The Past is Never Dead:
Sallust’s Intellect in the Historical Narrative of Catilinarian Conspiracy in Respect to
Morality

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ABSTRACT

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Despite his serious pursuit in writing history coming from his concern for the wellbeing of the Roman republic, Sallust is often criticized for his literary style as a historian, arguably more than he deserves. This paper defends Sallust as a Roman intellectual for he stresses the need to address mos maiorum in history. The central theme of Sallust’s historical examination is the morality of the Roman people. He tends to focus particularly on the change of Roman morality from the past to the present, along with his account of the past, which he evaluates to be significant and memorable. Sallust shows a strong tendency to make moral judgments of what he perceived to be good and bad conducts and, based on what he saw and heard, who had them. In respect to virtus, the morality of his contemporaries is always subject to negative comparison to that of Roman ancestors, but Sallust does not make clear links between past and present as to sufficiently explain the context of his overall narrative of Catilinarian Conspiracy. This paper contextualizes Sallust’s historical narrative of Bellum Catilinae in respect to morality as to illuminate how the concept of mos maiorum shaped Sallust’s view of his own society in political and moral contexts of the late Republic, in his literary style, and in his narrative of Catilinarian Conspiracy in Bellum Catilinae.
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A past is often left unexamined as the time progresses from one generation to another. The longer the past is left unmonitored, the harder it becomes for people to keep track of their past in terms of how it made its way into their present. What results is an unexamined past, eventually forgotten, silently yet slowly and clearly affecting some parts of the present society that very few people care enough to pay attention to. The problem of the unexamined past lies within one’s society being susceptible to change within a short time frame. The past continues to affect the present and thereafter the future as a precedent set to make its further impact in society. In the midst of such an ever-changing society, an unexamined past comes with a rather serious ramification; what people are ultimately creating for themselves is a miscommunication between generations called a generation gap. When enough time passes without taking much effort in examining and evaluating the past, the generation gap that was once formed only becomes bigger, and how the past eventually found its way into the present becomes obscure even for the people who have lived to see the whole course of events as eyewitnesses. Not only does the comparison between the past and present become harder, one would also find easier to miss critical insights needed for one’s reflection of the present, but can only be acquired by recollecting the past.

Such was the concern of Roman intellectuals during the late Republic due to insufficient historical examination. Arguably, Sallust (86 - 35 BCE) was a serious Roman intellectual for he stressed the need to address *mos maiorum* in history. The central theme of Sallust’s historical
examination is no other than the morality of the Roman people. He tends to focus particularly on
the change of Roman morality from the past to the present, along with his account of the past,
which he evaluates to be significant and memorable. In the first thirteen sections of Bellum
Catilinae,\(^1\) Sallust characterizes certain *artes animi et corporis* (skills of mind and body) as *boni
mores* (good conducts) then as *virtus* (virtue/morality). In the end, he sublimes *virtus* into *mos
maiorum* (the custom of ancestors), ultimately forging this “virtuous” image of Roman ancestors
that is so desirable and praiseworthy. The term *virtus* serves as an effective literary tool for
shaping the past in the footsteps of Roman ancestors which in turn legitimizes Romans to uphold
*mos maiorum* as forever glorious. Roller’s model of “exemplary discourse” implies the context
in which Sallust derives such virtuous and glorious image of *mos maiorum*. The “exemplary
discourse” is an endless cycle of social reproduction of “exemplarity” normally practiced within
Roman society by the Romans of the late Republic and Empire. There are four principal
components to his model—action, audience, commemoration, and imitation.\(^2\)

1) Action: an action should be done for the Roman community at large, incorporating ethics and social values. This normally falls into what Romans thought to be “virtue”, that is, “what it takes to be a man”.\(^3\)

2) Audience: Roller defines two types of audience—primary audience and secondary audience. Primary audience consists of eyewitnesses who observe the action, place the action in an ethical category (virtue, piety, gratitude, etc.), and transform the action into a socially and ethically significant deed (*res gesta*). Secondary audience does not consist of eyewitnesses, but those who grow up learning about actions already firmly established by primary audience as deeds.\(^4\)

3) Commemoration: a commemoration is not only of the action, but of its consequence to the community, and of the ethical evaluation received from the primary audience. According to Roller, it is usually done by monumentalizing a deed, which involves reading a narrative, looking at a statue, etc.\(^5\)

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\(^1\) Considered as a preface to the monograph
\(^3\) Roller, 4.
\(^4\) Roller, 5.
\(^5\) Roller, 5.
4) Imitation: an imitation is done by any spectator, whether primary or secondary, striving either to replicate or to surpass the deed himself in the case of positive examples, and striving to avoid doing so in the case of negative examples. Typically, the imitator seeks to become “the new X” or “another X”.6

Roller includes four additional remarks to the “exemplary discourse”:

