deal with the conspirators. The two speeches of Catiline (BC 20, 58) and the letter of Manlius (BC 33) place readers in a similar quandary because their claim to be fighting for liberty introduces readers to the debate over the nature of true freedom. Although the rhetoric which Catiline and Manlius use makes their arguments

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<sup>24</sup> BC 20, 33, 35, 51, 52, 58

<sup>25</sup> BI 10, 14, 24, 31, 85, 102, 110



initially persuasive, what they mean by “*libertas*” is dramatically opposed to Sallust’s understanding of freedom by and for virtue.

In the *Bellum Iugurthinum*, the speeches require the reader to compare the speaker’s words with his deeds. This necessity is made clear by King Micipsa’s deathbed speech. Although Micipsa emphasizes the affection between him and Jugurtha and the need for friendship between Jugurtha and his own sons, Sallust’s readers know that Micipsa is speaking insincerely. In fact, Micipsa had sent the young Jugurtha to the Roman war in Numantia in the hope that his valor or the ruthlessness of the foe would lead to his death (*BI* 7.2). It is only as a last resort, in an attempt to satisfy Jugurtha’s ambitious nature, that Micipsa eventually makes Jugurtha co-heir with Adherbal and Hiempsal. Adherbal’s speech and letter to the Senate cannot be taken at face value, either (*BI* 14, 24). Adherbal’s excessive flattery and submission to the Senate is more likely to be due to the danger he finds himself in from Jugurtha than from an actual command from his father to think of Numidia—which was not a province, but an ally of Rome—as belonging to the Senate and of himself as merely its manager (*BI* 14.1). Marius’ speech to the commons cannot be trusted any more than the speeches of Micipsa and Adherbal. For instance, Marius refers to the clumsiness of the nobles in conducting the war with Jugurtha (*BI* 85.45-7), but Sallust’s readers know that Marius was a loyal lieutenant of Metellus, the current general in Numidia, until Metellus made fun of Marius’ ambition to be consul (*BI* 64.1-4). After that, Marius set about actively to undermine Metellus’ reputation (*BI* 64.5-65.5). To gain popularity among the commoners, Marius does not hesitate even to risk the success of the war by relaxing discipline among the soldiers (*BI* 64.5). Knowing what they do about Marius’ character, Sallust’s readers will think twice before believing Marius when he declares, “for me, who have spent my entire life in exemplary conduct, to act correctly has now, out of habit, turned into my nature” (“*mihi, qui omnem aetatem in optumis artibus egi, bene facere iam ex consuetudine in naturam vortit*”) [*BI* 85.9].



Sallust also uses other techniques to prompt readers to develop political and moral judgment. For instance, he often describes several possible motives for characters' actions, thus requiring the reader to consider which possibility is most likely.<sup>26</sup> For instance, in chapter 82 of the *Bellum Iugurthinum*, after describing how Metellus wept when he heard of Marius' election to the consulship, Sallust says:

This behavior some ascribe to arrogance, others think that a noble mind had been inflamed by insult; many, because the victory that was already achieved had been snatched from his hands. To us it is sufficiently understood that he was tormented more by the honor given to Marius than by his own injury, and he would not have endured such distress if the province, taken from him, had been handed over to someone other than Marius. (*Quam rem alii in superbiam vortebant, alii bonum ingenium contumelia accensum esse, multi, quod iam parta victoria ex manibus eriperetur. Nobis satis cognitum est illum magis honore Mari quam iniuria sua excruciatum neque tam anxie laturum fuisse, si adempta provincia alii quam Mario traderetur.*) [BI 82.3]

Similarly, in chapter 19 of the *Bellum Catilinae*, Sallust offers two explanations for why Gnaeus Piso was slain by the Spanish cavalry under his command:

There are some who say thus, that the barbarians had not been able to endure his rule, which was unjust, arrogant, and cruel; but others hold that those horsemen, who were old and faithful retainers of Gnaeus Pompey, had attacked Piso by his will; they point out that the Spaniards had never before committed such a crime, but had patiently endured many harsh commanders before. We will leave this matter undetermined. (*Sunt qui ita dicant, imperia eius iniusta, superba, crudelia barbaros nequissime pati; alii autem equites illos Cn. Pompei veteres fidosque clientis voluntate eius Pisonem aggressos; numquam Hispanos praeterea tale facinus fecisse, sed imperia saeva multa antea perpessos. Nos eam rem in medio relinquemus.*) [BC 9.4-5]

By prompting readers to ponder the many possible motives for characters' actions, Sallust slowly but surely leads them to a deeper understanding of human nature.

