

## Elite Entitlement as Threat to the State in Sallust

In his monographs, Sallust portrays his titular characters and their associates as privileged people who act only due to personal interest. For example, Sallust tells us in the prologue of *BJ* that the *animus* is the guiding principle in man's actions, whether in line with or against morality (*BJ* 1). In addition to other undesirable qualities, both Catiline and Jugurtha are denigrated in respect to their *animus*; Catiline's is *ferox* (*BC* 5.7) while Jugurtha's is *cupidine caecus* (*BJ* 25.7). Yet neither man is wholly depicted in a negative light. At the end of the *Bellum Catilinae*, Catiline is an admirable military leader (*BC* 59-61; cf. Wilkins 1994: 33), while Jugurtha's narrative begins with the prince's portrayal as "most especially strong in character, [and] he did not permit himself to be corrupted by luxury or laziness" (*multo maxime ingenio validus, non se luxu neque inertiae corrumpendum dedit*, *BJ* 6.1). I argue that, rather than a generalized moral decline, the Sallustian theme of nobility contributes to the personal entitlement that compels both Catiline and Jugurtha to enact violence against Rome.

Nobility as a harmful quality is well-attested in Sallust's works, particularly in the *Bellum Jugurthinum*. When outlining his reasons for writing about the Numidian conflict, Sallust mentions that this was the first time that the nobility's pride was obstructed (5.1). Antagonism against the nobility continues with the appearance of Memmius, "an enemy of the power of the nobility" (*infestus potentiae nobilitatis*, *BJ* 27.2). Likewise, the *novus homo* Marius positions himself in opposition to the nobility, but with more of a focus on individuality. Balmaceda notes that Sallust uses Marius to essentially blur the class boundaries (2017: 66-73); indeed, Marius seems particularly driven by his non-elite status. Toward the end of his speech, he cites the vices that he considers so hateful among the nobles (85.43), yet what is most striking is that such vices

are not harmful for the nobles in whom they reside, but rather it is the state that is in danger of destruction (85.43). In speaking to the common people, Marius highlights the connections between nobility and vice, as well as the probable outcome for the entire city of Rome.

In this paper I show that the same qualities are present in the *Bellum Catilinae* (cf. Kapust 2011), where class tensions and vices compelled entitled noblemen to threaten the republic. Both Catiline and Jugurtha were born to noble families, yet are not able to fully embrace the lifestyle that such birth should ensure. Catiline was “born to an aristocratic family” (*nobile genere natus*, *BC* 5.1), yet we are told that he is upset that his family had fallen into poverty (*BC* 5.7). He additionally surrounds himself with followers who are in a similar situation (Wilkins 1994: 82). Jugurtha is quite literally of noble birth, as he is a member of the Numidian royal family; however, because he was born to his father’s mistress, he is not part of the line of succession (*BJ* 5.6-7). Both Catiline and Jugurtha have proximity to nobility without the ability to attain the associated privileges; this discontent will manifest in their respective crimes against the state.

I conclude with a brief comparison to two passages in Livy’s *Ab Urbe Condita* that depicts a strikingly similar scenario. The downfall of the monarchy is precipitated by the acts of Sextus Tarquinius, who rapes Lucretia because he believes that, as the king’s son, he deserves anything he desires (*AUC* 1.57-58). As a result of his crime, his family is expelled and the monarchy is ended. Likewise, once the new republic has been established, a group of young elite men becomes resentful that the monarchy has dissolved and more citizens have been granted rights; because of this perceived slight, they plot against their state (*AUC* 2.6). By reading these passages from Livy alongside the works of Sallust, we can see a pattern emerging from these two authors, who wrote their works during times similar to those about which they write: during times of regime change, whether from monarchy to republic or republic to principate, the

greatest internal threat comes from elite men who feel that they are entitled to positions and privilege above others.

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