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La République des Signes: Caesar, Cato, and the Language of Sallustian Morality*

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One of the most arresting features of Sallust's historiographical procedure is his tendency in the speeches to retain the unique characteristics of his own language rather than to duplicate that of the speakers themselves. The effect, in Sallust as in his forerunner Thucydides,[1] is to make the speaker sound like the historian. Not only does the distribution of Sallustian language among Sallust's speakers contribute to the stylistic cohesiveness of the individual monographs, it even embraces the extant fragments of the *Historiae*; it represents, therefore, not an epigonic literary mannerism, but a unifying feature of the historian's method.[2] The present study examines an especially sophisticated example of this technique: the deployment of Sallustian moral language in the debate between Caesar and Cato.[3]

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[1]Patzer 114–15.

[2]Note, for example, the way in which Philippus' description of the followers of Lepidus echoes Sallust's description of Catiline's dissipated cronies: *ad eum concurrere homines omnium ordinum corruptissumi, flagrantes inopia et cupidinibus, scelerum conscientia exagitati* (*Hist.* fr. 1.77.7); *omnes quos flagitium, egestas, conscius animus exagitabat, ei Catilinae proxumi familiaresque erant* (*Cat.* 14.3).

[3]McGushin 239 observes that the style of both speeches is "thoroughly Sallustian," and Earl 97 devotes a brief but astute paragraph to Cato's and Caesar's recycling of Sallustian ideas; for a more extended discussion, see Drummond 40–41, 47–50, and 72–77. Syme 116 notes the correspondences between Cato's speech and the Sallustian prologues and digressions, but his view of Sallust as pro-Catonian causes him to ignore the Sallustianisms in Caesar's speech. My own approach is greatly indebted to Batstone's (1988) excellent analysis of the *synkrisis* of Caesar and Cato at *Cat.* 53 and 54. Batstone maintains that Caesar and Cato embody conflicting notions of Sallustian *virtus*, and that the *synkrisis* thus pits *virtus* against itself; see also Büchner 1976, who argues a similar thesis that "die Einheit der römischen *virtus* war zerfallen" (1976: 56), and McGushin 311: "from *virtus* so fragmented the restoration of *libera res publica* is not to be expected." My primary aim in this study is to develop Batstone's unelaborated suggestion that a comparable phenomenon underlies the similarity between the

Nothing testifies more compellingly to the intricate unity of Sallust's verbal texture than its subordination, not to say erasure, of these two historical figures' distinctive and verifiable styles. Paradoxically, however, it is precisely through its stylistic consistency that the great rhetorical centerpiece of the *Bellum Catilinae* exposes a central contradiction in Sallust's ethical scheme. With the personae of Caesar and Cato, Sallust sets his own rationalistic and moralistic ideals in opposition to each other, and forces his normative language into a logomachy with itself. What makes this autologomachy possible is the loss of two mutually dependent characteristics of the ancestral past: rectitude in behavior and coherence in moral terminology. To preserve the former in the absence of the latter is possible only for Cato, the last representative of atavistic probity; as for Sallust, who invests Caesar and Cato with equal (or equally limited) power over the rhetoric of *mos maiorum*[4] and admits his own complicity in the corruption of his age—he exempts nothing from his analysis of the postlapsarian indeterminacy of Roman moral discourse, least of all his own attempts to frame his convictions within it.

That strategy is evident at the outset of Caesar's speech, which depends for its arrangement almost entirely upon the Sallustian preamble:[5]

Cat. 1.1	*Cat.* 51.1
Omnis homines	Omnis homines, patres conscripti,
qui sese student praestare ceteris animalibus	qui de rebus dubiis consultant,
summa ope niti decet	ab odio, amicitia, ira atque misericordia vacuos esse decet.
ne vitam silentio transeant, veluti pecora quae natura prona atque ventri oboedientia finxit.	

language of Sallust *in propria persona* and that which is placed in the mouths of Caesar and Cato: "the problem of virtue and vocabulary lies at the center of Catiline's manipulation of traditional concepts in Chapter 20, *and of the frequent resonance between Cato's words and Sallust's, or Caesar's and Sallust's*, or Catiline's virtues and Caesar's, or even Catiline's words and Sallust's" (Batstone 1988: 28, my italics).

[4]*Contra* Lämmli 102–3, who asserts that Caesar's appeal to ancestral precedent is hypocritical, and that Sallust's own view is reflected in Cato's "Hinweis auf den richtig gedeuteten *mos maiorum*."

[5]For the similarities between the two verbal surfaces, see Vretska 512–13 (ad *Cat.* 51.1).

