

‘WHERE CIVIL BLOOD MAKES CIVIL HANDS UNCLEAR’: THE MODEL OF *STASIS* IN SALLUST*

ABSTRACT

The following paper proposes that Sallust offers a conceptualization of civil conflict more in line with the Greek paradigm of stasis than with its Roman counterpart bellum ciuile. In doing so, it argues for the actual coexistence of these two differentiated conceptual strands in the political thought of the Late Republic. To this end, Sallust’s corpus is analysed to identify the main threads that articulate civil strife in its multifarious manifestations: how it arises and who its protagonists are or, conversely, how it is kept in check, how it is connected to the human passions that drive ideology, and the violence that stems from the clash between political and familial spheres of influence. The article shows how the pathos of familial drama is what characterizes civil conflict for Sallust, rather than the struggle for legitimacy found in Cicero’s narrative.

Keywords: Sallust; political thought; Cicero; *stasis*; *bellum ciuile*; *metus hostilis*; *libertas*; *dominatio*; *gloria*

Catiline’s taste for violence began during his adolescence; a villain straight out of a Shakespearean drama, this was when he started to enjoy both *bella intestina* and *discordia ciuilis* (*Cat.* 5.2). These phenomena played an enormous role not only for the infamous conspirator but also for Sallust, who followed Caesar into his *bellum Pompeianum*. Domestic political violence, whatever its scale and form, was a constant in his life and, by extension, in his writings. This article analyses how he conceptualizes internal conflicts in the different narratives articulated in the *Bellum Catilinae*, the *Bellum Iugurthinum* and the *Historiae*.¹ Specifically, it is proposed that those two realities so loved by Catiline, *bellum intestinum* and *discordia ciuilis*, are extremes of a continuum for Sallust: a spectrum represented more effectively by the Greek concept of *stasis* than by the Roman paradigm of *bellum ciuile*.²

* This famous description of civil turmoil in ‘fair Verona’ is found in Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, Prologue, line 4.

¹ The references to the works of Sallust (*Cat.* = *Bellum Catilinae*; *Iug.* = *Bellum Iugurthinum*; *Hist.* = *Historiae*) are made without express mention of the author. The following editions have been used: A. Kurfess, *C. Sallustius Crispus: Catilina, Iugurtha, fragmenta ampliora* (Leipzig, 1957); J.T. Ramsey, *Sallust. The War with Catiline. The War with Jugurtha* (Cambridge, MA, 2013); B. Maurenbrecher, *C. Sallusti Crispi Historiarum reliquiae, Fasciculus I: Prolegomena; Fasciculus II: Fragmenta* (Leipzig, 1891, 1893); J.T. Ramsey, *Sallust: Fragments of the Histories; Letters to Caesar* (Cambridge, MA, 2015).

² C.H. Lange and F.J. Vervaeke (edd.), *The Historiography of Late Republican Civil War* (Leiden and Boston, 2019). For the paradigm of *stasis*, G. Agamben, *The Omnibus Homo Sacer* (Stanford, 2017), 253–64; N. Loraux, ‘La guerre dans la famille’, *Clio (Toulouse)* 5 (1997), 21–62; N. Loraux, *The Divided City: On Memory and Forgetting in Ancient Athens* (New York, 2006); for the *bellum ciuile* paradigm, D. Armitage, *Civil Wars: A History in Ideas* (Hampshire, 2017), 31–90. Sallust’s political record is referenced by several ancient authors: *BAfr.* 8.3, 34.1–2, 97.1; *App. B Civ.* 2.92, 2.100; *Dio Cass.* 42.52.1–2; *Oros.* 6.15.8.

In Syme's view, Sallust's works were a response to the political situation of their time, devised as veiled criticism of the Triumvirate's violence and proscriptions.³ For Syme, Roman history was that of the ruling class lurking behind the institutional façade, and to search for something other than the pursuit of power would be to focus on the adornments and forget the essence. What importance could the people or ideology have when they were nothing more than the non-political classes and high-sounding words? Apart from narrating the selected events with greater or lesser precision, the purpose of Sallust's writings was reduced to an assessment of the nobles involved in each event, judged as a past reflection of those at the time of the Triumvirate. For Syme, Sallust's continuous references to the conflict between the people and the Senate, with all its symbolism and topoi, 'exhibits less of the historian, [and] more of the literary artist and contriver'.⁴

However, this way of perceiving the *res publica* was thrown into disarray by strong criticism from Brunt and Millar.⁵ Based on their contributions, both of these elements, the people and the ideology, returned to a central space on the political chessboard in such a way that they cannot be ignored or dismissed as mere contrivances. Understanding them became fundamental to identifying how Sallust conceived civil confrontation; they represent the nucleus of a division that reached a peak when our author entered the *cursus honorum* in the 50s.⁶

1. TWO PARTS UNITED BY FEAR

'I believe that the city, from what our ancestors have passed on to us, is divided into two parts: senators and people' (Sall. [*Ad Caes. sen.*] 2.5.6 *in duas partes ego ciuitatem diuisam arbitror, sicut a maioribus accepi, in patres et plebem*). Following Syme, many ruled out Sallust's authorship of the *Epistulae ad Caesarem*.⁷ Nevertheless, whoever the author of this letter is, he forcefully sums up how the Romans of the Late Republic conceived their political community. The idea of society as a simple collection of individuals arose much later, with Hobbes, and clashes with this composite idea of the *ciuitas*. For classical political thought the *res publica* was a being composed of parts with a different and even contradictory nature.⁸ In Sallust's *œuvre*, the *diuisio*

³ R. Syme, *Sallust* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1964), 121–3; for this idea taken to its logical extreme, J. Gerrish, *Sallust's Histories and Triumviral Historiography: Confronting the End of History* (London and New York, 2019); cf. C.H. Lange's review, *BMCRev* 2020.01.23. For the chronology of publications followed, see Syme (this note), 59, 218–19, who situates *Cat.* c.42 or 41, *Iug.* c.40 and *Hist.* between 39 and 35.