1) The community of Romans involved in doing, witnessing, evaluating, and monumentalizing deeds is the *populus Romanus* at large, not just elites.7
2) The exemplary discourse has powerful ideological effects. Once the deed is established, Romans took it as a normal or normative way in which social values were established, and assumed that actions, audiences, monuments, and imitations were or should be all linked in accordance with social values which they assumed that other people followed likewise.8
3) The production of exemplary discourse is beset at every turn by instabilities, contradictions, and contestations. An action may be evaluated positively in one ethical category, but negatively in another; or perhaps different aspects of an action may carry different values.9
4) How one goes about imitating an exemplary deed, that is, what constitutes legitimate imitation, and whether a spectator has produced one is often disputed, since it involves struggling to establish or disestablish a particular interpretation of an action’s value, a monument’s reference, or an imitator’s success, and alternative readings threatened to do at every instant.10

According to Roller, “exemplary discourse” is how the Romans of the late Republic and Empire encountered their past, placed its value and meaning, and deployed it in the service of the present.11 His examination of Livy’s account of Horatius Cocles and Cloelia strongly suggests that the “exemplary discourse” was not an uncommon for Romans, and that ancient Romans constantly identified and imitated what they historically perceived to be good or bad moral conducts which dictated what were to be proper or improper Roman behaviors. Roller’s approach with Livy’s *Ab Urbe Condita*, from which he derived “exemplary discourse”, matches

6 Roller, 5.
7 Roller, 6.
8 Roller, 6-7.
9 Roller, 7.
10 Roller, 7.
11 Roller, 51. Roller demonstrates the exemplary discourse with the cases of Horatius Cocles and Cloelia.
Livy’s value in history. A contemporary to Sallust, Livy states that one can discover what to imitate and not to imitate by studying the *exempla* (examples) of the past, in other words, history.

What chiefly makes the study of history wholesome and profitable is this, that you behold the lessons of every kind of experience set forth as on a conspicuous monument from these you may choose for yourself and you’re your own state what to imitate, from these mark for avoidance what is shameful in the conception and shameful in the result.\(^\text{12}\)

The benefit of studying history, as Livy understands it, is not so different from Roller’s model of “exemplary discourse” in acknowledging past examples as exemplarity. As it does with Livy, Roller’s model implies the context behind Sallust’s view toward history, which essentially brought his attention to the morality of Roman ancestors, while discussing the morality of his contemporaries. Being a Roman himself who was fully aware of how “exemplary discourse” worked in Roman society, Sallust was subject to such social discourse, particularly so because he needs to address how he understands the ancestral morality during his time. As Livy did, Sallust also thought of present morality in comparison to past morality. In his mind, following the good examples of the ancient Roman ancestors is considered as good moral conduct, while following the bad examples is bad moral conduct if one were to be a Roman. Roman descendants all alike were subject to the idea of “exemplary discourse”, and thus were socially demanded or expected to follow the examples of their ancestors.

In a similar manner, Sallust shows a strong tendency to make moral judgments of what he perceived to be good and bad conducts and, based on what he saw and heard, who had them. In respect to *virtus*, the morality of his contemporaries is always subject to negative comparison to that of Roman ancestors, but Sallust does not elaborate on his links between past and present as to explain why he has such a pessimistic view toward the morality of his present. Roller’s model suggests that Sallust considers the morality of his contemporaries the complete opposite to

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social demand and expectation. Whether “exemplary discourse” may line up with Sallust’s narrative of *mos maiorum* in *Bellum Catilinae* requires one to consider how the concept of *mos maiorum* shaped Sallust’s view of his own society 1) in political and moral contexts of the late Republic, 2) in his literary style, and 3) in his narrative of Catilinarian Conspiracy in *Bellum Catilinae*. 
Chapter 1: Political and Moral Contexts

The conceptual core of Roman political thought in the late Republic was *mos maiorum* (the custom of ancestors). As the term speaks for itself, the concept should be recognized as the standard way of life for Romans, coming from ancestral tradition. Established upon specific noble qualities that were recognized by Romans as "traditional", *mos maiorum* has never been so influential in every aspect of the late Republic, particularly in political and moral settings, that the Latin literature produced at the time was able to capture it with such vividness. In respect to historical writing, political and moral implication and its corresponding social impact of *mos maiorum* upon Roman society received utmost attention of writers such as Sallust and Livy for historical examination.

In political and moral settings, the concept of *mos maiorum* was the inner strength of Roman citizens in holding their system together as a mutually shared common sense of ancestral tradition. *Mos maiorum* oriented Roman citizens to a sense of civic virtue and duty through stories of deeds that were reinforced by visual reminders, public ceremonies, celebrations, and orations.\(^\text{13}\) Consolidated by *exempla* (model examples), *mos maiorum* was a foundation of *virtus* (virtue), the notion of moral qualities and of great deeds.\(^\text{14}\) *Mos maiorum*, however, could not

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bring the republic into political conformity. Factions between propertied and unpropertied classes, enfranchised Romans and disenfranchised Italians, leading nobiles (aristocrats) and rising novi homines (new men), and later populares and optimates centered around disputes on mos maiorum regarding the claim to order and authority which immediately marked their social distinctions. Ironically, mos maiorum served as a catalyst of the political discord in the late Republic. Soon prevalent in Rome was the sense of political rivalry which ultimately shaped the history of the late Republic as a period of a deep political crisis gradually leading to long-lasting civil wars.