Sallust's counsel is for humans who wish to assert their prominence in the animal kingdom, while Caesar's *de rebus dubiis consultare* is an activity requiring the exercise of reason, the very trait that separates humans from beasts. As Sallust suggests that the struggle against obscurity is a defining characteristic of the human condition (since obscurity reduces humans to a status analogous to that of the beast), so Caesar argues that humans who have already achieved such prominence as enables them to *consultare de rebus dubiis* must not allow passion, favorable or unfavorable, to affect a decision that calls for reasoned judgment. In effect, Caesar tells his audience how not to lapse from the Sallustian ideal of humanity.[6] Likewise, *animus* and *ingenium*, Sallust's favorite terms for the human intellect, do not have an autonomous existence in Caesar's speech:

> haud facile animus verum providet ubi illa officiunt, neque quisquam omnium lubidini simul et usui paruit. ubi intenderis ingenium, valet; si lubido possidet, ea dominatur, animus nihil valet. (*Cat.* 51.2-3)[7]

Rather, as in the Sallustian preamble, they come directly after the opening sentence, so that the sequence of thought in the exordium of Caesar's speech survives largely intact from Sallust's opening paragraph. Thus, Caesar's argument that passion obstructs the *animus*' perception of the truth cannot be understood except by reference to Sallust's explanation of the function of the *animus*: it is the rational faculty that governs us, while we in turn govern our bodies, our strength (*vis*) being divided between the two (*Cat.* 1.2). For this reason, Sallust contends, we should use our intellectual resources (*ingeni opibus*) rather than our physical strength (*virium opibus*) in seeking glory (*Cat.* 1.3).[8] *Gloriam quaerere* is a positive good in itself, since it represents the struggle against anonymity, which Sallust has already characterized as the true human enterprise.[9] If, however, we seek glory through physical strength rather than through intellectual talent, we distort our humanity by placing our subservient faculty (*vis in corpore/vires*) above our governing faculty (*vis in animo/ingenium*). Seen against this backdrop, the first part of Caesar's argument (*haud facile animus verum providet ubi illa officiunt*) implies that the passions deflect the *animus* from its proper, regulatory

[6]As emphasized by his use of *decet* with a complementary infinitive, a direct echo of the construction with which Sallust introduces his statement of this ideal.

[7]On the similarity in this passage between Caesar's usage and Sallust's, see McGushin 241 *ad loc.*

[8]Batstone 1990: 120–21.

[9]Earl 8.

function.[10] In its appeal for a conscious application of the intellect, Caesar's exordium scrupulously preserves the Sallustian association between *animus* and *ingenium*.

With Caesar's introduction of *lubido*, however, comes a reinterpretation of the themes set forth in Sallust's preamble. Again, the intratextual reference is unmistakable: *lubido* first appears in the *Bellum Catilinae* in the phrase *lubidinem dominandi*, immediately following the preamble (*Cat.* 2.2), and Caesar also associates the word with *dominari*. But the Sallustian passage sets up a different relationship between *ingenium* and *lubido*: only when the great imperialists of the past (*in Asia Cyrus, in Graecia Lacedaemonii et Athenienses*) began to subjugate cities and to employ *lubido dominandi* as an excuse for aggression did they realize the superior value of *ingenium* in war (*Cat.* 2.2). Sallust thus suggests that, at least in a strictly military context, *lubido* and *ingenium* can coexist;[11] transferred by Caesar to the realm of civic deliberation, these terms exchange their symbiotic relationship for an adversarial one.

Caesar's appropriation of Sallustian rationalism also informs the appeal to ancestral precedent that constitutes the core of his argument for clemency. Rome's *clementia* toward the Rhodians in the Macedonian war[12] and preference for *dignitas* over revenge in the treatment of Carthage are introduced as *ea...quae maiores nostri contra lubidinem animi sui recte atque ordine fecere* (*Cat.* 51.4).[13] Sallust first invokes the *maiores* in *Cat.* 5.9 as a preface to his review of Roman history at *Cat.* 6–13, making it clear that his purpose is to trace a pattern of decline.[14] Caesar's innovation is to absorb Sallustian reverence for the *maiores* into the rationalistic agenda which he has taken over from the preamble. To put it

[10]Vretska 514 *ad loc.*

[11]Batstone 1990: 123.

[12]As Drummond 40–41 notes, Caesar's allusion to this incident is heavily ironic: since the defender of the Rhodians was none other than the Elder Cato, Caesar is invoking one Cato against another. Moreover, both Sallust's and Caesar's opening sentences recall the language of the Elder Cato's speech in defense of the Rhodians, most notably *summa vi contra nititur* (*Rhod.* fr. 164 Malcovati, parallel noted by Vretska 30 [ad *Cat.* 1.1]). The irony would not have been lost on Sallust's audience, who would have recognized the Catonian model (Syme 112). That the Elder Cato is the probable source for Sallust's own moralistic vocabulary (*superbiam* and *luxuriose* appear at *Rhod.* fr. 163 Malcovati) further complicates the irony. For more on Sallust's Catonian borrowings, see Syme 267–69.

[13]Pöschl 369.

