

MARIUS AND FORTUNA¹

IN his treatment of Marius in the *Bellum Jugurthinum* Sallust lays considerable stress on fortune² and Marius' belief in divine assistance. I shall offer an analysis of these concepts in two sections: (1) their use by Sallust himself in relation to Marius; (2) their use in the earlier tradition about Marius.

1. Though he is frequently mentioned in the earlier chapters of the *B. J.*, our first formal introduction to Marius is in chapter 63. This chapter is of crucial importance. For it is the response given by the *haruspex* to Marius when he chances (*forte*) to be making a sacrifice at Utica that prompts him to ask for leave to go and stand for the consulship, an office for which he has an *ingens cupido*. Because of the aristocratic *superbia* of his commander Metellus he is 'snubbed' by him and thenceforth 'cupidine atque ira . . . grassari; neque facto ullo neque dicto abstinere quod modo ambitiosum foret' (64. 5).

The 'oracle' given to Marius at Utica is the *leitmotiv* which runs through Sallust's treatment of him. The relevant words are ' . . . magna atque mirabilia portendi . . . proinde quae animo agitabat, fretus dis ageret, fortunam quam saepissime experiretur; cuncta prospere eventura'. The opening section of ch. 63 is echoed at various points in Sallust's subsequent narrative. First, the word *forte* is repeatedly employed when Sallust comes to describe the Muluccha incident (92. 5-94. 7); 'ea res *forte* quam consilio melius gesta (92. 6), '*forte* quidam Ligus . . .' (93. 2), 'et *forte* in eo loco . . .' (93. 4) and (the summing-up of the whole episode) 'sic *forte* conrecta Mari temeritas . . . (94. 7). Then the phrase *fretus dis* is repeated in connection with the attack on Capsa, 'credo dis fretus . . .' (90. 1) and there is a reference to '*fortunam* quam saepissime experiretur' in 93. 1 when Marius at a difficult point in the Muluccha operation wonders ' . . . omitteretne inceptum . . . an *fortunam* opperiretur, qua saepe prospere usus fuerat'.

Of the two operations of Marius which Sallust describes in detail, one, that at Capsa, shows him in a favourable light. His preparations and planning are all that could be expected in the circumstances (' . . . pro rei copia' 90. 1). It would, I think, be wrong to see irony in the words 'credo dis fretus'.³ As indicated above, they serve primarily to remind the reader of the words of the 'haruspex' and indicate that it was Marius' confidence in divine assistance which led him to undertake an enterprise where the problems were so formidable. They are not meant to suggest that there was too much reliance on the gods and not enough on *consilium*. In fact it is stressed in 90. 1 that Marius, after a thorough reconnaissance (*omnibus exploratis*), ' . . . satis providenter exornat' and this is borne out by the description of the operation that follows. Marius had done everything

¹ I am very grateful to Mr. M. W. Frederiksen for his comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

² Sallust speaks both of *fortuna* (luck or good fortune) and of *fortis* (chance). For the different meanings which *fortuna-rύχη* can bear see esp. F. W. Walbank, *A Historical Comm. on Polybius* 1. 16 f. Sallust's use of *fortuna* in general is outside the scope of the

present treatment, but most of his references to it (e.g. *B.C.* 8. 1, 51. 25, and *B. J.* 102. 9, 104. 2) are of a conventional, 'Hellenistic' kind. I feel that in his treatment of Marius he tried to allot it a more exact role.

³ See A. D. Leeman, *Aufbau und Absicht von Sallusts 'Bellum Jugurthinum'*, p. 17, esp. n. 4 (on the use of *credo*). However, most commentators see criticism of Marius here.