A moral crisis was going hand in hand with a political crisis in Rome; the growth of luxury followed the political rivalry. Luxury was considered a source of evil, penetrating into Roman morals. One should be attentive to how the term luxuria (luxury) is used as a negative connotation. Polybius sheds lights on the strictness of Roman law and custom with respect to the acquisition of wealth.

(Polybius 6.56) Again, the laws and customs relating to the acquisition of wealth are better in Rome than at Carthage. At Carthage nothing which results in profit is regarded as disgraceful; at Rome nothing is considered more so than to accept bribes and seek gain from improper channels. For no less strong than their approval of moneymaking is their condemnation of unscrupulous gain from forbidden sources. A proof of this is that at Carthage candidates for office practice open bribery, whereas at Rome death is the penalty for it. Therefore as the rewards offered to merit are the opposite in the two cases, it is natural that the steps taken to gain them should also be dissimilar.15

Polybius implies that the acquisition of wealth, or divitia, was considered disgraceful for Romans (as opposed to Carthaginians). One should note that divitia is not only limited to money. Divitia is a collective term used to refer to a collective gain of profit as to measure one’s economic wealth. According to Polybius, Roman law and custom dictated that bribe was no less disgraceful than money. Similarly, luxury was considered as equally disgraceful as money and

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bribe due to the fact that luxury was a form of *divitia*, but of foreign origins. Roman intellectuals often identified the growth of luxury in Rome equivalent to a “foreign” invasion or a “foreign” plague.\(^{16}\) It is not a coincidence that luxury received such negative connotations after the fall of Carthage. If one were to consider Polybius’ comparison between Carthage and Rome in their customs on acquisition of *divitia*, one is the exact opposite of the other, a complete dissimilarity. The traditional Carthaginian custom characterized by extravagance is in conflict with the traditional Roman custom characterized by self-restraint and moderation. The “foreign” and “extravagant” nature of *divitia* coming from “outside” was the source of fear, that is, the fear of Roman intellectuals for what they believed to be outside influence, strange and foreign but quick and sudden, in a form of economic wealth. The influx of *divitia*, foreign and extravagant in respect to traditional Roman custom, gave the term *luxuria* a negative connotation which existed and continued to exist as *metus hostilis* (“fear of enemy”) even after the destruction of Carthage, and even later affecting as a catalyst for Jugurthine War in reaction to Jugurtha’s bribery in Rome. In ever-changing Roman republic facing rapid political and moral decline, *mos maiorum* naturally deserved attention of the Roman intellectuals as a possible solution to bring the republic into political and moral conformity. Virtuous Rome meant traditional Rome, and tradition meant unity: a single language, a shared history, communal civic worship, an empire gained under the united leadership of a strong senatorial order that assimilated everything foreign and alien.\(^{17}\)

Such magnitude of the social impact that *mos maiorum* had on Roman morality in reaction to the growth of luxury cannot be overlooked in Latin historiography. In discussing the

\(^{16}\) The claim on which individual is responsible for the introduction of luxury to Rome varies among different Roman authors. Sallust attributes to Sulla after his campaign in East, *(Cat. 11.5)*. Livy attributes to Cn. Manlius Vulso after his campaign in Asia Minor during the Galatian War *(39.6.7-39.7.4)*, Velleius Paterculus attributes to Scipio Aemilianus’ destruction of Carthage *(Hist. 2.1)*. The term *luxuria* is unanimously characterized as “foreign” and “extravagant”, both of which are clearly negative connotations.

invasion of Hellenism roughly after the defeat of Hannibal, Duff provides crucial social context for the literacy advance in Latin literature.

The social environment altered more during a few generations after the defeat of Hannibal than during the five preceding centuries. Foreign imports, comforts, luxuries, tastes, ideas, and beliefs had henceforth to be set in a Roman framework. The Roman became more adventurous in thought as in action. The great wars disclosed realms of intellect and beauty undreamed of hitherto.\textsuperscript{18}

As Duff acknowledges, the defeat of Hannibal is the most critical time in the history of Roman republic and that foreign influxes arising after Rome’s first overseas expansion have never been so formidable that, in the midst of moral and political crisis in Rome, emerged the diversity of Roman political thought that reached beyond abstract philosophic arguments and look to historiography, poetry, letters, and orations.\textsuperscript{19} In terms of literacy in Latin historical writing, nothing powerful appeared before Sallust and Caesar.\textsuperscript{20}

\textit{Mos maiorum} is the key to understanding the late Republic in political and moral settings. Politics and morals were so interconnected under the very concept of \textit{mos maiorum} which defined \textit{virtus} as not only moral excellence, but also social distinction in politics for the service of the state. \textit{Mos maiorum} thus ultimately shaped the Roman republican thought in political and moral settings. Roman intellectuals recognized the social impact of \textit{mos maiorum} behind the political and moral fragility of their world. Such recognition gave rise to literary advance in Latin literature and soon marked as a literary trend. Sallust was not an exception. Taking Rome’s political and moral crisis into consideration, Sallust considers important to speak at length about morality as he accounts for the unspeakable moral breakdown of his contemporaries by focusing on comparing his present to the past clearly from a retrospective