Another way Sallust educates his readers is by phrasing descriptions in paradoxical ways. For instance, after recounting the siege and capture of Jugurtha's

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<sup>26</sup> Sallust uses this rhetorical device (dialysis), at BC 19.5, 22.1-3; BI 37.4, 82.2-3, 86.2-3, 88.5-6, 108.3, 113.1.



treasure fortress in the mountains, Sallust concludes, “Thus Marius’ rashness was set straight by chance, [and] he acquired glory out of an error” (“*Sic forte correcta Mari temeritas gloriam ex culpa invenit*”) [BI 94.6]. He then leaves it to the reader to decide whether Marius should be commended for attacking this virtually impregnable fortress. After all, the siege would have been a pointless waste of lives and resources if one of Marius’ men, collecting snails on the rocky slopes of the mountain, had not discovered a way up to the plateau behind the fortress. In another chapter, Sallust presents his readers with a seeming moral dilemma in his description of Marius’ decision to burn the town of Capsa and slaughter the adult inhabitants even though the town had surrendered—an act contrary to the law of war.

This crime against the law of war was not perpetrated by the avarice or wickedness of the consul, but because the place was advantageous to Jugurtha [and] hard to access for us, [and because] the race of men was fickle, unfaithful, and had previously been controlled neither by kindness nor by fear. (*Id facinus contra ius belli non avaritia neque scelere consulis admissum, sed quia locus Iugurthae opportunus, nobis aditu difficilis, genus hominum mobile, infidum, ante neque beneficio neque metu coercitum.*) [BI 91.5-7]

Were Marius’ reasons sufficient to justify disregard for the laws of war? Sallust leaves this implicit question unanswered, since he wants his readers to grapple with it for themselves. As future leaders, Sallust’s readers will themselves be faced with cases in which the arguments for disregarding moral principles will seem compelling and urgent. In such situations, previous experience in holding fast to moral principles is critically important.

Still more importantly, leaders must develop the forethought to avoid situations in which disregarding moral principles will seem to be the only option. Sallust does not directly condemn Marius for cruelty, but he repeatedly emphasizes Marius’ lack of forethought in attempting to attack Capsa at all. Not only was Capsa a well-fortified town, but it was in the middle of a desert full of deadly serpents. Sallust compares



Marius' attack on Capsa to Metellus' successful attack on Thala—a town that was also located in the middle of the desert—but he does so not in order to make the plan seem less impossible but in order to explain the origin of the “very great desire” (*“maxuma cupido”*) that seized Marius—namely, the desire to gain as much glory as Metellus (*BI 89.6*). In fact, the comparison of Capsa with Thala reveals just how rash Marius' plan was. Whereas there were several springs of water outside the walls of Thala, the only water at Capsa was inside the walls. Consequently, even if Marius and his men were able to cross the desert, they would have to defeat Capsa immediately or risk dying of thirst. Not only would they be unable to lay siege to Capsa the way Metellus did to Thala, they would not even be able to retreat back across the desert, since they had no supply of water. Sallust admits that Marius “arranged the enterprise carefully enough under the circumstances” (*“pro rei copia satis providenter exornat”*) [*BI 90.1*]. Nevertheless, the enterprise which Marius had chosen was such that Sallust says the consul was “depending, I suppose, on the gods, for it was not possible to provide sufficiently against such difficulties by counsel” (*“credo dis fretus, nam contra tantas difficultates consilio satis providere non poterat”*) [*BI 90.1*].