⁴ Syme (n. 3), 167; for his oligarchical model of the *res publica*, R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford, 1939), 7 (for history as that of the governing class), 59 (ideology as high-sounding words).

⁵ Regarding the discussion on the nature of the Republican political system, K.-J. Hölkesskamp, *Rekonstruktionen einer Republik: Die Politische Kultur des antiken Rom und die Forschung der letzten Jahrzehnte* (Munich, 2004), 9–18; F. Pina Polo, 'Idea y práctica de la democracia en la Roma republicana', *Gerión* 37 (2019), 379–97.

⁶ For ideology in the *bellum Pompeianum*, P. López Barja de Quiroga, 'The *bellum ciuile Pompeianum*: the war of words', *CQ* 69 (2019), 700–14.

⁷ Syme (n. 3), 313–51; its authenticity is defended in A. Duplá Ansuátegui, F. Pina Polo and G. Fatas Cabeza, *Rem publicam restituere. Una propuesta "popularis" para la crisis republicana: Las "Epistulae ad Caesarem" de Salustio* (Zaragoza, 1994); F. Pina Polo, 'Sallust's *Epistulae ad Caesarem*: a *popularis* proposal for the Republican crisis?', *Hermes* 149 (2021), 177–205.

⁸ For the different conceptualizations of society, N. Bobbio, *Thomas Hobbes* (México, 1992), 15–33.

encapsulated in the well-known formula *senatus populusque Romanus* carries a profound symbolic weight, representing a duality of sovereign subjects which is a keystone of the political system, its ideology and its history: Senate and people.⁹

In *De republica*, Cicero also references both elements adding a third one: the power of the consuls (*Rep.* 2.56). And like Sallust, when he mentions these parts of the community he is not making a mere description; he is projecting onto them profoundly symbolic and even normative meanings. Specifically, they are used as the ideological fulcrums of his preferred regime: a 'mixed constitution' led by the Senate, emphasizing the harmony of the community (*Rep.* 2.41, 2.65). Here he is traversing well-trodden ground that leads him deep into Greek political thought but far away from Sallust.¹⁰

The consensus Cicero holds so dear is hard to find in the former; conversely, we continuously stumble upon the tension between these two entities that perceive themselves as sovereign. This is the symbolic division presented front and centre to Caesar in the second *Epistula*. As explored throughout this section, Sallust's position in this regard in all of his historical works is a variation of the same schema. First, he strongly structures his narratives around different historical figures that use this division as one of the main—if not the main—rhetorical devices to galvanize political support. This fact alone recognizes that this duality was a political factor important enough to warrant its inclusion as a central feature of partisan oratory. Coupled with the prominence these public orations have in the texts, this constitutes an implicit recognition by Sallust of its relevance. Second, the author himself, as a historian and narrator, explicitly describes this *diuisio* as an underlying feature of the *res publica*, ascribing to each constituent part certain qualities, both positive and negative. Finally, he analyses the relation between the main political figures and the entity they were using as a reference, whether Senate or *populus*. Many of these portrayals were cynical, painting as dishonest several of the proud orators whose speeches he had just reproduced.¹¹

In the *Bellum Catilinae*, partisan rhetoric is full of references to *populus* and Senate. The Catiline portrayed by Sallust uses this tension to light the fire of rebellion. In his letter to Marcius Rex, Gaius Manlius refers to the ancient secessions of the plebs, which, 'because of the desire to dominate or because of the abuses of the magistrates, separated from the *patres*' (*Cat.* 33.3 *saepe ipsa plebs, aut dominandi studio permota aut superbia magistratuum armata, a patribus secessit*). The latter term, *patres*, can

⁹ For the *populus* equated with the Assemblies, see F. Millar, *The Crowd in Rome in the Late Republic* (Ann Arbor, 1998); U. Paananen, *Sallust's Politico-Social Terminology: Its Use and Politico-Social Terminology* (Helsinki, 1972), 38 also points out the use of the term *populus* as an 'opposing pole to the senate, referring to the popular assembly'. For the people as the repository of *maiestas*, see P. Brunt, *The Fall of the Roman Republic and Related Essays* (Oxford, 1988), 338–9; for the sovereign nature of the *auctoritas patrum*, Agamben (n. 2), 230–42; regarding the absence of a single seat of sovereignty in the Roman Republic, see M. Lowrie, 'Sovereignty before the law: Agamben and the Roman Republic', *Law and Humanities* 1 (2007), 31–56, at 32.

¹⁰ The 'mixed constitution' was well regarded in Greek political thought, from Plato (*Leg.* 4.712d–e and 6.756; *Menex.* 238c–d) to Polybius (6.3.7), who credits it for Rome's ascendancy; Aristotle praises it as a stable regime (*Pol.* 4.8–9).

¹¹ For oratory and public debate in the decision-making process of the *res publica*, Millar (n. 9), 126. Cf. R. Morstein-Marx, *Mass Oratory and Political Power in the Late Roman Republic* (Cambridge, 2004), 265, 277–8 argues for the vacuous nature of public speeches. The thesis of the 'ideological monotony' has been challenged by J.A. Rosenblitt, 'Hostile politics: Sallust and the rhetoric of popular champions in the Late Republic', *AJPh* 137 (2016), 655–88; C. Tiersch, 'Political communication in the Late Roman Republic: semantic battles between *optimates* and *populares*?', in H. van der Blom, C. Gray and C. Steel (edd.), *Institutions and Ideology in Republican Rome: Speech, Audience and Decision* (Cambridge, 2018), 35–68.

refer to both patricians and senators, projecting into the past the deep schism between people and Senate that Sallust had witnessed. In a fiery speech on the battlefield of Pistoriae, Catiline had a clear idea of the enemy to be beaten: the supremacy of the few (58.11). Cato, for his part, warned fellow senators against the attempt to put an end to their life and to *libertas* (52.6 *libertas et anima nostra in dubio est*).

