

How to Read History:

Echoes of the Future in Sallust's *de Coniuratione Catilinae*

1. Sed pleni omnes sunt libri, plenae sapientium voces, plena exemplorum vetustas: quae iacerent in tenebris omnia, nisi litterarum lumen accederet. Quam multas nobis imagines--non solum ad intuendum, verum etiam ad imitandum--fortissimorum virorum expressas scriptores et Graeci et Latini reliquerunt? Cic. *Arch.*14

"But all books, all sayings of the wise, all antiquity are full of exempla: all of which would lie in the shadows if the light of literature were not to hit upon them. How many rendered images of the bravest of men--not only for observation, but also for imitation--have authors, both Greek and Latin, left for us?"¹

2. Sed in iis erat Sempronia, quae multa saepe virilis audaciae facinora conmiserat. Haec mulier genere atque forma, praeterea viro atque liberis satis fortunata fuit; litteris Graecis et Latinis docta, psallere et saltare elegantius quam necesse est probae, multa alia, quae instrumenta luxuriae sunt. Sed ei cariora semper omnia quam decus atque pudicitia fuit; pecuniae an famae minus parceret, haud facile discerneres; libido sic accensa, ut saepius peteret viros quam peteretur. Sed ea saepe antehac fidem prodiderat, creditum abiuraverat, caedis conscia fuerat; luxuria atque inopia praeceps abierat. Verum ingenium eius haud absurdum: posse versus facere, iocum movere, sermone uti vel modesto vel molli vel procaci; prorsus multae facetiae multusque lepos inerat. Sal.*dCC.*25

"And among these was Sempronis, who often committed many deeds of manly daring. This woman was fortunate in birth and form, and husband and enough children too; learned in Greek and Latin literature, able to play the lyre and dance more elegantly than is necessary for a proper woman, and learned in many other things which are the tools of extravagance. But everything was always more important to her than dignity and modesty; whether she was less careful with her money or her reputation, you could hardly tell; her lust was so inflamed that she more often sought men than was herself sought. And she often earlier had betrayed trust, defaulted on a debt, been an accessory to murder, and fallen entirely in her extravagance and lack of means. Nevertheless her ability was hardly contemptible: she was able to write verses, tell a joke, use modest, soft, or forward speech; there was truly much wit and charm in her."

3. "Iam pridem equidem nos vera vocabula rerum amisimus..." Sal.*dCC.*52.11

"Already for a while now, we have lost the true terms for things"

4. "Omnis homines, patres conscripti, qui de rebus dubiis consultant, ab odio, amicitia, ira atque misericordia vacuos esse decet. Sal.*dCC.*51.1

"It befits all men, conscript fathers, who deliberate on uncertain matters, to be empty of hate, friendship, anger and pity."

- Omnis homines, qui sese student praestare ceteris animalibus, summa ope niti decet, ne vitam silentio transeant veluti pecora... Sal.*dCC.*1.1

"It befits all men who desire to excel other animals, to strive with their utmost might lest they pass their life in silence like livestock..."

¹ All translations are my own. Text taken from thelatinlibrary.com

5. Omnia mala exempla ex rebus bonis orta sunt. Sal.dCC.51.27
"All negative exempla come from good things"
6. Sed ubi consulem ad tantum facinus impellere nequeunt, ipsi singillatim circumeundo atque ementiundo, quae se ex Volturcio aut Allobrogibus audisse dicerent, magnam illi invidiam conflaverant usque eo, ut nonnulli equites Romani, qui praesidi causa cum telis erant circum aedem Concordiae, seu periculi magnitudine seu animi mobilitate impulsus, quo studium suum in rem publicam clarius esset, egredienti ex senatu Caesari gladio minitarentur. Sal.dCC.49.4
But when they were unable to compel the consul to so great an action, they themselves, by going around individually and by making things up which they said they heard from Volturcius or the Allobroges, stirred things up to the point that a few Roman equites, who were around the temple of Concord with spears as a guard, so that their zeal for the state be clearer, threatened Caesar leaving from the Senate with death [lit. "a sword"].

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