

*Alioqui Nobilissimus*: Sallustian Morality and Augustan Amnesty in Velleius Paterculus  
Joseph V. Groves (University of Michigan)

Velleius Paterculus' brief two-volume history of the world is in many respects a competent yet unremarkable summary of events given in more detail and insight by other authors. When he comes to the Jugurthine and Catilinarian conflicts, Velleius clearly relies upon Sallust's manuscripts, reproducing their interpretations while adding no additional information. Their influence, however, extends far beyond these two episodes: Velleius takes over his predecessor's periodization of Roman history. For Sallust and his imperial epigone, the turmoil of the late Republic stems from the removal of Carthage and the moral decay caused by the lack of a rival. Velleius is therefore obligated to import Sallustian morality, but in diluted and defanged form. Civil strife is the ultimate evil, but for Velleius it is a product of the Augustan settlement. The later historian cannot accuse pardoned and partially rehabilitated historical figures of moral turpitude, particularly since such evaluations would also invite uncomfortable scrutiny of the winning side.

These excessively euphemistic accounts and diluted moralizing may make Velleius suspect as a primary source, but add a different sort of value. What the historian passed over or altered in order to render the history of these tumultuous times palatable to the Augustan age and its Tiberian continuation serves as positive evidence for the later reinterpretation of the Social and various civil wars. Especially noteworthy in this regard is Velleius' tendency to divorce the character of historical figures from their frequently execrable actions. Read with an eye towards amnesty, the histories of Velleius show that the Augustan settlement rested initially on the clemency of the emperor, but this very clemency required justification. The lenient reinterpretation of events and the character of many dubious figures makes a confused muddle out of the end of the Republic. This culminates in the treatments of Marius and Sulla which, although quite negative, carefully sidestep such judgments as would render their subjects completely unfit for inclusion amongst the Forum of Augustus' *summi viri*.