Sallust himself, as a historian, specifies the existence of these two distinct groups. In the *Bellum Catilinae* he mainly focusses on the people. At this juncture, he is undeniably critical of the Roman *populus*—especially the urban plebs—vis-à-vis its relation to Catiline’s *coniuratio* (36.4). Nevertheless, his portrayal of the plebs was not intrinsically disdainful, as he is always quick to emphasize the social roots of this hunger for ‘riots and revolts’ (37.3 *turba atque seditionibus*), which were none other than rampant inequality, the corruption of the rich, and political prosecution (37.6–9). The powerful passage where Sallust compares Rome to a sewer (37.5) is referring to just one of the groups longing for a revolution: those criminals the plebs were tempted to follow because of their position. The others were composed of desperate people whose reaction was not surprising giving their social predicament (37.8).¹²

The relation of many political actors with their reference groups is described as flawed and self-serving, disguising their desire of power behind the rallying cries—*honestis nominibus*—of the authority of the Senate or the rights of the people (38.3). Nevertheless, he is not condemning all politicians, just those willing to disturb the *res publica* (38.3). Although both parties were guilty of dishonesty and exercising victory with cruelty (38.4), it is arguable that the main criticism of the *Bellum Catilinae* is directed at the leaders of the *populares*. After all, it was those opposed to the Senate who were censured as being willing to destabilize the *res publica* to maintain their influence (37.10).¹³

Conversely, in the *Bellum Iugurthinum* the spotlight is on the Senate and the *nobiles*, shedding light upon the fracture between these two sovereign entities.¹⁴ The decision to narrate this particular war is framed by Sallust as part of the backdrop of tension caused by said confrontation. It was a war worth remembering, because it was the first time that the insolence of the nobility was challenged (*Iug.* 5.1). All the internal politics covered revolve around the conflict between a Senate guilty of arrogance and a *populus* trying to oppose this arbitrary rule. Sallust succinctly summarizes this tension in a powerful statement: with the two parts pulling everything to their respective sides, the *res publica*, which was in the middle, was ripped apart (41.5 *ita omnia in duas partis abstracta sunt, res publica, quae media fuerat, dilacerata*).

The narrator paints a distinct picture where the Senate—dominated by the *nobiles*—tries to patrimonialize the political community pitted against a people who see their *libertas* threatened. The nobility seeks greatness and ‘unjust domination’ (*iniustae potentiae*) over the plebs (41.10); an ambition facilitated by the proclivity of the elites to join together (41.6). Sallust decries how ‘the faction that put bribery or influence

¹² L. Perelli, *Il Movimento popolare nell’ultimo secolo della Repubblica* (Turin, 1982), 45–61, especially 52–3; cf. A. La Penna, *Sallustio e la ‘rivoluzione’ romana* (Milan, 1968), 113; Paananen (n. 9), 41. Contra, E.H. Shaw, *Sallust and the Fall of the Republic: Historiography and Intellectual Life at Rome* (Leiden and Boston, 2021), 196–285.

¹³ P. López Barja de Quiroga, ‘Sallust as a historian of civil war’, in C.H. Lange and F.J. Vervaeke (edd.), *The Historiography of Late Republican Civil War* (Leiden and Boston, 2019), 160–84, at 171.

¹⁴ Besides *nobilitas*, Sallust uses other terms—*pauci*, *factio*, *partes*—to characterize that small-interest group that exerts its control over the Senate; their nuances are explored in Paananen (n. 9), 48–59.

before truth' usually triumphs (16.1 *uicit tamen in senatu pars illa, quae uero pretium aut gratiam anteferebat*), with the public good being sidelined in the face of private interests (25.3).

This was bitterly contested by the Gracchi, honourably (41.10) but with their characteristic lack of moderation (42.3). Already immersed in the chronology imposed by the narrative, the *Bellum Iugurthinum* includes powerful pieces of partisan rhetoric where both Gaius Memmius, tribune of the plebs, and Marius denounce the control exercised over the political community by the closed block of the nobility, 'of ancient lineage and many portraits' (85.10 *hominem ueteris prosapiae ac multarum imaginum*). The former forcefully condemns the *nobilitas in contione* (30) for wanting to be masters and tyrants; they were engaged in a process against the people, killing its defenders and surrendering its laws and sovereignty to an enemy of the *res publica* (31). In turn, the people move between the inertia and apathy that Memmius denounces (31.2) and the vindication of their rights, supporting Marius' campaign for the consulship (84.1) and passing the *Lex Mamilia* (40).

Lastly, the surviving fragments of the *Historiae* seem to follow the pattern of Sallust's earlier works with regard to this basic duality underpinning society. In the preface, the author himself emphasizes the division between the Senate and the people, with the former attempting to exercise 'despotic authority' (*seruili imperio*) over a plebs that reacted against the abuses with a series of secessions, retreating to the symbolic Aventine Hill (*Hist.* 1.11bM = 1.10R). This is the militant populace which achieved the creation of the tribunes of the plebs, conquered the consulship and acquired autonomous legislative power (3.48.15M = 3.15.15R).

The characterization of Sulla's regime by the consul Lepidus again differentiates between these two constituent parts. At that time, their opposition was so bitter that it blinded the nobles, who willingly paid for the subjugation of the people with their own slavery (1.55.2M = 1.49.2R). From the other side of the political spectrum, Philippus warns the Senate of the dangers of restoring the power of the tribunes (1.77.14M = 1.67.14R), while recalling the crimes that the *popularis* Cinna had committed against the senatorial order (1.77.19M = 1.67.19R); it was the very same establishment that Lepidus was betraying (1.77.15). Sallust's cynicism is present but, as in the case of *Cat.* 38, much more precisely targeted than it is usually understood: he denounces a clique of *pauci potentes* who, under pretext (*Hist.* 1.12M = 1.12R *sub honesto patrum aut plebis nomine*), tried to impose *dominatio*.