The gravity of Marius' responsibilities to his soldiers and to the Roman people makes it difficult to see how depending on the gods could be a sufficient substitute for mature forethought. Not only does he ignore the consequences of failure, he also ignores the consequences of success. The only way Marius could defeat Capsa is by taking it by surprise and forcing it to surrender immediately. Since Capsa was so difficult to access, however, there would be almost no way to ensure its loyalty once it surrendered. If he allowed the inhabitants to live and they returned to Jugurtha—and Capsa was one of the towns most loyal to Jugurtha—it would be impossible to conquer them again, since Marius' first victory was due to surprise. Even leaving a garrison in the town would be insufficient since there would be no reliable way to send reinforcements if the city rebelled. In other words, if Marius defeated Capsa, he would





have to choose between transgressing the law of war and relinquishing any permanent advantage he might have gained from the victory. Certainly, he would still have achieved his personal goal of obtaining glory and impressing the enemy and his own men, and he could also take a great deal of booty. Nevertheless, only the permanent defeat of Capsa could produce the long-term, practical benefits that would justify his rash attack on Capsa and conceal the fact that he had risked his men's lives simply to establish his own reputation.

By comparing Marius' attack on Capsa to Metellus' attack on Thala, Sallust reveals that the seeming moral dilemma in which Marius finds himself is of his own making. If Marius had exercised forethought and considered the consequences both of victory and (what was more likely) of defeat, it is to be hoped that he would not have attacked the town at all. As it was, Marius' initial rashness puts him in a position in which the only way he can take advantage of his victory is by committing an atrocity. Sallust recounts the incident in a way that allows the readers to experience just how strong the temptation can be to transgress moral principles for personal or state reasons. Hopefully, thoughtful readers of the *Bellum Iugurthinum* will be struck not only by the dangerous power of such temptations, but also by the possibility of using forethought to avoid situations in which one will be tempted to betray one's moral principles. If one has trouble remaining faithful to principle, one should be all the more careful to avoid such situations. The account as a whole reveals the importance of moral as well as political and military forethought.

The examples given above reveal what an extensive education Sallust's *Bella* can provide for potential leaders. Unlike an education consisting solely of military training or Greek eloquence, Sallust's education is designed to prepare young men for virtuous leadership. The narrative structures of the *Bella*, recounting as they do the rise and fall of Catiline and Jugurtha, impress upon readers the consequences of virtue and vice, both for the individual and the state, and communicate Sallust's most urgent message:



that the fortune of princes changes with their character (*BC* 2.5). Sallust's nuanced portrayals of the different characters in the *Bella* educate his readers in human nature, and the many speeches in the *Bella* train readers to discern a person's true character beneath insincere rhetoric. Finally, through his portrayals of the prudential judgments which leaders must make, Sallust gives his readers experience in applying moral and political principles to practical situations.

### Conclusion

By developing his readers' moral and political acumen in his account of the wars with Catiline and Jugurtha, Sallust hopes to educate a new generation of leaders capable of preventing such wars in the future. For Sallust, peace is the primary goal of government, and thus the main goal of his education as well. The importance of peace in Sallust's understanding of the art of politics is clear in his speech to Caesar. The speech can be divided into two parts; in the first, Sallust offers Caesar advice for war (sections 1-4) and in the second, advice for peace (sections 5-8). Even the section on war is directed towards peace, however. Sallust's advice to Caesar on how to conclude his war with Pompey is to exercise mercy so that his victory will be followed by a just and lasting peace ("Speech" 3.1-3). In the second half of his speech, Sallust gives Caesar advice for how to maintain peace once it is attained. That Caesar desires peace, Sallust treats as obvious, since "wise men wage war for the sake of peace, they endure labor in the hope of leisure. Unless you make that firm, what does it matter to be conquered or to conquer?" ("*sapientes pacis causa bellum gerunt, laborem spe otii sustentant. Nisi illam firmam efficias, vinci an vicisse quid retulit?*") ["Speech" 6.2]. To establish Rome in firm peace, Sallust declares, it is necessary to establish harmony among citizens by casting out "licentiousness of expenditure and plundering" ("*sumptuum et rapinarum licentiam*") ["Speech" 5.4]. The most important thing is for Caesar to "keep vicious occupations and evil desires away from the young" ("*ut pravas artis malasque libidines ab iuventute*



*prohibeas*") so that "the young man may devote himself to honesty and industry, not expenditures and riches" ("*iuventus probitati et industriae, non sumptibus neque divitiis studeat*") ["Speech" 6.4, 7.2]. For this purpose, Sallust suggests that Caesar check the love of money and luxury by making a law preventing men from living outside their means. Caesar's task, Sallust declares, is "strengthening the republic for the future, not by arms alone and against the enemy, but—what is far, far more rugged [a task]—in the good arts of peace" ("*in posterum firmanda res publica non armis modo neque advorsum hostis, sed, quod multo multoque asperius est, pacis bonis artibus*") ["Speech" 1.8].<sup>27</sup>

