

The Anti-Exemplarity of Sallust's Metellus Numidicus

In contrast to most ancient historians, Sallust does not claim an exemplary value for his work. Rather, the historian appears to call into question the very idea that exemplary imitation is still possible. In the preface of the *Jugurtha*, he states that old heroes like Q. Maximus and P. Scipio used to look upon the *imagines* of their ancestors and were inspired to match their great deeds and virtue. However, Sallust writes, contemporary Romans are only concerned with imitating their ancestors' wealth (4.4-8). But rather than offer new *exempla* for his readers to model themselves on in hopes of rekindling that lost virtue, Sallust instead presents what Gerrish calls "*anti-exempla*." She describes *anti-exempla* as "morally ambiguous characters who refuse to show readers a clear portrait of 'good' or 'bad'" (2012: 1). It is my goal to add to better define this concept and turn anti-exemplarity into a valuable way to understand Sallustian characterization. Kraus' description of an *exemplum* is useful here. She writes that an *exemplum* is "at once an individual and a type... we are encouraged to see them as both unique, historically determined individuals and as imitable, repeatable, paradigms" (2005: 186). My definition of a Sallustian *anti-exemplum* then has several components: first, the ambiguous morality that Gerrish identifies, making it difficult for the reader to pick out who should be imitated or avoided. Second, an *anti-exemplum* is not a type, not repeatable. Instead, Sallust emphasizes the subject's individuality and connection to his immediate historical circumstances to the point that, unlike a true *exemplum*, the figure cannot be extracted and used as a paradigm. For instance, it is not particularly relevant that Cincinnatus was fighting Aequi, but Sallustian *anti-exempla* are unintelligible when divorced from their context. Ultimately, these *anti-exempla* are a way for Sallust to highlight the unprecedented and morally-destabilized nature of the Late Republic.

Sallust's Catiline is an obvious instance of the *anti-exemplum* at work, and his ambiguous nature has long been recognized (e.g. Batstone 1990 and 2010; Wilkins 1994), but there more subtle *anti-exempla* in the *Jugurtha*. Q. Caecilius Metellus Numidicus serves as the primary Roman protagonist for the middle arc of the monograph, and is the first commander to make headway against the Numidian prince Jugurtha. Considering Sallust's supposedly *popularis* leanings, Metellus' portrayal is surprisingly nuanced. He is introduced positively, but in a way that suggests future ambiguity, "a sharp man who, although he opposed the popular party, nevertheless had a just and inviolate reputation" (43.1). With his positive qualities, especially an immunity to the Sallustian über-vice *avaritia*, Metellus offers hope of restoring *concordia*. However, despite his military successes and adherence to the *mos maiorum*, Metellus has problems managing his emotions and his arrogance leads to an irreparable rift with Marius and future disaster for the state. Finally, Sallust offers an anachronistic version of Metellus' return to Rome, his homecoming uniting the entire city in joy – a hint of what could have happened were it not for Metellus' crippling *superbia*. This is the reoccurring theme of the Sallustian *anti-exempla*: they are flawed mediators. Metellus, Catiline, Caesar, Cato, Marius, Sulla, Sertorius and others were all men who had the positive qualities needed to ensure Rome's success. But their flaws are such that they actively lead to the Republic's destruction in civil strife.

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