[14]*Res ipsa hortari videtur, quoniam de moribus civitatis tempus admonuit, supra repetere ac paucis instituta maiorum domi militiaeque, quo modo rem publicam habuerint quantamque reliquerint, ut paulatim immutata ex pulcherruma <atque optuma> pessuma ac flagitiosissuma facta sit, disserere* (*Cat.* 5.9).

another way, Sallust pursues two agendas, separately but simultaneously: his rationalistic conception of human excellence and his nostalgia for a virtuous Roman past. Caesar's reformulation subordinates the second agenda to the first. His ancestral examples are meant to induce the Senate to treat Rome's internal enemies in the same way that the *maiores* treated foreign enemies—that is, dispassionately and in accordance with reason, *contra lubidinem*. When Caesar, immediately after adducing his examples, tells the Senators that they must take care *neu magis irae vostrae quam famae consulatis* (*Cat.* 51.7), he is referring to that honorable quest for *fama* which Sallust regards as the only meaningful way to live:

> quae homines arant navigant aedificant, virtuti omnia parent. sed multi mortales, dediti ventri atque somno, indocti incultique vitam sicuti peregrinantes transiere; quibus profecto contra naturam corpus voluptati, anima oneri fuit. eorum ego vitam mortemque iuxta aestumo, quoniam de utraque siletur. verum enim vero is demum mihi vivere atque frui anima videtur qui aliquo negotio intentus praeclari facinoris aut artis bonae famam quaerit. (*Cat.* 2.7–9)

Sallust here recapitulates the rationalistic doctrine of his preamble. *Dediti ventri atque somno* clearly echoes *ventri oboedientia* in *Cat.* 1.1, thus linking the two passages. The *virtus* responsible for all human accomplishments is intellectual,[15] as indicated by the description of nonentities as *indocti incultique*: enslaved to their bodies, they are deservedly obscure because they have not developed their rational faculties. *Aliquo negotio intentus* stands in contrast to these, while *famam quaerit* gestures back to *quo mihi rectius videtur ingeni quam virium opibus gloriam quaerere* (*Cat.* 1.3). According to Caesar, it is by exemplifying Sallust's intellectual conception of *bonae artes* that clemency toward the conspirators would most accord with *mos maiorum*.

Caesar's final Sallustian flourish goes still further, applying Sallustian rationalism to the theme of Roman decline: *profecto virtus atque sapientia maior illis fuit, qui ex parvis opibus tantum imperium fecere, quam in nobis, qui ea bene parta vix retinemus* (*Cat.* 51.42). This sentence follows the last of Caesar's ancestral precedents for *clementia*, the legislation limiting the kinds

[15]As Batstone's analysis (1988 *passim*, 1990: 122–24) demonstrates, Sallustian *virtus* is a concept more easily deconstructed than explicated. An admirably lucid attempt at the latter is made by Earl 16: "*virtus* [is] the functioning of *ingenium* to achieve *egregia facinora* and thus to win *gloria* by the exercise of *bonae artes*."

of punishment that could be inflicted on Roman citizens.[16] From this act of leniency, Caesar concludes that the *maiores* were both better and wiser than the Romans of the present day. What is more, his assessment of contemporary decline as the inability to retain what the *maiores* acquired contains an allusion to Sallust's description of how sovereign power is either held or lost:

> quod si regum atque imperatorum animi virtus in pace ita ut in bello valeret, aequabilius atque constantius sese res humanae haberent, neque aliud alio ferri neque mutari ac misceri omnia cerneres. *nam imperium facile iis artibus retinetur quibus initio partum est*; verum ubi pro labore desidia, pro continentia et aequitate lubido atque superbia invasere, fortuna simul cum moribus inmutatur. ita imperium semper ad optumum quemque a minus bono transfertur. (*Cat.* 2.3–6 [my italics])

By *iis artibus*, Sallust means *animi virtus*, which is effectively synonymous with *vis in animo/ingenium*. Power is both acquired and retained by intellectual superiority, and lost when *lubido*, coupled with *superbia*, takes over. *Sapientia* goes hand in hand with *virtus* as *superbia* accompanies *lubido*. Yet Caesar has redefined the Sallustian terms: it is true that, for Sallust, only the intelligent can be good, but they can also be wicked, as the example of Catiline demonstrates: *Catilina...fuit magna vi et animi et corporis, sed ingenio malo pravoque* (*Cat.* 5.1); *satis eloquentiae, sapientiae parum* (*Cat.* 5.4). *Ingenium* here shifts its meaning from intellect to character and divides into two moral antipodes (*bonum ingenium/malum ingenium*), while *vis animi* appears as morally neutral, in contrast to the *vis in animo* of *Cat.* 1.2.[17] If intellectual acuity (*vis animi*) can coexist with a vicious nature, then it is also possible to be intelligent without being wise, for *sapientia*, the quality lacking in Catiline, represents the combination of high intelligence with high morals. The intellectual strength

