

REVIEW

AN ANTHOLOGY OF SALLUST SCHOLARSHIP

William W. Batstone and Andrew Feldherr, edd., *Sallust*. Oxford Readings in Classical Studies. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp. xii + 494. Hardback, £100.00/\$130.00. ISBN 978-0-19-879098-3.

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Sallust is having a moment. Recent years have seen a wave of attention that seems unlikely to abate, particularly during an historical era that seems to offer a fresh crisis at every turn. For those of us struggling to make sense of the chaotic history of our times as it unfolds, Sallust seems like a kindred spirit. As a witness to, participant in, and recorder of contemporary (or near-contemporary) events, he offers a model for confronting questions of objectivity and perspective and for thinking about the relationship between writing history and making history. After decades of neglect relative to their fully extant siblings, the fragmentary *Histories* have made out particularly well in the last five years. Ramsey's 2015 Loeb offered the first new complete edition of the fragments since Maurenbrecher¹ and the first complete English translation since McGushin's two-volume set in the early 1990s; in the same year La Penna and Funari released the first book of their planned complete text and commentary. Moreover, 2019 saw the publication of not one but two monographs on the *Histories*.² The current *aetas Sallustiana* has now also given rise to the inclusion of Sallust in the Oxford Readings series, edited by William Batstone and Andrew Feldherr. By now the general remit of the 'Oxford Readings in Classical Studies' series is familiar to those in the field: according to the general editors, '[t]he series provides students and scholars with a representative selection of the best and most influential articles on a particular author, work, or subject' and aims 'to offer a broad overview of scholarship, to cover a wide variety of topics, and to illustrate a diversity of critical

¹ Funari's editions and commentaries (*C. Sallusti Crispi Historiarum Fragmenta*, 2 vols, Amsterdam) are invaluable, but were published as separate volumes (fragments preserved through indirect transmission in 1996 and those preserved in codices and papyri in 2008, respectively) and are difficult to obtain outside major research libraries.

² J. Gerrish, *Sallust's Histories and Triumviral Historiography* (Abingdon and New York) and J. A. Rosenblitt, *Rome After Sulla* (London and New York).

methods'. There is ample room to debate the utility and feasibility of the series' goals, and many reviewers have taken up this task.³ Rather than relitigating questions about the value of the series, the present review will focus on whether and how this particular volume's contributions add up to something greater than the sum of the parts and which reading audience will find it most beneficial. In short, this is a finely curated collection that will serve a wide variety of readers well.

Since the contributions to this volume were selected for their importance and impact on Sallustian studies, it seems superfluous to evaluate them individually; each contribution is a worthwhile read and certainly deserves its place here. As Batstone and Feldherr point out in their preface, this final product is just one of many possible versions, any number of which could have given the reader a useful snapshot of twentieth- and early twenty-first-century Sallustian scholarship. The Oxford Readings volume comprises sixteen contributions, including a substantial introduction by Batstone and Feldherr. With the exception of Feldherr's chapter 'Faces of Discord in Sallust's *Histories*' (written for this volume) the papers are reprints of influential articles and chapters spanning some 120 years. Several have been translated into English (Latte, Schwartz, Egelhaaf-Gaiser, Klingner, La Penna), and some are excerpted or condensed (Schwartz, Latte, Earl, Klingner, La Penna). Several authors (Batstone, Levene, Kraus, Osmond) have provided updates or appendices with further reflections and more recent bibliography. Most of the originals were already quite accessible to scholars and students, having been published in widely available venues (e.g., *CPh*, *JRS*, *Hermes*); a few (e.g., Latte's monograph, Egelhaaf-Gaiser's chapter) were difficult for those at smaller or less-resourced institutions to access without Interlibrary Loan. At £100/\$130, the volume might be beyond the budget of individual scholars and especially students, but should be a reasonable purchase for most college and university libraries. This is no small benefit at the present moment, as COVID-related disruptions and funding cuts have upset the normal functioning of university libraries and the availability of ILL.

If this volume is likely to become the entry-point to Sallustian studies for some readers, we might ask how fully representative its chapters are and whether the reader who begins here will come away with significant gaps in his or her picture of Sallustian scholarship. Fortunately for readers of Sallust both new and old, Batstone and Feldherr have made the most of a seemingly impossible task. Sallust's three works receive nearly equal coverage (four chapters on the *Catiline*, four on the *Jugurtha*, three on the *Histories*); three deal with Sallust's work across the corpus, and the final chapter by Patricia J. Osmond discusses Sallust's reception in Renaissance political thought. As is

³ See, e.g., Glenn C. Lacki's review of *Oxford Readings in Ovid* (<https://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2007/2007.09.19/>).

discussed below, several major approaches to Sallust in the twentieth and twenty-first century are represented. One could always swap out an article here or there based on personal preference, but the overall selection succeeds insofar as it presents the reader with a well-balanced array of ways to think about Sallust.