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item J.Wight Duff, \textit{A Literary History of Rome: From the Origins to the Close of the Golden Age} (London: Benn, 1960), 70.
\item Hammer, 1.
\item Duff, 186.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
point of view. In order to stress the moral condition of the Roman people visible in the course of Catilinarian Conspiracy, Sallust carefully builds his historical narrative around the theme of morality.
Chapter 2: Literary Style

Despite his serious pursuit in writing history coming from his concern for the wellbeing of the Roman republic, Sallust is often criticized for his literary style as a historian, arguably more than he deserves. He is accused for his unreliability, immateriality, and partiality of his accounts coming from inadequate and intangible evidence, political partisanship (sometimes called Caesarianism for Sallust’s support for Caesar), and elaboration on accounts of seemingly less significant individuals. Goodyear considers the modern criticism toward Sallust for his historical deficiency.

The stories about Sallust, some say, are wholly unreliable, nothing more than echoes of the virulent personal abuse conventionally exchanged between politicians of his time. Again, we are told, even if the stories are true, they are immaterial: a man whose own behaviour is deplorable may yet make an excellent observer and moralist.\footnote{F.R.D. Goodyear, “Sallust,” *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature* 2 (1982): 268.}

Due to such claim, at times, modern criticism renders him as more of a historical novelist\footnote{Alfred William Pollard, trans., *The Catiline and Jugurtha of Sallust* (London: Macmillan, 1882), xiv.}. Thus, Sallust’s concern behind his pursuit in writing about Catilinarian Conspiracy can be easily misconstrued as if he were only to praise ancestors and condemn their descendants with an overall tone of unreasonable romanticism. Particularly due to his pessimism, Sallust’s view of his present alludes to looking back to the past as “those good old days when things were
always better”. Having encountered such drastic opinion of Sallust, modern critics of Sallust find his work unaccountable. For instance, Duff argues that,

But it is totally misleading to dismiss the age as one of unqualified degeneracy. The moody complaints of Sallust and Livy regarding moral decay in their own or in immediately preceding times must be considerably discounted as due to their exaggerated diagnosis of ailments in the bodily politic and their roseate painting of a vanished ear of simple goodness.

Duff claims that Sallust and Livy exaggerate their past as “ailments” and present as “simple goodness” with romanticism, aka their “roseate painting”. Along with Livy, Sallust is accused of his underlying tone of romanticism. Considering the emotional and subjective aspect of romanticism, romanticism may be the very source of modern criticism toward Sallust. Based on his strong conviction that morality is a subject matter not irrelevant to the nature of the Catilinarian Conspiracy, Sallust focuses on the morality of the Roman people. Sallust creates a very strong introduction by observing ancient history of Rome from moral perspective, but the first thirteen sections of Bellum Catilinae, mostly stressing how and why the morality of the Roman people changed by comparing the present to the past, are a tad long-winded. Moreover, he employs fortuna (fortune)\(^\text{23}\) to explain the cause of moral decline at Rome, relying on divine force for explaining the cause of events. The overall impression is that Sallust writes an unusually long preface of moral history without considering the main plot of Catilinarian Conspiracy.

The misconception about Sallust’s concern and intention comes from the author himself for his critical failure to connect clear links between the morality of Roman people and the plot of Catilinarian Conspiracy. Sallust suggests several different ideas all together at once in attempt to establish the definition of Roman morality, but they are hard to follow especially since Sallust

\(^{23}\) Often translated as the goddess Fortuna (e.g. “saevire fortuna ac miscere omnia coepit”).
does not distinguish between his moral narrative and his historical narrative. The connection between the corrupted minds of the people and the development of Catilinarian Conspiracy remains unclear in the text itself, but is significant in his narrative explaining the social message Sallust intends to deliver. In order to redefine on what perspective Sallust wishes to devise his narrative, one must examine Sallust’s literary style in comparison with Livy’s as Sallust and Livy are contemporary authors and frequently subject to literary comparison. One should be reminded that Sallust’s work is a monograph, a subgenre of history. Sallust wishes to explore a single subject or aspect of history for the purpose of exploring the very nature of the subject, if not, its aspect. On contrary, Livy follows the traditional annalistic method of writing history, exploring multiple subjects of history.