possible to anticipate the difficulties but no human *consilium* could do so completely in such a situation. The 'omnia non bene consulta' of 92. 2 are not meant to include the Capsa campaign but are the result of it. In this campaign Marius has both 'trusted in God' and 'kept his powder dry'. However, 'ubi ea res bene evenit' (cf. 63. 1, '... cuncta prospere eventura'), it is implied that he trusts more and more in the gods and in fortune, less in the *consilium* which had served him so well at Capsa. Thus it seems that Sallust is making a distinction between the Capsa and Muluccha¹ campaigns. Whereas in the former Marius had done his best to provide against the difficulties by *consilium*, in the latter, difficulties, severe enough to call the advisability of the whole enterprise into question, could have been foreseen but were not. Hence 'ea res forte quam consilio melius gesta' (92. 6); the failure of *consilium* leads to *temeritas* which is only corrected by *fors* (94. 7, where *fors* clearly picks up the *fors* in 92. 6 at the beginning of the section). This use of *temeritas*² and its implied relation to *consilium* recalls an earlier passage in the *B. J.* In 7. 5 it is suggested that to be *proelio strenuos* without *consilium* 'temeritatem adferre plerumque solet'. The whole of this passage ('ac sane' to 'solet') is of considerable interest.³ For one thing, it is an adaptation of a famous piece of Thucydides (2. 40. 3). However, in its description of Jugurtha as both *proelio strenuos* and *bonus consilio* at Numantia, it also evokes the old Roman ideal of the 'vir fortis sapiensque'.⁴ What Sallust is here doing is presenting, by means of the borrowing from Thucydides, a more subtle and detailed analysis of what constitutes *virtus* in the military sphere than traditional categories were capable of. What is needed is a blend of *audacia* and *consilium*—'quod difficillimum in primis est'—which avoids *timor* on the one hand and *temeritas* on the other. It is this set of criteria which, I believe, underlies Sallust's criticism of Marius in the Muluccha incident.

However, it is evident that, generally speaking, Sallust has quite a high opinion of Marius' capacity as a general.⁵ One of the qualities that he ascribes to him is that of *providentia*⁶—a quality which Sallust regards as essential to a general.⁷ Now from 7. 5 and 90. 1 it is clear that *providentia* depends on the

¹ The Muluccha incident seems to owe something to the similarly 'fortuitous' Pylos affair in Thucydides. The part played by the Ligurian resembles that of the Messenian *στρατηγός* in Thuc. 4. 36. See also H. C. Avery, *Hermes* xcv (1967), 324 f. and T. Mantero in *Ἀντιδωρον*... Paoli (1956), 204 f.

² *Temeritas*, which is not found in the *B. G.*, occurs three times in the *B. J.* The third occurrence is in the speech of Marius (85. 46). There is an interesting use in *Hist.* 2. 15, '... fortunam in temeritatem declinando corrumpabant'. The nexus 'temeritas—consilium—fortuna' does not originate with Sallust. Cf. e.g. Cic. *Lael.* 6. 20 and *pro Marc.* 2. 7. Nor is such a conjunction surprising when we remember that *temeritas* originally refers to what occurs *temere* i.e. 'by chance' and 'without calculation or planning'. Thence it was extended to an unthinking and uncalculating state of mind.

³ *Audacia* is the quality shown by the

proelio strenuos and is here used in its good sense (cf. *B. C.* 9. 3). The passage deals with soldiers as a whole, not just generals. However, Sallust certainly regarded *providentia* as a quality needed by a good general (see n. 7 below). *Temeritas* is a defect of soldiers (see e.g. Caes. *B. G.* 7. 52) or of generals. Marius, by a piece of deliberate irony, is made to attack the recklessness of previous commanders in Numidia (85. 46).

⁴ On this see D. C. Earl, *The Political Thought of Sallust*, p. 29. Sallust's verdict on Metellus as a general is 'magnus et sapiens vir' (45. 1); his conduct at Zama (61. 1) is deliberately contrasted with that of Marius at the Muluccha fort (esp. 93. 1). The combination of *audacia* and *consilium* was characteristic of the early Romans (*B. C.* 51. 37).

⁵ See esp. 88. 2 and 100.

⁶ *Prudenter* (88. 2), *providere* and *providenter* (90. 1), *omnia providere* (100. 3).