The introduction is invaluable for new readers of Sallust and will also be very useful to those who have spent more time with him. In the first half, the editors open with a brief biography of the author. There follows an overview of some of the fundamental questions all readers of Sallust are likely to confront at some point, such as the influence of Sallust's political career on his views of history and how to understand his self-justifications for taking up the project of writing history. The second half of the introduction brings welcome cohesion to the volume by situating the chapters within a detailed, roughly chronological survey of Sallustian scholarship. It is worth emphasising that nearly every piece that came to this reviewer's mind when contemplating alternative editorial choices is mentioned or discussed in the introduction; the editors have done an exemplary job of anticipating the inevitable gaps and pointing the reader in the right direction.

I will next highlight the volume's coverage of several prominent debates, areas, or trends in Sallustian studies. I will not touch on every chapter, but those contributions not discussed individually have in no way been excluded for lack of merit.

Sallustian scholarship in the early- to mid-twentieth century was deeply preoccupied with debating whether Sallust should be categorised as a politician or an author. Some approaches were more nuanced than others, but the prevailing sentiment held that this was an either/or proposition. The pieces that Batstone and Feldherr have selected as exemplary of this debate, Schwartz's 1897 paper on the *Catiline* and Klingner's 1928 discussion of the *Histories*' preface, do a fine job of demonstrating the stakes and claims on both sides. Schwartz details the discrepancies between Sallust's account of the Catilinarian conspiracy and his likely sources and depicts the *Catiline* as a brutal takedown of Cicero; in Schwartz's reading, Sallust is driven by powerfully partisan motives. Klingner, on the other hand, views Sallust's historical project as a reflection on representations of the past rather than one of practical political action. The *Histories* have many bitter things to say about recent history, but Klingner argues that this critique does not serve any immediate partisan purpose. Rather, Sallust's gloomy account undermines the teleological narrative in which the Sullan state represented the arrest of a national decline and the subsequent restoration of stability; his re-working of the Posidonian model figures Sulla as 'no longer the grim, frightful harbinger of something ultimately good, but the embodiment of evil and decay' (347). As subsequent scholarship has more explicitly acknowledged, the two sides of Sallust offered by these chapters are not necessarily mutually exclusive, nor

are they the only possibilities; still, read together, these two examples offer a nice illustration of arguments situated at the poles.

Sallust's splendid and confounding prose and narrative styles are comprehensively discussed with an abridged version of Latte's 1935 monograph, translated from German. This contribution is an especially welcome one, as Latte's invaluable study is, for the most part, only held by major research libraries; although serious scholars will want to procure the original when available, it will be most useful to have this version handy for quick reference (and perhaps for assigning to students, as well).

Sallust's famous prefaces are laden with philosophical and ethical reflections, and a significant body of scholarship has sought to understand the role of morality in Sallust's configuration of Roman history. The proems are not as over-represented in this volume as they are in the literature more broadly, although Batstone and Feldherr make several helpful suggestions for further reading on the prefaces. Earl's 'The Moral Crisis in Sallust's View' (a chapter excerpted from his 1961 monograph *The Political Thought of Sallust*) illustrates an historical approach to Sallustian morality. Earl argues that Sallust breaks with tradition in the monographs by marking 146 BCE as the beginning of Rome's moral decline, as the removal of *metus Punicus* opened space for the rise of *ambitio*, *avaritia*, and subsequently *discordia*. As Earl points out, this simplified schema left Sallust backed into a corner, forced to exaggerate the *concordia* of the early second century and gloss over events and details that contradicted his narrative. Batstone's chapter offers a useful counterpoint. In this reading, the contradictory and conflicting ideas in the preface and throughout the *Catiline* are not mistakes or misunderstandings. Rather, Sallust allows these inconsistencies to stand without resolution as an enactment of both the murky obscurity of the conspiracy and the fundamental instability of historical 'knowledge' and representation. Gunderson's chapter offers another perspective by arguing that the *ingenium* of the writer exerts limited control. For Gunderson, Sallust's text represents 'not the performance of authorship as the mastery of intended meaning, but instead the demonstration of the conditions within which such a mastery is lost' (168). Here, the *Catiline*'s repetitions, contradictions, and discontinuities result not from rigid adherence to an historical schema nor a deliberate enactment of uncertainty, but rather from the author's inevitable failure to fully master the narrative and its reception by the reading audience.

