

A Sum Greater Than Its Parts: The Republic in Sallust's Monographs

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While moral degeneration and the seeming inevitable destruction of the Republic are dark themes which pervade both of Sallust's monographs, a consistent and complementary picture of the strength of the Roman state also follows both narratives from beginning to end, offering, as Syme notes, Sallust's suggestion of how the republic might be saved in its darkest hour (*Sallust* 120). This strength is found, according to Sallust, in a fertile gene pool of diverse and opposite qualities, which when unified creates the Roman state and leads to great accomplishments.

Sallust foreshadows this theme of unity from disparate qualities at the beginning of the *Bellum Catilina* when he corrects a false dichotomy: neither bodily strength nor intellectual vigor better equip military enterprise for success; both are insufficient in themselves and require the other (BC 1.5-6). He then demonstrates that Rome's foundation was brought into being by a fusion of unlikely elements: refugee Trojans and an aboriginal people who lived without culture and in a state of anarchy (6.1). But *hi postquam in una moenia convenere, dispari genere, dissimili lingua, alius alio more viventes, incredibilis memoratu est quam facile coaluerint: ita brevi multitudine diversa atque vaga concordia civitas facta erat* (6.2). The language is striking, especially the suggestive plural *in una moenia* to express the unity that was achieved.

The theme is later explored the synkrisis of Caesar and Cato, men *ingenti virtute, divorsis moribus* (BC 53.6). The comparison of their individual, but mutually exclusive, virtues are given in response to Sallust's lament that the stock of Roman virtue seemed to have been worn out leaving Rome with the moral decline and civil division. Though Batstone ("Antithesis of Virtue," *CA*, 1988) has persuasively argued that Sallust's literary presentation makes the Synkrisis "an emblem of this crisis in the Late Republic" (3) because it provides no resolution in the conflict between the virtues, I believe that the larger context of Sallust's monographs does indeed provide a road map for this resolution, especially in the pairing of two other remarkable Romans, Marius and Sulla in the *Bellum Jugurthinum*.

The key to understanding the significance of Marius and Sulla in the text is to resist the temptation – as Sallust himself does – to look beyond that textual (and temporal) boundaries of the monograph to the devastating civil wars between them and focus on their unity in the text. Both men are fully characterized in the text (Marius at *BJ* 63, Sulla *BJ* 95) clearly delineating their differences of character. Yet it is through their mutual cooperation that the elusive Jugurtha is first marginalized and then captured, bringing an end to a long and sometimes demoralizing war.

Fragmentation is the danger of disparate qualities joined, but Sallust points as often to a whole greater than the sum of its parts: Rome does not and cannot exist without the strength found in the union of the parts.