The roots of Sallust's *res publica*, therefore, lie in the paradox of comprising two parts that seem locked in permanent conflict. For a member of the *optimates*, the pre-eminence of the Senate is self-evident: the best government would always be the government of the best, and who are the best if not the members of the Senate? When this superiority is endangered, Cicero himself advocates for a *concordia ordinum*, uniting senators and *equites* in an effort to subdue the *populus* and expel from the community the *furiosi* who threaten the *res publica*.¹⁵ Sallust, however, does not seem to answer the question of which of these two parties should be dominant. In his account, both sides

¹⁵ P. López Barja de Quiroga, 'Conflicto versus consenso: de Cicerón a Aristóteles pasando por Carl Schmitt', *Debita verba: estudios en homenaje al profesor Julio Mangas Manjarrés* 1 (Oviedo, 2013), 171–82, at 174–8; for the *populares* as *furiosi*, Cic. *Sest.* 99–100; on the discrepancies between *populares* and *optimates* regarding the legitimate model of government, see N. Mackie 'Popularis ideology and popular politics at Rome in the first century B.C.', *RhM* 135 (1992), 49–73.

coexist in conditions of apparent equality and the focus is on this tension to analyse it and explain the reasons behind it.¹⁶

What, then, is the solution to this difficult dialectical relationship? Some authors claim that *concordia* was a core value for Sallust, a virtue to be aspired to in overcoming internal divisions. However, its scant presence in the textual corpus and its clear link to Sulla’s regime make it an unlikely hypothesis.¹⁷ In fact, this dialectical opposition is overcome by a mechanism that lies outside the political community: the fear inspired by its external enemies, the so-called *metus hostilis* (*Iug.* 41.2; *Hist.* 1.11–12M = 1.9–10, 12R). Stability was neither a definitive situation, nor achieved through an institutional solution. At least in Sallust’s maturity, the avoidance of civil strife was not dependent on some constitutional arrangement or legal remedy, but hinged on the (wholly contingent) existence of this external threat that galvanized the *res publica*. As soon as this *metus hostilis* faded, the underlying centripetal force that held the two parts together also disappeared. Then the *res publica*, confident in its prosperity, would abandon itself to moral corruption, descending into internal conflict and decadence (*Cat.* 10–11; *Iug.* 41).¹⁸

Decadence is a constant through Sallust. None the less, the precise moment at which this evil is unleashed gradually evolves, as he keeps pushing backwards the origin of the civil discord to the point it transcends the contingency of human behaviour to acquire a deterministic nature.¹⁹ In the *Bellum Catilinae*, although the disappearance of *metus hostilis* corresponds to the destruction of Carthage (10.1), decline does not begin until Sulla’s return from the East (11.5–8). In the *Bellum Iugurthinum*, discord is already beginning concurrently with the disappearance of the *metus Punicus* (*Iug.* 41.2); and in the *Historiae*, the seeds that can unleash civil conflict are present from the outset, waiting to emerge after the disappearance of the *metus hostilis* of the day (*Hist.* 1.11–12M = 1.9–10, 12R).

¹⁶ Despite this ambivalence given Sallust’s historical *œuvre* as a whole, he is much more critical of the *nobiles*: Perelli (n. 12), 45–61.

¹⁷ R. Funari, *C. Sallusti Crispi Historiarum fragmenta* (Amsterdam, 1996), 33–4; although D.J. Kapust, *Republicanism, Rhetoric, and Roman Political Thought: Sallust, Livy, and Tacitus* (Cambridge and New York, 2011), 43–5 considers that Sallust sees conflict in a positive light, ultimately, it is a dissension harmonized by *concordia* (*concordia cum certamine*). According to D. Hammer, *Roman Political Thought: From Cicero to Augustine* (Cambridge, 2014), 148–55, *concordia* and *metus hostilis* complement each other, channelling the passions of the community; however, *concordia* is only mentioned eleven times in Sallust’s corpus, and not even all of those references have direct political implications, as seen in López Barja de Quiroga (n. 13), 179. On the appropriation of *concordia* by Sulla’s regime, Lepidus is clear: ‘harmony (*concordia*) and peace ... are the names [Sulla] has given to his crimes and patricides’ (*Hist.* 1.55.24M = 1.49.24R); also F. Marco Simón and F. Pina Polo, ‘*Concordia y libertas* como polos de referencia religiosa en la lucha política de la república tardía’, *Gerión* 18 (2000), 261–92, at 270.

¹⁸ For *metus hostilis* as a social unifier in Graeco-Roman political thought, particularly in Sallust, D.J. Kapust, ‘On the ancient uses of political fear and its modern implications’, *JHI* 69 (2008), 353–73; Kapust (n. 17), 27–52; La Penna (n. 12), 232–7; Hammer (n. 17), 148–55; D.S. Levene, ‘Sallust’s *Catiline* and Cato the Censor’, in W.W. Batstone and A. Feldherr (edd.), *Sallust* (Oxford, 2020), 214–43.

¹⁹ G. Vassiliades, *La res publica et sa décadence. De Salluste à Tite-Live* (Bordeaux, 2020), 275–6, 472–3, 503–4 proposes that Sallust’s conception of decadence evolves: while in the *Bellum Catilinae* and the *Bellum Iugurthinum* it results from contingent moral human failings, the *Historiae* present it as the consequence of deterministic factors. This thesis is in line with the ‘Hobbesian turn’ proposed by S. Schmal, *Sallust* (Hildesheim, 2001), 77–95, at 94, following B. Latta, ‘Der Wandel in Sallusts Geschichtsauffassung: vom *Bellum Catilinae* zu *Bellum Iugurthinum*’, *Maia* 40 (1988), 271–88 and B. Latta, ‘Die Ausgestaltung der Geschichtskonzeption Sallust. Vom *Bellum Iugurthinum* zu den *Historien*’, *Maia* 41 (1989), 41–57.