⁷ *B. C.* 60. 4; *B. J.* 28. 5, 49. 2.

faculty of *consilium*.¹ So Marius is criticized not for lacking *consilium* but for allowing it to be superseded, in the Muluccha campaign and on the other occasions vaguely indicated in 92. 2 ('omnia non bene consulta'), by a euphoric belief that fortune and the gods are on his side² and will correct his mistakes (see especially 93. 1). This criticism is unaffected by the actual success of the Muluccha operation. As always, Sallust delights, in the manner of Thucydides, in showing how popular judgement can err and how the 'vera vocabula rerum' (*B.C.* 52. 11) can be perverted. In his eyes the *gloria* accruing to Marius after the Muluccha affair is not true *gloria* and is as empty as the *virtus*³ ascribed to him by his troops in 92. 2. Sallust's own views are quite clear. The opening of the *B.J.* (1. 3) declares emphatically that if a man's spirit 'ad gloriam virtutis via grassatur' he has no need of *fortuna*.

2. The Utica incident which is structurally the keystone of this section of the *B.J.* plays a comparatively insignificant part in Plutarch's *Marius*. It only occurs when Marius is already on his way to Rome (8. 5). Moreover, there are other important differences in the two accounts. Marius' quarrel with Metellus, which Sallust dates from the 'snub', arises in Plutarch from Marius' currying favour⁴ (δημαγωγῶν 7. 4) with the army and from the Turpilius incident which Sallust, who gives an entirely different version of it, puts after and not before the quarrel. Thus, while Plutarch presents Marius in a highly unfavourable light,⁴ the arrangement of events in the Sallustian account, whatever Sallust's personal views of the matter, displays a pro-Marian *Tendenz*. He acts as he does because it is the will of heaven (as revealed to him at Utica) and because he has been slighted by Metellus. If this is so, an important fact emerges; since the 'oracle' has this key role only in the Sallustian version and since it instructs Marius '... proinde quae animo agitabat, fretus dis ageret, fortunam quam saepissime experiretur', the emphasis on Marius' belief in fortune and divine assistance in Sallust must, in origin, reflect the same pro-Marian bias.⁵

Now it seems very probable that by the time Sallust wrote the *B.J.* there was a tradition in existence which assigned prominent parts in Marius' career to fortune and the gods. Cicero, who had known Marius personally, and who had strong if mixed feelings about his fellow-townsmen,⁶ refers to him in *Paradoxa Stoicorum* 2. 16 as 'secundis rebus unus ex fortunatis hominibus' and in *De Natura Deorum* 3. 32. 81 Cotta is made to ask how it came about that Marius 'tam feliciter septimum consul domi suae senex mortuus est'. Moreover, Cicero,

¹ Cf. the relation of πρόνοια and λογισμός in Thucydides to γνώμη. See esp. 2. 62. 5 γνώμη... ἥς βεβαιωτέρα ἡ πρόνοια; note also the contrast here between γνώμη and ἀμαθία εὐτυχίης (cf. 2. 40. 3: it is ἀμαθία, the absence of λογισμός, which produces θράσος).

² Marius is in the same state of mind as the Athenians after Pylos: see Thuc. 4. 65. 4. For the belief in mistakes being corrected by outside intervention cf. Aristoph. *Nub.* 587-9. The effects of belief in τύχη are described in Thuc. 3. 45. 6.

³ For Sallust's views on *virtus* see Earl, op. cit., ch. 3. In the political sphere as well Marius owed a great deal to chance. He was fortunate in the time and circumstances of his candidature. See *B.J.* 65. 5 and 73. 4.

⁴ A third version of these events, in which Marius did not begin his attack on Metellus until he arrived in Rome, appears to be presented by Cic. *De Off.* 3. 20. 79 and Dio fr. 87. 3.

⁵ I do not think it possible to ascertain who was Sallust's direct source for the parts of the *B.J.* between 63. 1 and 94. 7 which concern Marius. The lack of circumstantial detail compared with the part after 94. 7 shows, I believe, that it was not Sulla. Rutilius Rufus, suggested by E. Badian in *Latin Historians* (ed. T. A. Dorey), p. 24, is also unlikely.