Sallust and Livy sought to writing history as they thought through and with their history, and were equally consumed by the precariousness of their hold on power and the fragility of their own system.\textsuperscript{24} The root of their interest in historical writing is morality derived from the concept of \textit{mos maiorum}, aka, the exemplarity of the past, which is subject to memory worthy of remembrance. Their concerns were not so different from any others: exercising Roman \textit{virtus}, that is, following \textit{mos maiorum}. The task of writing history was a way of exercising \textit{virtus} and following \textit{mos maiorum}. Livy interprets and discovers \textit{virtus} in ancestral exemplarity and ubiquity of historical writing ("\textit{veterem tum volgatam esse rem videam}"), while Sallust does so in the purpose of historical writing for the service of the state ("\textit{pulchrum est bene facere rei publicae, etiam bene dicere haud absurdum est; vel pace vel bello clarum fieri licet. Et qui fecere et qui facta aliorum scripsere, multi laudantur}"). Accordingly, Sallust and Livy link their present to the past by linking themselves and their works to their ancestral deeds, and for that

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{24} Hammer, 2.}
reason, take writing history in with great affection as they deem worthy of a deed on a par with that of antiquity.

Upon writing history, Sallust and Livy link their present to the past with *virtus* as their historical lens, retracing the past in order to address the very question of their concern: “how did we come here, our present, from where we were, our past?” Each took different perspective in writing history. In fact, their styles are, in nature, complete opposite of each other. The difference between Sallust and Livy in their historical perspectives demanded different ways to examine their history with *virtus* which determined their literary styles.

If one were to make an analogy from their difference in historical perspectives, Sallust's monograph can be described as examining a forest of trees, as opposed to Livy's annals as examining trees of a forest. While both of their historical lenses are *virtus*, Sallust examines his history with *virtus* in respect to “moral qualities” which helps explain the causality. He writes history because he sees the extraordinary nature of the crime and of the danger arising from it (“*nam id facinus in primis ego memorabile existumo sceleris atque periculi novitate.*”). Livy, on the other hand, examines his with *virtus* in respect to “ancestral deeds” which helps see the morality. He writes history because he wants pay attention to the life and moral (“*ad illa mihi pro se quisque acriter intendat animum, quae vita, qui mores fuerint, per quos viros quibusque artibus domi militiaeque et partum et auctum imperium sit*”). As such, Sallust's monographic style is geared toward focusing on morality to shape history, while Livy's annalistic style is toward focusing on history to shape morality. While both write their histories either in adherence to or deviation from ancestral morality, Sallust's concern is primarily on “what caused the men to do in certain ways, while Livy's concern is on “what men did”. Regardless of which style each
author adheres to, both styles successfully present their historical narratives as wake-up calls to
their present out of their concerns for the political and moral crisis in Rome.

As such, Sallust’s vivid portrayal of characters and memorable speeches from significant
individuals in Bellum Catilinae serves as exempla. They are, however, not of those individuals
performing great deeds during Catilinarian Conspiracy, but of those individuals whose moral
qualities were either for or against imitating mos maiorum in which moral principles were
asserted by Sallust. For that reason, they are always pertinent to particular individual’s morality,
working as effective literary devices for Sallust to shape the plot of Catilinarian Conspiracy
based on morality.
Chapter 3: Narrative

How Sallust wishes to narrate the Catiline’s conspiracy is through morality because he constantly sees in the morality of the Roman people the very nature of the conspiracy. From the very first section of *Bellum Catilinae*, the concept of mind and body is significant in understanding Sallust’s perspective of morality. According to Sallust, *animus* (mind) and *corpus* (body) are two essential components of men contributing to two essential qualities of men, *ingenium* (inner disposition) and *vis* (outer strength), both of which constitute one’s morality.

While *animus-corpus* and *ingenium-vis* stand as two separate concepts, Sallust pairs one concept to another, making a strong analogous relationship between *animus-corpus* and *ingenium-vis*; *animus* is to *ingenium* as *corpus* is to *vis*. Then Sallust further expands the very concept of mind and body upon *imperio* (sovereignty)-*servitio* (slavery) and *deus* (god)-*belua* (brute) (“animi imperio, corporis servitio magis utimur; alterum nobis cum dis, alterum cum beluis commune est”). Therefore, *animus* is associated with *ingenium*, *imperio*, and *deus*, while *corpus* is with *vis*, *servitio*, and *belua*; mind is subject to disposition, sovereignty, and immortal and long-lasting aspect, while body is to strength, slavery, and mortal and short-lived aspect.

From numerous analogies, Sallust fully incorporates philosophical concepts to describe how the working of one’s mind and body is relevant to the working of inner disposition and outer strength with which men shape their way of life, aka *mos maiorum*. Sallust argues that while mind and body complement each other as contributing factors to strength (“*nstra omnis vis in animo et corpore sita est*”), mind is superior to body. Accordingly, he addresses that *vita* (life) is short due to its fleeting quality like body, yet *memoria* (memory) is long due to its lasting quality.
like mind, and that *divitia* (wealth) and *forma* (beauty) are similar to body from their fleeting quality, yet *virtus* (virtue/morality) is similar to mind from its lasting quality (“*vita ipsa qua fruimur brevis est, memoriam nostri quam maxume longam efficere; nam divitianum et formae gloria fluxa atque fragilis est, virtus clara aeternaque habetur*”). Thus, Sallust stresses the importance of one’s mind: to maintain *mos maiorum* (ancestral virtue/morality) due to its lasting quality, thus worthy of being written down in history.