It is difficult not to see here the growing pessimism of someone who lived through such a time of confusion and frenzy that ended in war and the devastation of Italy (*Iug.* 5.1).²⁰ But with this progression Sallust also embraces Thucydides' diagnosis of civil strife as an ever-present danger, with its roots fully embedded in human nature. For the Greek historian, internal conflict 'shall be ever as long as human nature is the same' (3.82.2). In the *proemium* of the *Historiae*, his Roman counterpart refers to this human nature as afflicted by a permanent flaw that causes civil conflict: the everlasting contest between passions (*Hist.* 1.7M = 1.8R).²¹

2. CERTAMEN OF PASSIONS AND POLITICAL IDEOLOGY

The tricolon of *libertas*, *gloria* and *dominatio* presents these elements as the fundamental motor that drives human beings and, by extension, the different parts of the community (*Hist.* 1.7M = 1.8R). This is where their importance lies, and this is why any study of Sallust's political beliefs must necessarily include an analysis of them.

As Arena has shown, *libertas* in Late Republican literature must be understood as synonymous with non-domination: this is the core that defines this concept for the entire political spectrum.²² For the Romans of this period, who lived alongside slavery on a daily basis, *libertas* was precisely the negation of this state and, therefore, the condition of non-domination by an arbitrary authority. This transforms it into a relational concept, since it must always be exercised in relation to a third party: whether a foreign power, a *factio* of the community itself, or a specific individual.²³

In this sense, *libertas* could be claimed by both the *optimates* and the *populares*; the difference would lie in who the subject of this right is and against whom it is defended. While a more bipartisan *libertas* can be found in the texts, as with the expulsion of the kings (*Cat.* 6.7), Sallust normally uses this term in a more politicized way, limited by the speaker to one side of the political community.²⁴ Consequently, we can speak of a *libertas optimatum*—less common but equally present—whose active subject is the Senate and a *nobilitas* that must defend itself against the attempt of *dominatio* by those who aspire to tyranny. This is what Philippus or Cato refers to when declaring

²⁰ F. Klingner, 'On the introduction to Sallust's *Histories*', in W.W. Batstone and A. Feldherr (edd.), *Sallust* (Oxford, 2020), 340–9 = F. Klingner, 'Über die Einleitung der Historien Sallusts', *Hermes* 63 (1928), 165–92; M. Reinhold, *Studies in Classical History and Society* (Oxford, 2002), 49–50. Latta (n. 20 [1988] and [1989]) also analyses Sallust's pessimism in historical digressions, linking it to his 'philosophy of history' and political ideology.

²¹ For Thucydides' influence on Sallust, see Vell. Pat. 2.36.2, Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.101; L. Canfora, 'Thucydides in Rome and Late Antiquity', in A. Tsakmakis and A. Rengakos (edd.), *Brill's Companion to Thucydides* (Leiden and Boston, 2006), 730–40. The connection between the preface of the *Historiae* and the work of Thucydides has been defended by A. La Penna and R. Funari, *C. Sallusti Crispi Historiae I: fragmenta 1.1–146. Texte und Kommentare, Bd 51* (Berlin, 2015), 129 and recognized by J. Martos Fernández, *Obras: Gayo Salustio Crispo* (Madrid, 2018), 372 n. 1006.

²² V. Arena, *Libertas and the Practice of Politics in the Late Roman Republic* (Cambridge and New York, 2012), 14–44.

²³ For *libertas* vis-à-vis *optimates* and *populares*, see Arena (n. 22), 73–168.

²⁴ I. Cogitore, *Le doux nom de liberté: Histoire d'une idée politique dans la Rome antique* (Paris, 2011), 75–166 shows the adaptability of *libertas*, which could mean the opposite of tyranny, or have a much more concrete and partisan use, as commonly in Sallust (108–15).

freedom under threat by the likes of Lepidus or Catiline (*Hist.* 1.77M = 1.67R; *Cat.* 52.6).²⁵

However, the *libertas populi*, exercised by the people and threatened by the Senate, is the one with greater presence in the texts analysed. Sallust himself states that it is the natural impulse of the *populus*, just as *dominatio* is the natural impulse of the nobility (*Hist.* 1.11–12M = 1.9–10R; *Iug.* 41). In fact, it is one of his favourite literary topoi when composing the speeches that the *populares* deliver to the Roman people, as can be seen in the words of Lepidus (*Hist.* 1.55M = 1.49R), Macer (*Hist.* 3.48M = 3.15R), Catiline (*Cat.* 20, 58.8–11), Memmius (*Iug.* 30 and 31) and in the objectives of the Gracchi (*Iug.* 42).²⁶

The natural counterpoint to *libertas* is *dominatio*, the power of arbitrary domination over a third party. Its purest expression is found in the relationship of a master to his slave, a reality continuously referenced for symbolic purposes. Sallust himself points out it is a vice typical of kings, of capricious will (*Cat.* 6.7; *Iug.* 113.1). In his narratives *dominatio* is closely linked to accusations of tyranny, the ultimate goal of those opportunistic politicians who seek to overturn the *res publica* (*Hist.* 1.12M = 1.12R; *Cat.* 20.2, 38.3). In *popularis* rhetoric the best example of a tyrant would be Sulla; an assessment that Sallust seems to share (*Cat.* 28.4 *Sullae dominatione*). He is accused of having subjugated the whole *res publica*, enslaving even a subservient *nobilitas* (*Hist.* 1.55.1–2, 25M = 1.49R, 3.48M = 3.15R; *Iug.* 31).

