

Romans Behaving Badly: Misdeeds Abroad in Valerius Maximus

This paper shows that Valerius Maximus' presentation of edifying *exempla* in his *Memorable Deeds and Sayings* is so dominated by the specter of civil strife that his accounts of wrongs done by Romans to non-Romans predominantly focus on the effects on the political order at Rome rather than the immediate victims. Valerius avoids asserting any Roman responsibility for redress and presents these incidents as reflecting badly only upon their perpetrators rather than redounding to the Romans' collective discredit. I begin with *exempla*, in which Roman generals and officials mistreat allies and foreigners and demonstrate how Valerius' treatment of these incidents privileges senatorial solidarity. This presentation furthers the goal of the work outlined by Lobur (2008): educating members of the early principate's ruling class in how the newly constituted political ideology of *consensus* could both draw upon Rome's traditional past and offer a future secure from civil strife. For example, while on campaign in 150 BCE, Servius Sulpicius Galba, who would become consul in 144, promised clemency to some eight thousand Lusitanians, whom he disarmed and promptly slaughtered. Valerius blames Galba for the height of perfidy (VM 9.6.2), yet, when Galba secures acquittal by commending his son to the jury, Valerius regards it as a positive outcome, remarking that *miser cordia* defeated *aequitas* (VM 8.1.absol2). Galba's other appearances in the work, once as the object of Scipio Aemilianus' barb (VM 6.4.2), and then for having Cato as his prosecutor (VM 8.7.1), demonstrate that Valerius was primarily concerned with concord within the aristocracy. In a similar case, P. Piso, prosecuted for "intolerable injuries to allies," is spared after humiliating himself by groveling and getting a mouthful of mud, since the jury judged that by his embarrassment "he had already paid a sufficiently harsh penalty to the allies," (VM 8.1.absol.6). Instead of marshaling *exempla* to ensure that Roman officials acquitted themselves honorably,

Valerius displays little concern for the just treatment of foreigners and provincials and concentrates on how this behavior abroad affects the situation in Rome.

Much of Valerius' material is drawn from Livy. In the second section of my paper I examine how Valerius has altered or suppressed the negative judgments in Livian material, looking in particular at their different treatments of the scandal over Hannibal's suicide and the equestrian duel of Claudius Asellus and the Capuan Cerrinus Vibellius Taurea during the Second Punic War. While Livy (39.51) abhorred Roman culpability in Hannibal's suicide and contrasted it with the warning given to the enemy king Pyrrhus lest he be poisoned, Valerius straightforwardly attributes the design to the senate itself (VM 9.2.ext2). In his eyes, it was just recompense for Hannibal's prodigious cruelty. In contrast to his unapologetic stance on Hannibal's death, Valerius felt the need to alter Livy's account of the combat between Roman and Capuan guest-friends during the Second Punic War. In Livy, the Roman triumphs, but in Valerius, he steadfastly refuses to fight his acquaintance (Livy 25.18; VM 5.1.3). These divergent judgments indicate that, after the trauma of the civil wars, many old ethical concerns were displaced by a concern for domestic tranquility and group solidarity.

Valerius' lack of interest in imperial mismanagement also draws upon a firm belief in exceptional Roman virtue, supported by the theology of victory outlined by Rosenstein (1990). The idea that the Romans were uniquely ethical pervades his work at a structural level, for he divides each topic between Roman and foreign examples. More than an organizational device, this exceptionalism is of crucial explanatory value. Since military success comes from earning the gods' favor, Rome's imperial success constitutes a retrospective justification of their actions and hegemony. This understanding of victory is already found in Livy, but Valerius' statement represents an intensification of this ideology. Near the beginning of his work, Valerius claims

that the Romans' scrupulous attention to religious detail earns the gods' efforts on their behalf in enlarging their empire, *pro eo imperio augendo custodiendoque pertinax deorum indulgentia* (VM 1.1.8). This claim of a privileged position for Rome with regard to *iustitia* and *publica fides* (VM 6.5, 6.6) serves to insulate Rome's relationship with other peoples from scrutiny.

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