[16] *Tum lex Porcia aliaeque leges paratae sunt, quibus legibus exilium damnatis permissum est* (*Cat.* 51.40). Noting that the *leges Porciae* "both forbad the execution and flogging of Roman citizens and proposed a severe penalty for those who contravened it," that their exact content cannot be determined further, and that there is no evidence of a *lex Porcia* providing for exile as a substitute for execution in the case of citizens convicted of capital offenses, Lintott 252–53 offers the most convincing interpretation of this passage: Caesar in *Cat.* 51.40 is recapitulating the distinction he made in *Cat.* 51.21–22 (*quam ob rem in sententiam non addidisti, uti prius verberibus in eos animadvorteretur? an quia lex Porcia vetat? at aliae leges item condemnatis civibus non animam eripi, sed exilium permitti iubent*), where he has in mind the *lex Porcia*'s prohibition against flogging. In both passages, it is the *aliae leges* that provide for exile rather than execution, and *quibus legibus* in 51.40 thus refers only to *aliae leges*. See also Drummond 31, 115–16.

[17] Batstone 1990: 128–29.

represented by *vis in animo* and *ingeni opes*, whose employment Sallust initially promotes as the morally appropriate quest for glory, is now demoted to a mere prerequisite, at best, for Sallustian *virtus*.[18] Caesar's statement, however, coming toward the close of an argument that has defined the good in terms of the rational, all but equates intelligence with goodness. The *maiores*, by his lights, were better because of their superior intelligence. Sallust's own descriptions of ancestral rectitude tend to deemphasize its intellectual aspect in favor of the traditional virtues of simplicity, uprightness, and industry;[19] only as part of his explanation of why Rome's exploits are less celebrated than those of Athens does the intellect come into play, and even there it is brought down to earth by the assertion that, unlike the Athenians, the Romans never severed the intellect from the body.[20] It would of course be possible to reconcile that claim with Sallust's preamble by inferring that the body, though always present in the exercise of *ingenium*, was nevertheless subordinate to it, but the fact remains that Sallust's presentation of ancestral *virtus* departs from the purely rationalistic conception of the preamble. To reestablish the link between *virtus*, *mos maiorum*, and *ingenium* is Caesar's project—thwarted in advance by Sallust's demonstration that it is not at all clear what those terms mean.[21]

By contrast, Cato's appeal to *mos maiorum* privileges the reactionary moralist in Sallust over the rationalist. The early part of Cato's speech draws deeply from the language of *Cat.* 11 and 12, where Sallust describes how the ascendancy of *avaritia* and the general decline of public morals under the Sullan régime led to the disparity between the character of his contemporaries and that of the *maiores*. Cato's reproachful appeal to the Senators, *vos ego appello, qui semper domos villas, signa tabulas vostras pluris quam rem publicam fecistis* (*Cat.* 52.5), comports with both Sallust's description of Sulla's rapacious soldiery and Sallust's comparison of contemporary villas to the temples

[18]As part of what Batstone (1990: 119–32; 192–94, esp. nn. 23, 36, and 37) rightly regards as Sallust's constant revision of his own terminology.

[19]*Igitur talibus viris non labor insolitus, non locus ullus asper aut arduos erat, non armatus hostis formidulosus: virtus omnia domuerat* (*Cat.* 7.5); *igitur domi militiaeque boni mores colebantur; concordia maxuma, minuma avaritia erat; ius bonumque apud eos non legibus magis quam natura valebat* (*Cat.* 9.1).

[20]*Ita eorum qui fecere virtus tanta habetur quantum eam verbis potuere extollere praeclara ingenia. at populo Romano numquam ea copia fuit, quia prudentissumus quisque maxume negotiosus erat: ingenium nemo sine corpore exercebat; optumus quisque facere quam dicere, sua ab aliis bene facta laudari quam ipse aliorum narrare malebat* (*Cat.* 8.4–5).

[21]Batstone 1988, esp. 11–12 and 19–20; 1990: 120–26.

built by Roman ancestors.[22] Cato thus implicitly links the Senators' decadence not only with the havoc wrought by Sulla on traditional Roman military discipline, but also with Sallust's portrayal of the dissolute rich of his day, *ignavissumi homines* (*Cat.* 12.5) whose private houses emulate the scale of cities. The Sullan link is reinforced by Cato's reference to the *res publica*: not only does he accuse the Senators of neglecting the commonwealth, but he exhorts them a few lines later to seize it (*capessite rem publicam*, *Cat.* 52.5), since life and *libertas* are at stake (*libertas et anima nostra in dubio est*, *Cat.* 52.6). Sallust uses the phrase *armis recepta re publica* (*Cat.* 11.4) to describe Sulla's seizure of power,[23] and attributes to Catiline a *lubido... rei publicae capiundae* (*Cat.* 5.6).[24] Cato here recurs to a verb (*capessere*) derived from the same root as *recepta* and *capio*, and in the process reverses the semantic polarities. Applied to the activities of Sulla and Catiline, *capere rem publicam* denotes the unconstitutional seizure of power, and hence an attack on *libertas*, while *capessite rem publicam* requires senatorial initiative in order to shore up *libertas*. Cato's exhortation also concludes an appeal to the Senators' own self-indulgence:[25] *si ista, quoiuscumque modi sunt quae amplexamini, retinere, si voluptatibus vostris otium praebere voltis* (*Cat.* 52.5). His argument for senatorial action thus bends Sallustian moral discourse to an un-Sallustian purpose, for it is based on the proposition that the Senators have no other way of retaining those very luxuries which, for Sallust, attest to the deterioration of the body politic.