According to Sallust, when body becomes superior to mind, sloth wins over labor and changes the way one’s morality used to work. Once again, Sallust utilizes the concept of mind and body: *voluptas* (pleasure) is to body, *onus* (burden) is to mind (“*corpus voluptati, anima oneri fuit*”). Sallust characterizes sloth as a vice so formidable that can change the fortune of the state with its moral conducts (“*verum ubi pro labore desidia, pro continentia et aequitate lubido atque superbia invasere, fortuna simul cum moribus immutatur*”). Sallust confesses that his political career from his youth allowed him to witness such change of morality (“instead of modesty, temperance, and integrity, there prevailed shamelessness, corruption, and rapacity”25). Coming from a political background where he owes his credibility, Sallust expresses his determination to write about the Catilinarian Conspiracy for its “unusual nature both of its guilt and of its perils.”26 He clearly states that he is interested in exploring the nature of the conspiracy, rather than the course of the conspiracy itself.27

The “nature” he refers to is that of the changed fortune of the state, that is, the morality of the state overturned by body over mind and sloth over labor. Such nature is what Sallust

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26 Watson, 23.
27 For that reason, Sallust ignores Polybius’ concern in addressing interconnectedness of the world in historical writing (Polybius, World History, 1.3.3-4) since his focus in history is on the inquiry of *mos maiorum* (aka ancestral virtue/morality). Sallust’s priority in *mos maiorum* strongly suggests that his lack of attention to Cicero and Pompey and instead to Cato and Caesar in his narrative were not affected by Sallust’s political partiality.
means by “Fortune”, which “began to be savage and to throw all into confusion.”

No longer does mind triumphs over body; no longer do ingenium, imperio, and deus triumph over vis, servitio, and belua; voluptas (pleasure) wins over onus (burden). Such is the Sallust’s depiction of moral depravity. Referring back to the concept of mind and body, Sallust shapes the very “nature” of the conspiracy as “body over mind” or, simply put, “vice”. Then he applies such “vice” to Catiline. Catiline’s morality is in accordance with “body over mind”. Catiline had strength (vis) in both mind (animus) and body (corpus), but bad disposition (ingenium) (“fuit magna vi et animi et corporis, sed ingenio malo pravoque”). The morality of Catiline perfectly matches up with Sallust’s concept of mind and body.

Thus, Sallust refers the “guilt” to Catiline, a living example of plague called “vice” corrupting the youth and then forming a plan to overthrow the republic where the potential “perils” of the state’s wellbeing lied. Sallust further elaborates on Catiline’s character, thereby emphasizing Catiline’s “vice” and “guilt” which he relates to Catiline’s mind and body. He describes Catiline as,

“He delight, from his youth, had been in civil commotions, bloodshed, robbery, and sedition; and in such scenes he had spent his early years. His body could endure hunger, want of sleep, and cold, to a degree surpassing belief. His mind was daring, subtle, and versatile, capable of pretending or dissembling whatever he wished.”

As exemplified in Catiline’s character in respect to his mind and body, Sallust maintains his argument that there exists a direct relationship in the nature of morality and that of mind and body. One’s mind and body shape one’s morality, that is, Catiline’s morality was corrupt because his body and mind were corrupt from his youth when he was consumed by a strong desire of power to seize the state by whatever means possible. Such is Catiline’s “vice” and

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29 Watson, 23.
“guilt” that Sallust summarizes as “diminution of patrimony and consciousness of guilt”

fueled by his wicked disposition, but he also attributes such “vice” and “guilt” to the overall corrupt morals of the state after the domination of Sulla ("post dominationem L. Sullae"), characterized by “extravagance and selfishness, pernicious and contending vices, rendered thoroughly depraved.”

The nature of Catilinarian Conspiracy is thus the change of morality coming from morally corrupt state which Catiline was first affected by and later affected by Catiline. Both the victim and offender of moral depravity, Catiline is much like vice that Sallust compares to disease and plague that changed the morality of the state ("haec primo paulatim crescere, interdum vindicari; post, ubi contagio quasi pestilentia invasit, civitas immutata, imperium ex iustissumo atque optumo crudele intolerandumque factum").

Then Sallust narrates a historical account of the moral development of their ancestors as early as the foundation of the Roman Kingdom retrospectively ("how they managed the state, and how powerful they left it; and how, by gradual alteration, it became, from being the most virtuous, the most vicious and depraved." so as to inquire virtus and mos maiorum. According to Sallust, the core of their ethnicity has been their virtue. In order to protect their freedom, country, and homes, their ancestors secured the safety of the state from dangers inside and out with their virtue. The state they protected with arms existed for the protection of their own liberties and for the promotion of public interests. As the fall of monarchy gave a rise to the republic, people began to show their passion for distinctions. Their virtue kept their passion going. Every Roman looked after his own fame and glory, but from virtue came good morals. Sallust describes what is considered “good morals” of their ancestors.