In any case, *dominatio* is a passion generally associated with the *nobilitas* and the Senate, and it is a staple of *popularis* rhetoric. Catiline, Memmius and Macer are categorical in speaking of the 'power of the few' (*Cat.* 58.11) who 'want to be masters' (*Iug.* 31) and exercise tyranny over the people (*Hist.* 3.48.23M = 3.15.23R), something with which Sallust agrees in describing their authority as 'despotic', deciding on 'life and punishment as if they were kings' (*Hist.* 1.11b.3M = 1.10.3R). He says that their power lays in their tendency to unite (*Iug.* 41.6), with their opponents denouncing them as organized in an arrogant *factio* (31.4; 85.10) or even a 'criminal clique' (*Hist.* 3.48.3M = 3.15.3R *factio noxiorum*) that monopolized power and office, denounced by both Marius (*Iug.* 85) and Sallust himself (*Iug.* 5.1).²⁷

The last of the passions of the tricolon is *gloria*, for which the different actors of the *ciuitas* compete. In its purest version it is born of *uirtus* (*Cat.* 1.4, 12.1; *Iug.* 82.7), as was the case in the Republic at its height, when citizens competed for 'immense glory, honourable wealth' (*Cat.* 7.6). However, there is a less admirable way to achieve it; wealth and ambition are also considered paths to glory, despite the dangers they entail. Wealth can lead to luxury and greed, terrible vices for the Republic (*Cat.* 5.7, 11, 52.7.22; *Iug.* 45.2; *Hist.* 1.11M = 1.9–10R). Similarly, the ambiguity of *gloria* arising from ambition is clarified through the characters with whom it is associated. Two clear examples of this are Marius, 'greedy only for glory' (*Iug.* 63.2), and Sulla, 'a lover of pleasures, but more a lover of glory' (95.3). We also find it motivating the

²⁵ For *libertas* as the opposite of *regnum*, a free city where no tyrant is superior to the law, C. Wirszubski, *Libertas as a Political Idea at Rome during the Late Republic and Early Principate* (Cambridge, 1950), 7–11 and 66.

²⁶ While avoiding direct mention of the *populares–optimates* division, Hammer (n. 17), 174–9 considers that Sallust emphasizes the role of the *populus* as the guardian of Republican *libertas*.

²⁷ Arena (n. 22), 244–57; also O. Patterson, *Freedom in the Making of Western Culture* (London, 1991) explores the dialectical relationship between freedom and slavery as described in Gaius' *Institutes* (1.51–3).

nobilitas in general (31.9), Jugurtha (6.1, 6.2, 7.1, 8.2, 10.2) and the Numidians (*Jug.* 18.12).²⁸

MacGushin considers that this triad of *libertas*, *gloria* and *dominatio* corresponds, in a linear fashion, to different phases of Roman history narrated by Sallust.²⁹ Passions, however, do not mark different stages of political evolution, but exist in a situation of permanent confrontation. In the words of Sallust himself, they are a 'defect of human nature, which, restless and indomitable, always struggles' (*Hist.* 1.7M = 1.8R *nobis primae dissensiones uitio humani ingeni euenere, quod iniquis atque indomitum semper in certamine libertatis aut gloriae aut dominationis agit*).³⁰

In the absence of *metus hostilis*, this *certamen* turns inwards, and civil strife appears. In Sallust's account, we find three major instances of this phenomenon. First, when the corruption of the monarchy meant *superbia dominatioque*, the kings were expelled and, along with the new regime, Republican ideology developed around the idea of *libertas* (*Cat.* 6.7). The period of harmony that corresponds to *metus Etruscus* is followed by the patrician-plebeian conflict. Here, *superbia nobilitatis* provokes repeated secessions of the people, who achieve the creation of the tribunes of the plebs and plebeian access to the consulship (*Hist.* 1.11M = 1.9–10R, 3.48.15M = 3.15.15R). Finally, after the demise of the *metus Punicus*, there is the cycle of conflict between a Senate, which, when driven by the passion of *dominatio*, succumbs to a *factio*, and the people, susceptible to support dishonest politicians (*Hist.* 1.12M = 1.12R; *Cat.* 37).

It is in this new phase, which begins with the Gracchi (*Jug.* 42.1) and worsens in the time of the war against Jugurtha (*Jug.* 5.2), that we can look for the emergence of the ideological families of the *optimates* and the *populares*. Sallust does not use these terms as a specific political label; this, together with the cynicism he attributes to many politicians, led influential authors such as Gelzer and Syme to dismiss the existence of real political ideology in Rome, especially in the case of the *populares*.³¹ Important, however, is Sallust's aforementioned insistence on dividing the political community into *partes*—the same term he uses to refer to the Caesarean side to which he belonged (*Hist.* 1.6M = 1.6R). *partes* had distinctive traditions and political vocabulary, each with its own *topoi* and references forged in decades of civil conflict. Furthermore, while it is true that Sallust, from his pretended position of neutrality (*Hist.* 1.6M = 1.6R), portrays both sides with a good dose of cynicism, at no point does he claim that all politicians were unprincipled and used ideology only as a pretext. In both the *Bellum Catilinae* (38.3) and the *Historiae* (1.12M = 1.12R) he describes as liars only those who assaulted the state to seize its rule. There are also honest politicians on either side, such as Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus (*Jug.* 41.10–42.1), quintessentially *populares*, or Cato himself (*Cat.* 54), a staunch member of the *optimates*.³²

²⁸ For *uirtus* and its relationship with *gloria* and the Greek concept of *aretē*, see M. McDonnell, *Roman Manliness: Virtus and the Roman Republic* (Cambridge, 2006), 293–5, 363.

²⁹ P. McGushin, *C. Sallustius Crispus. Bellum Catilinae. A Commentary* (Leiden, 1977), 75.

³⁰ With the reading *in certamine* (R) compared to *inter certamina* (M); the relationship among the three passions defended above is based on López Barja de Quiroga (n. 13), 172–5.