As noted above, Sallust's "Speech to Caesar" was probably delivered in 46 BC, three years after Caesar crossed the Rubicon and two years before his assassination. The *Bellum Catilinae*, in contrast, was published soon after Caesar's assassination and Sallust's own retirement from public affairs, probably in 44 BC, and the *Bellum Iugurthinum* was published after the *Bellum Catilinae*, around 41 BC. Sallust's analysis of Rome's decay is the same in all three works: Rome is enslaved, he explains, to the greed and licentiousness of its own citizens. Although man's nature is capable of incredible greatness, when individuals become slaves to vice, neither their own liberty nor the

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<sup>27</sup> Sallust regularly uses the word "*artes*" to refer to qualities of character, either good or bad: eight times in the *Bellum Catilinae* and fourteen times in the *Bellum Iugurthinum*. Sallust often uses the adjectives "*bonae*" and "*malae*" to make explicit the distinction between virtues and vices (*Bonae/optumae artes*: BC 2.4, 10.4, 11.2; BI 1.3, 4.7, 28.5, 41.2, 43.5, 63.3, 85.9. *Malae/pessumae artes*: BC 3.4, 13.5; BI 41.1, 85.43.). In the *Bellum Catilinae* Sallust identifies a variety of virtues as "good arts," including *labor* (exertion) [BC 2.5], *continentia* (self-control) [BC 2.5], *aequitas* (impartiality) [BC 2.5, 9.3], *pudor* (a sense of shame) [BC 3.3], *abstinentia* (abstinence) [BC 3.3], *fides* (trustworthiness) [BC 9.4], and *probitas* (honesty) [BC 9.4]. The vices which Sallust contrasts with these "good arts" are also various: *desidia* (laziness) [BC 2.5], *lubido* (lust) [BC 2.5, 13.5], *superbia* (arrogance) [BC 2.5, 10.4], *audacia* (insolence) [BC 3.3], *largitio* (bribery) [BC 3.3], *avaritia* (greed) [BC 3.3, 5.8, 9.1, 10.4], *luxuria* (luxury) [BC 5.8], and *crudelitas* (barbarity) [BC 10.4]. In the *Bellum Iugurthinum*, Sallust exchanges variety for focus. He heavily stresses the two good arts of *probitas* and *industria* (honesty and diligence) [BI 1.3, 4.7, 63.2], which he treats as a pair, always naming them together. The other arts which he mentions are direct descriptions of character, such as "*patiens laborum*" ("enduring hardships") [BI 28.5], "*firmissumus contra pericula et insidias*" ("most steadfast against dangers and stratagems") [BI 28.5] and "*domi modicus*" ("moderate at home") [BI 63.2]. The vices Sallust identifies as bad arts in the *Bellum Iugurthinum* are *avaritia* (greed) [BI 28.5, 43.5], *lascivia* (lasciviousness) [BI 41.3], *superbia* (arrogance) [BI 41.3], *luxuria* (luxury) [BI 85.43], and *ignavia* (sloth) [BI 85.43].



liberty of the state can endure for long. Although Sallust's diagnosis of Rome's malaise remains the same, the solution he offers to Caesar is different from that which he embodies in the *Bella*. Whereas in the *Bella* he attempts to reform the morals of Roman youths through an education in virtue, in the "Speech to Caesar" he proposes the enactment of a law to check the greed and license of young Romans by preventing them from living outside their income. To be sure, the fact that Sallust is addressing a political leader in his "Speech to Caesar" may be a sufficient explanation for why he proposes a political solution instead of a cultural solution. However, during the period between the speech and the publication of the *Bella*, he may also have become disillusioned with political methods of reforming Roman morals. Certainly, his attempts in the "Speech" to dampen Caesar's ambition and warn him against ruling the state for his own benefit instead of for the good of the Roman people were unsuccessful. Regardless, by the time Sallust wrote the *Bella* he was convinced that an education in virtuous leadership, such as that he provides in his histories, could do more good than the political efforts of his contemporaries. Just as justice had prevailed in early Rome more because of good morals than because of laws, so Rome's greatness would be restored not by political measures but by cultivating "the good arts of peace" (BC 9.1, "Speech" 1.8).



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