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30 Watson, 25.
31 Watson, 25.
32 Watson, 25.
Good morals, accordingly, were cultivated in the city and in the camp. There was the greatest possible concord, and the least possible avarice. Justice and probity prevailed among the citizens, not more from the influence of the laws than from natural inclination. They displayed animosity, enmity, and resentment only against the enemy. Citizens contended with citizens in nothing but honor. They were magnificent in their religious services, frugal in their families, and steady in their friendships.\textsuperscript{33}

Qualities of “good morals” that their ancestors were bound by were “intrepidity in war and equity in peace”\textsuperscript{34}. Then Sallust points out qualities of vice, or “bad morals”, which eventually corrupted the minds of the Roman people. According to him, avarice and ambition, namely the love of money and power, spread like plagues after the fall of Carthage. Sallust attributes the subjugation of mind to body to avarice and ambition in forms of wealth and power that flowed in and out to Rome, which resulted from Rome’s overseas expansion after it defeated Carthage. While both are considered forms of “vice”, ambition is closer to “virtue” since the pursuit of glory, honor, and power is still considered to be virtuous. According to Sallust, ambition refers to the kind of pursuit for honorable qualities by honesty, while avarice the kind of pursuit for money wrongly by fraud and deceit. He stresses that ambition once influenced the minds of men, but avarice corrupted them after Sulla’s dictatorship.\textsuperscript{35} The moral standards were slowly waning to depravity.

What characterizes the Catilinarian Conspiracy “so criminal and dangerous” for Sallust is that the degree of moral decline is even worse than its precedent, the time of Sulla’s dictatorship. Sallust recognizes \textit{Sullanum regnum} as the time when moral standards started to collapse within the Roman society. The youth of the \textit{Sullanum regnum} such as Catiline was largely affected by Sulla who allowed luxury of Asia to penetrate into the army of the Roman

\textsuperscript{33} Watson, 29.
\textsuperscript{34} Watson, 29.
\textsuperscript{35} Sallust, \textit{Bellum Catilinae}, 11.1-7.
people to keep them motivated for personal gains (whether that may be obtained in the name of glory, honor, or power) in order to secure their loyalty. By blaming directly on *Sullanum regnum* for the state’s moral depravity starting with the army, Sallust creates a link between Catilinarian Conspiracy and *Sullanum regnum*; the nature of *Sullanum regnum* is similar to that of Catilinarian Conspiracy for they come from one man whose acts affected the morality of the state to decline. Catiline’s character is a testament to the ramification of the *Sullanum Regnum*. As much as Sulla, Catiline is a huge potential threat to the republic as he is an instigator of moral depravity that spreads like a plague and, by doing so, a disturber of internal peace.

Such moral depravity is thus the nature of Sulla’s dictatorship in Rome and Catilinarian Conspiracy which goes against *virtus* and *mos maiorum*. Sallust denotes *virtus* and *mos maiorum* regarding people’s pursuit of wealth and power.

Quarrels, discord, and feuds were carried out against their enemies; citizen vied with citizen only for the prize of merit.

Sallust points out that the pursuit of wealth and power against *virtus* and *mos maiorum* was civil discord and strife caused by Sulla and Catiline at home. Sulla’s dictatorship in Rome and Catiline’s conspiracy were executed at home, not abroad; not carried out against the enemies, but upon fellow Roman citizens. The nature of Sulla’s dictatorship and Catiline’s conspiracy is what Sallust defines as avarice (*avaritia*). Sallust introduces ambition (*ambitio*) and avarice (*avaritia*) and argues that the former is similar to but different from the latter in that one’s morality can be interpreted as either righteous or heinous, depending on how one either justly or unjustly pursues, glory, honor, and power. The ambition is a term used to describe what was done against the

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37 Rolfe, 33.
enemy, while avarice against the state. In Sallust’s narrative, ambition and avarice is in accordance with that of mind and body; ambition is subject to mind whereas avarice is to body.

The dichotomy also reminds one of libertas (freedom) and dominatio/regnum (a very old philosophical concept that was the heart of Roman sentiment. Sallust uses the same concept but in different forms (servire and imperare) in Catiline’s speech.\textsuperscript{39} What was once primarily used by military in the time of external conflicts (aka wars against foreign enemies) is used in the time of internal conflicts (aka wars against fellow Romans) as a political tool effective in politics for bringing down one’s political opponents. The nobility is referred to those who already rose to power, while novi homines to those who need to strive to rise to power. The hostility between nobility and novi homines was at its peak at the time of Catiline. The political rivalry, fueled by fear and/or hatred of being subject to the idea of slavery (aka taking one's libertas by the other's dominatio/regnum), easily justifies one’s judgment of one’s enemy is and that enemy's crime. Once one defines who goes against one's interests in political setting, the meaning of enemy they once knew loses all its meaning. Under Sallust’s moral narrative, the concept of mind and body is consistently applied to the dichotomy between ambition (ambitio) and avarice (avaritia) and that between libertas (freedom) and dominatio/regnum (dominion). Sallust thus demonstrates the interconnectedness between politics and morality in Catiline’s conspiracy.