The late-twentieth century 'rhetorical' or 'literary' turn in the study of historiography dispensed with any lingering notion that historical narratives were the mere vehicles of facts, and recognised historians as artists equal to their poetic counterparts. Scholars were now free to apply to historical narratives some of the theoretical approaches long familiar in other corners of philology. The idea that Sallust and his fellow historians skilfully employed the tools of rhetoric in shaping their historical accounts opened new interpretative

possibilities that are well represented here with several articles from the 1990s and early twenty-first century. There are some exciting pieces here on the *Jugurtha*, in particular. For example, Levene's article on the *Jugurtha* as 'An Historical Fragment' invites us to see Sallust as a narrative innovator who denies his reader both structural and thematic closure; the *Jugurtha*'s incompleteness draws attention to the relentless pattern and unresolved state of Roman decline. Kraus takes up Levene's theme of incompleteness, but her reading of Jugurtha's character offers an alternative to Levene's more schematic picture of decline. Kraus argues that Jugurtha embodies the work's 'thematics of disorder' and that, from the start, the prince's chaotic nature threatens to upend not only the world within the narrative but also the narrative itself, as the historian struggles to wrestle his disorderly subject matter into a stable form. In the other two *Jugurtha* chapters, Wiedemann discusses the three digressions of the work as vehicles for Sallust's exploration of virtues and Egelfhaaf-Gaiser performs a narratological reading of Marius' speech at *Jug.* 85. It is perhaps worth noting that none of the four chapters on the *Jugurtha* was published before 1992, which has the effect of making it feel like the most 'contemporary' of Sallust's works. This is somewhat deceptive; as mentioned above, the *Histories* have received a great deal of attention in recent years, but I imagine that much of this work was published too recently for inclusion here.

The one important moment in modern Sallustian studies that feels underrepresented by the selections is acknowledged by the editors in the introduction. Batstone and Feldherr point out that the publication of Büchner, Syme, and La Penna's monographs in the 1960s moved the conversation about Sallust beyond labelling him *either* a partisan *or* an author.⁴ These works allowed, even took as a first principle, that Sallust could be more than one thing.⁵ This may seem obvious to twenty-first century students of historiography, but Büchner, Syme, and La Penna—each in his own way—subverted the conventional paradigm of Sallustian scholarship to that point. Of these three important volumes, only La Penna is represented here. This is surely a practical choice rather than a value judgment. La Penna's treatment of the *Histories* was the most thorough and comprehensive discussion of that work until the two monographs of 2019 mentioned above and was thus the clear choice to anchor that section of the volume. Still (and this may be the reviewer's bias rather than an inescapable truth), any conversation about Sallust feels a little less rich without the inimitable voice of Syme. Some readers may also wish that reception studies were more well-represented here. How-

⁴ K. Büchner, *Sallust* (Heidelberg, 1960); R. Syme, *Sallust* (Berkeley and London, 1964); A. La Penna, *Sallustio e la 'rivoluzione' romana* (Milan, 1968).

⁵ E.g., Syme, quoted in the introduction (16): 'Sallust is at the same time an artist, a politician, and a moralist.'

ever, a single Oxford Readings volume can't be everything to all readers, and these omissions do not substantially detract from the quality of the volume.

Particularly with Batstone and Feldherr's introduction as a guide, the student or scholar new to Sallust will find this volume to be a comprehensive and thorough introduction to Sallust and to the questions and trends that have driven Sallustian scholarship for the last hundred or so years. This collection should be welcomed by serious readers of Sallust as well. In their more recent instalments, the Oxford Readings in Classical Studies series editors have remedied the chief deficiencies that made earlier iterations less suitable for serious scholarship (e.g., lack of footnotes),⁶ and the Oxford Readings in Sallust contains all the necessary scholarly apparatus (including a compiled bibliography covering all chapters and an index of passages). Overall, this volume is a valuable resource for all readers of Sallust and sets the stage for the next generations of innovative Sallustian scholarship.

College of Charleston

JENNIFER GERRISH
gerrishj@cofc.edu

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⁶ An issue noted in Peter Kruschwitz's review of *Oxford Readings in Menander, Plautus, and Terence* (<https://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2002/2002.12.30>).