Cato's reference to his own complaints about those luxuries, *saepe de luxuria atque avaritia nostrorum civium questus sum* (*Cat.* 52.7), could scarcely

[22]*Ibi primum insuevit exercitus populi Romani amare potare, signa tabulas pictas vasa caelata mirari* (*Cat.* 11.6); *operae pretium est, quom domos atque villas cognoveris in urbium modum exaedificatas, visere templa deorum quae nostri maiores, religiosissumi mortales, fecere. verum illi delubra deorum pietate, domos suas gloria decorabant* (*Cat.* 12.3–4). These parallels are noted by McGushin 259 (ad *Cat.* 52.5.).

[23]Cato is also engaging Caesar in a battle of Sallustian allusions, since Caesar has plundered the same passage of Sallust in order to warn the Senators against an act which, though good in itself, would set a bad precedent: *sed postquam L. Sulla armis recepta re publica bonis initiis malos eventus habuit*, *Cat.* 11.4; *omnia mala exempla ex rebus bonis orta sunt*, *Cat.* 51.27 (parallel noted by McGushin 251 [ad *Cat.* 51.27]).

[24]The full context is *hunc* [sc. *Catilinam*] *post dominationem L. Sullae lubido maxuma invaserat rei publicae capiundae* (*Cat.* 5.6). Sallust's decision to place Catiline's *lubido rei publicae capiundae* (cf. *lubidinem dominandi*, *Cat.* 2.2 [Ledworuski 45]) directly after Sulla's *dominatio* is surely intended to tar both with the same brush, and to link Catiline with the post-Sullan deliquescence of Roman virtue.

[25]Drummond 56.

be more Sallustian in tone;[26] indeed, Sallust twice uses the collocation *luxuria atque avaritia* to indict Rome's moral debasement.[27] But Sallust also indulges his moral outrage after retiring from a public life which, by his own admission, was tainted with *ambitio mala* (4.2). Cato's willingness to ventilate in the Senate his displeasure with the current Roman citizenry and to pay the price in political enmities contrasts unavoidably with the denunciations which Sallust issues from the relative safety of private life. Like Sallust, Cato despises *lubido*;[28] but, while Cato's censure of *lubido* in others derives from the stringency of his own conduct, Sallust acknowledges that, despite a temperamental distaste for *audacia*, *largitio*, and *avaritia*, characteristics which, in his moral scheme, go together with *lubido*, he was unable in his youth to resist their blandishments.[29] The Catonian mask does not alter the content of the Sallustian criticism; the crucial difference is that, in Cato's formulation, the accuser is exempt from the accusation,[30] as his verbal maneuver in *Cat.* 52.22–23 reveals: he moves from first person plural (*nos habemus luxuriam atque avaritiam*) to third person singular (*inter bonos et malos discrimen nullum* [sc. *est*], *omnia virtutis praemia ambitio possidet*) to second person plural (*ubi vos separatim sibi quisque consilium capitis, ubi domi voluptatibus, hic pecuniae aut gratiae servitis*), thus gradually excluding himself from the scope of his indictment and ultimately

[26]Earl 97.

[27]*Incitabant praeterea corrupti civitatis mores, quos pessuma ac divorsa inter se mala, luxuria atque avaritia, vexabant* (*Cat.* 5.8); *igitur ex divitiis iuventutem luxuria atque avaritia cum superbia invasere* (*Cat.* 12.2). Earl 97 notes the parallel between *Cat.* 52.7 and 12.2.

[28]*Qui mihi atque animo meo nullius umquam delicti gratiam fecissem, haud facile alterius lubidini male facta condonabam* (*Cat.* 52.8).

[29]*Quae tametsi animus aspernabatur insolens malarum artium, tamen inter tanta vitia imbecilla aetas ambitione corrupta tenebatur* (*Cat.* 3.4).