As such, the concept of mind and body is fully incorporated into his argument as a way of justifying ancestral deeds as they were driven by ambition, as opposed to their counterparts who were driven by avarice. One may find hard to believe, however, that ancient Romans who came before the fall of Carthage did not rob or pillage at all, or, even if they did, had little or no avarice. Confiscation of material goods in war and proactive foreign interventions in peace were the ultimate driving forces in Roman expansion. How good-natured and well-intended the

\textsuperscript{39} Sallust,\textit{ Bellum Catilinae}, 20.
morality of ancient Romans was or how ill-natured that of his contemporaries was in comparison cannot be fully validated. Nevertheless, the term *luxuria* serves as a key element to understanding Sallust’s narrative.

Sallust attributes luxury (*luxuria*) as the “root of all evils,” the decisive factor that led him to believe that the fall of Carthage is the start of moral depravity, only to be later exacerbated by Sulla’s military expedition in Asia Minor. According to Sallust, luxury implies money (*pecuniae*) or, better yet, economical wealth (*divitiae*). The desire for luxury and then power (“*cupido primo pecuniae, deinde imperi*”), but by unjust means, is avarice, which cannot be restrained. Sallust criticizes the emergence of luxury for its extravagance (*luxus*) and sloth (*desidia*), the cause of moral decline, as he specifically pinpoints the introduction of luxury to the Roman people after the fall of Carthage. Then he connects the luxury, along with other “evil” practices, directly to avarice, as a vice that ultimately demoralized the Roman people.

Avarice, not ambition, applies to both Sulla and Catiline as an act of “vice”, not “virtue”, because the acquisition of wealth and power by the means of avarice was “unjust”. The “unjust” factor in avarice is luxury. Sallust argues that luxury, coming from outside sources, distorted the meaning of *divitiae* and *ambitio*. According to Sallust, the “traditionally Roman” way of recognizing wealth (*divitiae*) and ambition (*ambitio*) was with fame (*fama*) and nobility (*nobilitas*), not money (*pecuniae*) (“*eas divitias, eam bonam famam magnamque nobilitatem putabant*”). He explains what was happening in Rome on contrary to the Roman tradition since the fall of Carthage was “*amicitias inimicitiasque non ex re sed ex commodo aestumare magisque voltum quam ingenium bonum habere*”. The comparison between *res* (matter) and *commodo* (convenience) as well as that between *voltum* (appearance) and *ingenium* (inner disposition) are, again, derived from Sallust’s concept of mind and body. The subjugation of
mind to body visible by Sallust in avarice emerging from people’s consumption of foreign luxury, which affected in people’s recognition of divitiae and ambitio is the change of virtus and mos maiorum which Sallust constantly criticizes. In Sallust’s view, the youth became morally corrupted from their pursuit of divitiae not as fame or nobility, but as money which they recognized as gloria (glory), imperium (sovereignty), and potentia (authority). Their act of robbing and pillaging from fellow Roman citizens at the time of Sulla due to avarice, their pursuit in money derived from luxury, is what Sallust defines as an unjust and criminal act. Ultimately, the meaning of pursuing divitiae and ambitio, changing from pursuing fame and nobility to pursuing money, was a sign of moral depravity that made its way to the time of Catiline.

What resulted from such moral depravity which already started from the time of Sulla’s dictatorship was a conspiracy led by Catiline, discord and strife at home and abroad coming from a single morally wicked man calling others of similar disposition for what it seemed to be Rome’s self-destruction as it was intended to satisfy one’s political or economic interests by taking things away from other fellow citizens, which is in its nature very familiar to Sulla’s dictatorship, aka the time when Sulla misguided the youth by distorting the meaning of ambition as the act of debauchery; not to protect freedom, country, or home, but to rival one another for wealth. The Catilinarian Conspiracy was the testimony to Sallust’s argument that the mind was no longer superior to the body.
Conclusion

Under the circumstances of moral change that occurred over the years as he constantly switches back and forth from the past to the present, Sallust claims that corrupt morals of the state enabled Catiline to conspire a plan so readily to overthrow the state by exploiting the youth who were subject to debauchery. What he provides is a historical examination from the past to present in order to explain the nature of the conspiracy discussed at hand. His examination of the past works more like a wake-up call to the present, out of fear of generation gap between the past and present. In a retrospect, Sallust looks back to the past to stress the change of morality in the Roman society at large in his day so that he may derive what may be the main cause of the moral depravity of Rome.

Sallust is a Roman intellectual who exceptionally valued ancestral morality in ever-changing Rome. Only in respect to ancestral morality did he speak highly of Roman ancestors and lowly of his contemporaries. It is extremely difficult to assess, however, at which point in time within Roman history the morality of Roman people was better than others, and, in terms of conceptualizing what ancestral morality is, Sallust tends to show drastic judgments compared to his keen insights. As a person living in a specific time of history when civil strife and social turmoil were prevalent, however, it is only proper for Sallust to make judgments of both past and present based on how he viewed his present. After all, he is only being faithful to the period he lived in, that is, his past and his present.