³¹ The idea that Roman politicians lacked ideology is argued by M. Gelzer in *Die Nobilität der römischen Republik* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1912), translated as *The Roman Nobility* (Oxford, 1981); Syme (n. 4), 15; more recently (and with nuances), see H. Mouritsen, *Politics in the Roman Republic* (Cambridge, 2017); M.A. Robb, *Beyond Populares and Optimates: Political Language in the Late Republic* (Stuttgart, 2010); Morstein-Marx (n. 11).

³² For the differences between the *optimates* and the *populares*, J.-L. Ferrary, 'Le idee politiche a Roma nell'epoca repubblicana', in L. Firpo (ed.), *Storia delle idee politiche, economiche e sociali*, vol. I, *L'Antichità classica* (Turin, 1982), 724–804; Arena (n. 22), 73–168. M.J. Hidalgo de la

Agamben's description of a 'process of politicization' is helpful for understanding Sallust's logic. Starting from the Greek model of *stasis* formulated by Loraux, he somewhat changes her characterization of the *stasis* as a 'war within the family' that fractures the *oikos* from the inside out.³³ Instead, Agamben postulates that Greek political thought envisions civil conflicts as having their origin in the tension generated between two spheres with different rationales when they collide. At one extreme would be the domestic and apolitical reality of the *oikos*, and at the other the politicized sphere of the *polis*. *stasis*, therefore, would erupt at the liminal point where, depending on the dominant impulse at that moment, the politicization of the *oikos* or the depoliticization of the *polis* occurs. Hence, a 'process of politicization' consists in the political sphere encroaching against the domestic. In this event, political identity became much more strongly felt by citizens than other identities competing for the loyalty of the community up to the point of trumping them with violence, if necessary.³⁴

This model powerfully manifests itself in Sallust's account. In the last of the three processes of politicization that he recounts, this expanding political sphere can be found in those opposing *partes* of the *res publica*—*populus* and *Senatus*—and in the ideologies articulated around them. But this expansion comes at a cost for the domestic sphere; and this cost is fundamental for Sallust. He pays special attention to the blood tribute that families have to pay because of the emergence of civil conflicts waged according to a political criterion.

3. 'A HOUSE DIVIDED'³⁵

When famously talking about a 'house divided', Lincoln was representing the political with a domestic metaphor: he was painting the Union in intimate, close terms to emphasize the drama of its disunion. For Sallust, the tragedy of this division—the οἰκία μερισθεῖσα (Matt. 12:25) which Lincoln was referencing—was not the projection of some political issue but the literal fracture of the house (*domus*) itself. For him, this is the tragedy of internal turmoil. The domestic sphere sees its very foundations—*gens* and *domus*—disturbed by a different logic, a political one, that violently trumps any prior loyalties.

The importance of the *gens* is key for Sallust; it is not for nothing that Catiline's final thoughts before giving his life in combat are for his lineage and his dignity (*Cat.* 60.7). It is in the clash between this familial sphere and the political nature of the *ciuitas* that we can find much of the violence—intrafamilial and interfamilial—present in Sallust's works; a phenomenon that will manifest itself in a multitude of forms. We find it embedded in the father-child relationship, forcing both the *pater familias* to exercise his *patria potestas* in a ruthless manner and the children to rebel against family power with murderous intent. The *Bellum Catilinae* presents us with multiple examples of this violence,

Vega, 'Algunos aspectos del pensamiento político de Salustio', *SHHA* 2–3 (1984–1985), 103–18, at 107–12 depicts Sallust as a *uir popularis*, although one more aligned with the landed Italians rather than with the impoverished urban plebs.

³³ Loraux (n. 2 [1997]), 61–2.

³⁴ Agamben (n. 2), 253–64, relying on the theoretical framework in C. Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political: Expanded Edition* (Chicago and London, 2007).

³⁵ A. Lincoln, *Selected Speeches and Writings* (New York, 1992), 131–9, at 131 (speech originally delivered on 16 June 1858).

showing a senator who does not hesitate to execute his son for participating in the conspiracy (39.5), at the same time as the conspirators, mostly sons of the nobility, planned to begin their rebellion by murdering their fathers (43.2). Both this work and the later *Historiae* use the powerful symbolism behind patricide as a way of condemning those who threaten the Republic. So did Caesar (51.25) and Cato (52.31) while discussing the fate of the conspirators; and this is also the term used by both Lepidus, to qualify the criminal acts of Sulla's dictatorship (*Hist.* 1.55.24M = 1.49.24R), and Cotta, who comments with irony on the crimes of which he is accused (2.47.3M = 2.43.3R).³⁶

Violence directed against the family in a broader sense also appears as a basic topos. The debate in the Temple of Concord places a special focus on the family, with Caesar and Cato agreeing on the nature of the dangers that beset their homeland. For Caesar, the fate of the vanquished was to see their homes sacked, their children torn from their fathers' laps, and mothers enduring the desires of the victors (*Cat.* 51.9 *rapi uirgines, pueros, diuelli liberos a parentum complexu, matres familiarum pati, quae uictoribus conlubiissent, fana atque domos spoliari*). In similar terms, Cato states that Catiline and his followers make 'war against their homeland, their fathers, their altars and their homes' (52.3 *qui patriae, parentibus, aris atque focus suis bellum parauere*), precisely what Petreius will urge his men to defend on the battlefield of Pistoriae, encouraging them to fight for their 'fatherland, sons, altars and homes' (59.5 *pro patria, pro liberis, pro aris atque focus suis certare*). Here, among the casualties on both sides, Sallust closes his narrative by dramatically portraying the ties binding the survivors to the dead; a familial, domestic and deeply personal connection. Among the corpses were friends and foes, guests and family, something that provoked both happiness and grief, mourning and joy (61.5–9).³⁷ Unlike Cicero, who systematically and unabashedly prioritizes the *res publica* over the bonds of kinship and friendship (*Off.* 1.53 and 1.57), Sallust always keeps in mind the importance of the *gens* and does not seem to give moral priority to either of the two spheres. Nevertheless, the drama of his time is the violent imposition of the political—rightly or wrongly—on the family, and the suffering that results, as reflected in the dead and wounded of Pistoriae.³⁸

4. THE NATURE OF CIVIL CONFLICT: *STASIS* OR *BELLVM CIVILE*

As we have seen, in Sallust's narrative violence is exercised against the family sphere time and again in the name of a political criterion, one that arises from the politicization of the community. This is confirmed by the terminology used to name these conflicts.