[30]According to Vretska 573 (ad *Cat.* 52.8), Cato is drawing a distinction between a minor misdemeanor (*delictum*) and serious transgressions (*male facta*); under this interpretation, the severity with which Cato treats his own minor lapses licenses him, in his own mind, to show little tolerance for *male facta* committed by others out of *lubido*. Vretska (*loc. cit.*) also points out that *fecissem* represents, for Sallust, a unique use of the subjunctive in a causal relative clause, and wonders "vielleicht sollte die Irrealität betont werden." His caution is unnecessary: *qui mihi atque animo meo nullius umquam delicti gratiam fecissem* can be interpreted simultaneously as a relative clause of characteristic stating cause and as the apodosis of a disguised counterfactual condition (with, e.g., *si umquam deliquissem* as an unexpressed protasis). The full sense would therefore be "because I am not the kind of man who would ever have accorded indulgence to myself and to my own character for any misdemeanor (that is, if I had committed any), I did not easily condone transgressions committed out of another man's passion." Cato does not concede that he is guilty of a *delictum*, only that he would never have forgiven himself if he had been, and he certainly does not impute to himself any measure of *lubido*.

identifying the selfishness of his auditors as responsible for the crisis of the state (*eo fit, ut impetus fiat in vacuam rem publicam*, with *eo* referring to the two preceding *ubi* clauses). Cato, that is, denounces from above, Sallust from within.[31]

It is noteworthy that Cato has portrayed the Republic as resilient enough to endure neglect at the hands of citizens who have given themselves over to *lubido*. This apparent refutation of the Sallustian argument that civic disintegration inevitably ensues when *lubido* and its attendant evils infect the state also informs his treatment of the most sophisticated of all Sallustian themes, the reversal of language:

> iam pridem equidem nos vera vocabula rerum amisimus: quia bona aliena largiri liberalitas, malarum rerum audacia fortitudo vocatur, eo res publica in extremo sita est. sint sane, quoniam ita se mores habent, liberales ex sociorum fortunis, sint misericordes in furibus aerari: ne illi sanguinem nostrum largiantur et, dum paucis sceleratis parcunt, bonos omnis perditum eant. (*Cat.* 52.11–12)

> sed alia fuere quae illos magnos fecere, quae nobis nulla sunt: domi industria, foris iustum imperium, animus in consulendo liber, neque delicto neque lubidini obnoxius. pro his nos habemus luxuriam atque avaritiam, publice egestatem, privatim opulentiam; laudamus divitias, sequimur inertiam; inter bonos et malos discrimen nullum; omnia virtutis praemia ambitio possidet. (*Cat.* 52.21–22)

Caesar, too, has shown an awareness of semantic *glissement*: *quae apud alios iracundia dicitur, ea in imperio superbia atque crudelitas appellatur* (*Cat.* 51.14). According to him, the same signified (*quae...ea*) is represented (*dicitur, appellatur*) by different signifiers (*iracundia* as opposed to *superbia atque crudelitas*), depending upon the status of the person to whom it is attributed. The contrast between *apud alios* and *in imperio* reflects Caesar's earlier contrast between those who dwell in obscurity and those whom *imperium* has elevated to prominence.[32] The purpose of this rather advanced sociological theory of language is to warn the Senators, who fall into the category *in imperio*, that if

[31]It bears reemphasizing at this point that Sallust's Cato is not only a literary construct, but a speaker whose rhetorical strategy of railing against contemporary decadence is intended to shame his audience into adopting his proposal (Drummond 74 n. 151), nor is it by any means certain that Sallust intends everything in Cato's speech to be understood as a statement of the speaker's true convictions.

[32]*Qui demissi in obscuro vitam habent, si quid iracundia deliquere, pauci sciunt; fama atque fortuna eorum pares sunt. qui magno imperio praediti in excelso aetatem agunt, eorum facta cuncti mortales novere* (*Cat.* 51.12).

they give way to their anger and vote for execution, the undesirable signifiers *superbia* and *crudelitas* will attach to their reputations. Caesar's theory, in other words, is an outgrowth of his Sallustian rationalism, whereas Cato taps a different Sallustian vein by associating semantic change with civic decline.[33] Sallust establishes this association at *Cat.* 12.1–2, when he excoriates the degeneracy of the post-Sullan years:

> postquam divitiae honori esse coepere et eas gloria imperium potentia sequebatur, hebescere virtus, paupertas probro haberi, innocentia pro malivolentia duci coepit. igitur ex divitiis iuventutem luxuria atque avaritia cum superbia invasere.

Hebescere virtus coepit furnishes the context for the exchange of positive or neutral for negative signifiers (*paupertas probro*, *innocentia pro malivolentia*). Using *luxuria atque avaritia* as well as the genitive of *virtus* to allude to the Sallustian passage, Cato observes that the present day is marked by *inter bonos et malos discrimen nullum* (*Cat.* 52.22): good men can no longer be distinguished from bad because, by implication, the loss of *vera vocabula rerum* has destroyed good and bad as conceptual categories. Cato differs from the historian, however, in suggesting that civic decline can be somehow arrested. With *sint sane* (*Cat.* 52.12), he resigns himself to the fact that the deterioration which has taken place so far cannot be reversed, but he seems to imagine that the commonwealth can still be saved even when words have been severed from their proper meanings: the perfective *amisimus* plainly indicates that the semantic dislocation is complete. Nevertheless, by implying that some measure of civic life remains possible even in the absence of a clear relationship between language and truth, that civic integrity can be salvaged even in the absence of the integrity of moral terms, he incorporates into a Sallustian conceptual structure a view contrary to Sallust's own.

