

A SALLUSTIAN REMINISCENCE IN AURELIUS VICTOR

Hactenus Romae seu per Italiam orti imperium rexere, hinc advenae quoque; nescio an ut in Prisco Tarquinio longe meliores. Ac mihi quidem audienti multa legentique plane compertum urbem Romam externorum virtute atque insitivis artibus praecipue crevisse. Quid enim Nerva Cretensi prudentius maximeque moderatum?

[Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 11. 12–12. 1 Pichlmayr–Gruendel]

The influence of Sallust on Aurelius Victor's language has long been recognized.¹ One example is the echo of Sallust *Bellum Catilinae* 53. 2, "sed mihi multa legenti, multa audienti" (cf. 53. 4: "mihi multa agitantī"), in the passage quoted above. But the Sallustian reminiscence here has not, to the best of my knowledge, been fully appreciated.

In *Bellum Catilinae* 53. 2 ff. Sallust is making some observations on Roman greatness and Roman virtue that lead up to his memorable comparison of Cato and Caesar. Rome's greatness was brought about by virtue, but by the virtue of only a few (53. 4: "ac mihi multa agitantī constabat paucorum civium egregiam virtutem cuncta patravisse"). In recent times Rome has been suffering from a lack of virtue, though Sallust acknowledges that Cato and Caesar were both *ingenti virtute*, even if *divorsis moribus*. Victor, too, is meditating on the connection between virtue and Rome's greatness, only he is thinking of the virtue of the *externi*, those not of Roman or Italian origin—a geographical limitation inevitably implied in the comments of Sallust, writing in the first century B.C. Victor's comments are elicited by his introduction of Nerva, whom he erroneously believes to have been the first emperor of non-Italian origin.² The highlighting of the role of the *externi* has an autobiographical dimension: Victor was himself an *externus*, an African provincial of relatively humble origins who rose high in the imperial bureaucracy.³

Victor, then, did not merely appropriate, in an adapted form, Sallust's "sed mihi multa legenti, multa audienti." He also "corrected" or elaborated on the observations on virtue that Sallust made in the passage that begins with those words. The Sallustian phrase at *De Caesaribus* 11. 12 was doubtless intended to make the reader think of the whole passage from which it was taken.

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1. See E. Wölfflin, "Aurelius Victor," *RhM* 29 (1874): 285–88; Th. Opitz, "Sallustius und Aurelius Victor," *Neue Jahrbücher Für Philologie und Pädagogik* 127 (1883): 217–22.

2. For a defense of the transmitted reading *Cretensi* at Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 12. 1, see S. D'Elia, "Per una nuova edizione critica di Aurelio Vittore," *RAAN* 43 (1968): 142–43.

3. Cf. H. W. Bird, "S. Aurelius Victor: Some Fourth-Century Issues," *CJ* 73 (1978): 223–25.

ELPIDA'S FAT HAND

In an earlier issue of this journal I argued that the phrase *χερὶ παχείῃ* at *Odyssey* 21. 6 means "full" (in a visually pleasurable sense).¹ Penelope, far from

1. "Penelope's Fat Hand (*Od.* 21. 6–7)," *CP* 73 (1978): 343–44.