⁶ See T. F. Carney, *Wiener Studien* lxi (1960), 83 ff.

who often uses the epithet *divinus* of Marius, wrote a verse panegyric¹ on him which seems to have contributed a great deal to the notion of him as divinely inspired.² At least the only substantial fragment of the *Marius* we possess shows him observing an omen sent by Jupiter of his return from exile (cf. *B. J.* 92. 2 '... deorum nutu cuncta portendi'). Further evidence, almost certainly of pre-Sallustian date, of his connection with fortune is provided by the accounts of his death in Plutarch and Diodorus. Plutarch records, on the authority of a C. Piso, ἀνὴρ ἱστορικός (probably the consul of 67 B.C.; see *R.E.* iii. 1376), that Marius, after recounting his frequent reversals of fortune, concluded ὡς οὐκ ἔστι νοῦν ἔχοντος ἔτι τῇ τύχῃ πιστεύειν ἑαυτόν. (45. 5). He then took to his bed and died a few days later. Similarly Diodorus,³ who says that Marius committed suicide, comments οὐκ ἐτόλμησε ἔτι τῆς τύχης πείραν λαβεῖν δεδιδαγμένος περὶ τῆς κατ' αὐτὴν ἀβεβαιότητος μεγάλοις συμπτώμασι. Here τῆς τύχης πείραν λαβεῖν is exactly equivalent to the 'fortunam experiri' of *B. J.* 63. 1.

Such a tradition, associating Marius with fortune and the gods, will, I have argued, ultimately derive from sources favourable to Marius. To attribute success to this kind of help could, of course, be a means of denigrating a man or a people and of denying that merit had anything to do with such success. However, as Mr. Balsdon has shown (*J.R.S.* xli [1951], 1 f.), this was by no means always the case; for a general to claim that fortune and the gods were on his side or to have this claimed on his behalf was a way of avoiding φθόνος and was compatible with a claim to ἀρετή.⁴ An illuminating parallel to the case of Marius may be found in that of Scipio Africanus. When Polybius comes to discuss Scipio's character (10. 2 f.), he is critical of previous historians who represented him as favoured by fortune and owing his success to chance and the unexpected, such men being considered more divine than those who act by calculation. His troops believed that their generals⁵ acted μετὰ τινος θείας ἐπιπνοίας (10. 2. 12) just as those of Marius, as well as his enemies, thought 'illi aut mentem divinam aut deorum nutu cuncta portendi' (*B. J.* 92. 2). What these generals themselves thought is difficult to determine. It is, however, clear that a similar 'legend' to that which became attached to Scipio could have attached itself to Marius and that this could account for the obsession with *fortuna*⁶ which informs Sallust's treatment of him.⁷

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¹ *Ibid.*, p. 97: 'Legends... speedily grew round the person of Marius and Cicero's poem seems to have been responsible for some'. It appears to have been modelled on Ennius' poem *Scipio* (see *R.E.* VIIA 1253 f.) which may have attempted to 'heroize' its subject. The date of the *Marius* is uncertain. See the discussion by G. B. Townend in *Cicero* (ed. T. A. Dorey), pp. 120 f.

² In *De Imp. Cn. Pomp.* 16. 47 Marius is included in a list of generals who have 'divinitus adiuncta fortuna'.

³ Diodorus, who wrote his history c. 60–30 B.C., is here dependent on a late Republican source, though presumably not Posidonius, who gave a different version of Marius' death (Plut. 45. 4).

⁴ e.g. Sallust says of Sulla in *B. J.* 95. 4 '... multique dubitare fortior an felicius

esset'. Here there is perhaps an implied contrast with Marius, as at other points in *B. J.* 95. See Earl, *op. cit.* p. 79. See also Avery, *art. cit.* p. 329, who, however, is mistaken about the nature of the contrast.

⁵ Cf. Plut. *Sert.* 11 and 20 for a similar legend about Sertorius.

⁶ One of Varro's 'logistorici' was called *Marius de Fortuna*. Caesar's friend Oppius, who wrote a rather romanticized biography of Scipio, may have written one of Marius. See Peter, *HRR* ii. 64.

⁷ It may be that, as A. La Penna (*Sallustio e la 'rivoluzione' romana*, p. 243) suggests, Sallust's obvious distaste for 'l'aureola mistica' of Marius in 92. 1–2 was influenced by his reaction to the 'charisma' of Caesar in his last years.