At the same time, Cato clarifies that conceptual structure in such a way that it is possible to speak of a Sallustian/Catonian theory of language. This theory is of course heavily indebted to Thucydides' analysis of semantic change in the wake of the Corcyrean *stasis*,[34] and it is in Cato's speech that the full extent of

[33]McGushin 263–64.

[34]See *inter alios* Latte 4, Büchner 1983 *passim*, Scanlon 75, Scanlon 82, Drummond 73. It is equally important to note, however, that the theme of semantic change was "philosophisch-rhetorisches Gemeingut" (Vretska 578 [ad *Cat.* 52.11]; cf. McGushin 291 [*ad eundem loc.*]: "the debasement of political vocabulary is a well-known topos...and here once more Cato is

that debt becomes evident: *vera vocabula rerum amisimus* recalls τὴν εἰωθυῖαν ἀξίωσιν τῶν ὀνομάτων ἐς τὰ ἔργα ἀντήλλαξαν τῇ δικαιώσει, and *malarum rerum audacia fortitudo vocatur* is a virtual translation of τόλμα μὲν γὰρ ἀλόγιστος ἀνδρεία φιλέταιρος ἐνομίσθη (Th. 3.82.4).[35] Sallust's *haberi coepit* and *duci coepit* likewise take their cue from ἐνομίσθη (as do Caesar's *dicitur* and *appellatur*, though in the service of an entirely different agenda), while *luxuria(m) atque avaritia(m)*, used by both Sallust and Cato, recalls Thucydides' identification of the causes of *glissement* (πάντων δ' αὐτῶν αἴτιον ἀρχὴ ἡ διὰ πλεονεξίαν καὶ φιλοτιμίαν, 3.82.8). The Thucydidean legacy is thus divided between the Sallustian and Catonian personae, and it is the latter's major achievement to delineate the difference between the Sallustian-Catonian and the Thucydidean theories. Where Thucydides speaks of a change from customary meanings, Cato speaks of the loss of true meanings.[36] That is, in stating that the traditional relationship between signifier and signified has dissolved, Thucydides initially accepts the Saussurean position that this relationship is based on consensus (εἰωθώς),[37] but departs from it by applying a negative connotation to the *mutabilité du signe* that Saussure regards as an inevitable and neutral diachronic process.[38] For Thucydides, the breakdown of semantic consensus is undesirable inasmuch as it results from a breakdown in civic order and constitutes a linguistic *stasis* engendered by and parallel to political *stasis*.[39] He does not, however, assert that the consensus has established a correct meaning, or even that a correct meaning is possible; he merely implies that the stability of signs is necessary and that whatever consensus has established it must be preserved. Underlying the Sallustian/Catonian argument, by contrast, is a fundamentally anti-Saussurean position that certain signifiers belong with certain signifieds, that the collapse of Roman civic order has decoupled those signifiers not merely from the signifieds to which they used to be bound, but from those to which they ought to be bound, and to which—in a healthy *civitas* such as Rome used to be—they *are* bound. The old consensus,

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made to express a Sallustian concept"). For the definitive study of the Thucydidean material, see Loraux.

[35]Büchner 1983: 259–60.

[36]I here adopt Büchner's astutely observed distinction (1983: 260) between "Änderung d[er] bisher gewohnten Begriffe" (Thucydides) and "Verlust d[er] echten Begriffe" (Sallust/Cato). See also Batstone 1988: 21–22.

[37]"En effet tout moyen d'expression reçu dans une société repose en principe sur une habitude collective ou, ce qui revient au même, sur la convention": Saussure 100–101.

[38]Saussure 108–13.

[39]Loraux, esp. 114–24.

mos maiorum, achieved the proper union of signifier and signified, and thereby created true signs.[40] Thus, while Thucydides acknowledges the necessity of consensus without overtly favoring one consensus over another, Sallust and Cato regard *mos maiorum* as a privileged consensus. For them, the tragedy of politics and language is not just that semantic stability has given way to semantic instability, but that the ancestral system of signs, the only semiotic system capable of containing and conveying truth, has fallen apart.[41]

Cato's linguistic arguments make it clear that the fundamental difference between him and Caesar turns less on the immediate question of what to do with the conspirators than on the larger issue of interpreting this no longer coherent system, or rather on identifying the nature of its former coherence. If Caesar is right, then *mos maiorum* requires a policy of humane rationalism; if Cato is right, then it requires the severest possible punishment of any transgression. Both speakers invoke Sallust in support of their views, but it is Cato who has the last Sallustian word:

> apud maiores nostros A. Manlius Torquatus bello Gallico filium suom, quod is contra imperium in hostem pugnaverat, necari iussit, atque ille egregius adulescens immoderatae fortitudinis morte poenas dedit: vos de crudelissumis parricidis quid statuatis cunctamini? (*Cat.* 52.30–31)

Compare:[42]

> duabus his artibus, audacia in bello, ubi pax evenerat aequitate, seque remque publicam curabant. quarum rerum ego maxuma documenta haec habeo, quod in bello saepius vindicatum est in eos qui contra imperium in hostem pugnaverant quique tardius revocati proelio excesserant quam qui signa relinquere aut pulsi loco cedere ausi erant; in pace vero quod beneficiis magis quam metu imperium agitabant et accepta iniuria ignoscere quam persequi malebant. (*Cat.* 9.3–5)

[40]Again Büchner (1983: 260): "Sallust hingegen weiß, daß die alten Begriffe die *vera vocabula rerum* sind."

[41]Minyard (21–22) sees Cato as articulating "the crisis of the age. Words are floating free, divorced from the values and institutions to which they were attached....The utility of language for conveying ideas and truth, the very possibility of having tests of truth amid such confusion of idea, was called into question."

[42]The following parallel is noted, but not analyzed in detail, by Earl 97; Tiffou 407 takes it as conclusive evidence that Cato is a mouthpiece for Sallust.

Although Cato uses the example of a specific individual[43] while Sallust speaks in generalities, the idea is the same: the *maiores* punished those who failed to obey military orders, even when their disobedience took the form of excessive zeal to fight Rome's enemies. But Cato's example serves a different purpose: he seeks to demonstrate that enemies of the commonwealth should not be treated any better than the *maiores* treated those who insubordinately fought on its behalf, whereas Sallust, in an apparent attempt to negotiate a coexistence between the two main components of his ethical system, wishes to show that ancestral virtue took different forms in peace and war. Indeed, Cato's reference to this particular Sallustian passage constitutes in part an explication of his debate with Caesar. Cato's proposal harks back to the policy of the *maiores* in war, Caesar's to their policy in peacetime. Cato is at pains to demonstrate that the Catilinarian conspiracy is nothing less than a war against the state, for only then can he deflect Caesar's attempt to apply the ancestral signifiers *aequitas* and *accepta iniuria ignoscere*.

Though Cato's policy prevails, the Sallustian conception of *mos maiorum* remains irreparably split, and Cato's scholiastic treatment of the Sallustian contrast between peacetime and wartime *virtus* points directly toward that fissure, for if Catiline's sedition is a war against the state, it is also a war within the state; it is the *stasis* which, as both Sallust and Sallust's Cato have learned from Thucydides, destroys traditional systems of signification. While Caesar acknowledges that the meanings of words can slip, he pretends that ancestral *virtus* is still in its prelapsarian condition, and in cannibalizing Sallustian language to support his rationalistic conception of *virtus*, he ignores Sallust's own shift from the rationalistic to the moralistic mode, as well as the conflict between the two. Cato, for his part, is fully aware of the state of language and morals; his mistake is to imagine that he can urge a return to ancestral morality despite the loss of the old terminological certitudes. The paradox is evident in his sarcastic and contemptuous appeal to the materialism of his contemporaries, by which he seeks to embarrass them into conforming to his reactionary ideals of conduct. Cato's austere morality is predicated on his conception of *mos maiorum* as an archaic, pre-rational set of indisputable truths;[44] but such a morality is possible for him alone, since he is, or at least postures as, the last man alive for whom these truths are still indisputable. Even if he is right in his belief that *vera*

[43]Who, as many commentators have noted, cannot possibly have been an Aulus Manlius Torquatus; see, e.g., Vretska 599 *ad loc.*, McGushin 266 *ad loc.*

[44]The definition is derived from Minyard 10.

vocabula are absolute and independent of social consensus, they nonetheless have no power in a society from which consensus has disappeared. The only figure without any illusions is Sallust, for whom the ultimate horror of the Catilinarian crisis is that it has bequeathed to him a moral vocabulary so riven by ambiguities and contradictions that even Catiline himself, the twisted[45] lover of *stasis* from his first youth,[46] can cite it for his purpose.[47] Sallust's study of the crisis, which begins by confronting those ambiguities and contradictions within his own voice, appropriately culminates in a debate that would not be possible if the signs out of whose fragments he has attempted to assemble a moral discourse were still intact.

[45]*Ingenio pravo*, *Cat.* 5.1; *pravus* is here used with its root meaning, as an antonym of *rectus*: "krumm, verkehrt, pervers, pervertiert" (Ledworuski 75).

[46]*Huic ab adulescentia bella intestina caedes rapinae discordia civilis grata fuere*, *Cat.* 5.2. In its entirety, the quadruple asyndeton adverts to the time of Marius and Sulla (Vretska 126 *ad loc.*); of particular interest here, however, is that *bella intestina* and *discordia civilis* are close terminological counterparts of Thucydidean *stasis*.

[47]His speech to his cronies at *Cat.* 20.2 begins by invoking, of all things, their *virtus* and *fides*.

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