³⁶ For the political symbolism of *parricidium* and its proximity to the crime of *perduellio*, see R.A. Bauman, *Crime & Punishment in Ancient Rome* (London and New York, 1996), 72–3; for the historical flexibility of the offence itself, which initially referred to the simple assassination of a fellow citizen, G. Mousourakis, *A Legal History of Rome* (London and New York, 2007), 36, 208. This broader meaning can also be found both in Tacitus (*Hist.* 1.85.3) and in Cicero (*Cat.* 1.29).

³⁷ The disruptive influence of the political in the domestic sphere can take more subtle forms, subverting the traditional order inside the family. Catiline is presented resorting to many disreputable women to advance his cause (*Cat.* 24.3), enlisting their husbands and even many slaves (24.4), and making a mockery of the *patria potestas*. The most infamous case would be Sempronia, who committed many crimes of masculine daring (25.1) and, to a degree, is presented as a feminine version of Catiline (25).

³⁸ P. López Barja de Quiroga, *Imperio Legítimo: El pensamiento político romano en tiempos de Cicerón* (Madrid, 2007), 317–18; López Barja de Quiroga (n. 13), 179.

Sallust's way of referring to them varies widely, but always starts from a common denominator: their nature as a civil confrontation, for they involve members of the same political community united by their status as citizens. We can find the terms *studia ciuilia* (*Iug.* 5.1), *bella intestina* and *discordia ciuilis* (*Cat.* 5.2), *ciuilia arma* (*Hist.* 1.6M = 1.6R, 1.90M = 1.78R, 3.48.11M = 3.15.11R), *dissensio ciuilis* (*Iug.* 41.10), *ciuilis uictoria* (*Iug.* 95.4) and finally *bellum ciuile* (*Cat.* 16.4, 47.2; *Hist.* 1.12M = 1.12R) to describe similar or identical phenomena. For him, it is the adjective *ciuilis* that is fundamental, not the noun it accompanies. Citizenship and ideology intertwined have become a political criterion of social identity used to differentiate friend from foe, an identity that, when taken to the extreme, is materialized in public violence and tramples familial solidarity and all other domestic loyalties.³⁹

The appearance of the term *bellum ciuile* has been taken by Armitage as an indicator that the Romans began to think about and express civil conflicts in a new way. This new model would integrate the two central elements that mark what this author calls, echoing Wittgenstein, the ‘family resemblance’ that would characterize all subsequent manifestations of this phenomenon. The phenomenon's name provides its interpretative keys. First, it is carried out according to military parameters: we are dealing with a *bellum*, both on a symbolic level and in the way in which violence manifested itself. Second, there must be at least two contending parties disputing the legitimacy of political authority.⁴⁰

Questions have been raised about the novel aspects of this Roman conceptualization, downplaying its differences with the Greek one and presenting both of them in a continuum. Lange in particular defends the idea that we can talk about a coherent ‘Graeco-Roman perspective’ of civil war. For him, the clear break portrayed by Armitage simply did not happen, and the divergent terms *stasis* and *bellum ciuile* function most of the time as overlapping concepts, at best hinting to a distinction of scale. When Thucydides chronicles the strife within Corcyra, Lange argues, he is describing a reality where *stasis* and *polemos* are intertwined, feeding off each other and being virtually inseparable.⁴¹

Nevertheless, Armitage's response is precise when he points out his claim that the Romans ‘invented’ civil war to be epistemological, not ontological.⁴² He is not arguing that the Romans were the first to be plagued by violent internal conflict; only that they were the first to experience it as civil war. True, battle lines arrayed under military standards were only one of the many manifestations violence can adopt in a *bellum ciuile*;⁴³ and it may also be true that every civil war is necessarily a *stasis*, but not every *stasis* amounts to a civil war, as Straumann points out.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, conceding

³⁹ For a similar process of politicization in fifth-century Greece, see C. Meier, *The Greek Discovery of Politics* (London and Cambridge, 1990), building upon the concept of the political provided by Schmitt (n. 34); López Barja de Quiroga (n. 13), 166 points out that for Sallust there is a type of conflict that can be clearly differentiated from the previous ones: *seditio*. This is characterized by a specific social origin, connected to the plebs—with a traditional link to the patrician–plebeian conflict (*Hist.* 1.11M = 1.9–10R; *Iug.* 31.17)—or to the poor (*Cat.* 37.3; *Iug.* 66.2; *Hist.* 1.77.7M = 1.67.7R).

⁴⁰ Armitage (n. 2), 31–90; for Wittgenstein's concept of *family resemblance*, whose echoes can be seen in Armitage (n. 2), 57, see J.E. Llewelyn, ‘Family resemblance’, *Philos. Q.* vol. 18, issue 73 (1968), 334–46.

⁴¹ C.H. Lange, ‘*Stasis* and *bellum civile*. A difference in scale?’, *Critical Analysis of Law* 4 (2017), 129–40.

⁴² D. Armitage, ‘On the genealogy of quarrels’, *Critical Analysis of Law* 4 (2017), 179–89, at 180.

⁴³ Lange (n. 41), 138.

⁴⁴ B. Straumann, ‘Roman ideas on the loose’, *Critical Analysis of Law* 4 (2017), 141–51, at 142.

this does not detract from the main argument that differentiates *stasis* from *bellum ciuile* not only as a matter of quantity but also of quality: that of legitimacy.

At the crux of the *bellum ciuile* is not a pitched battle but a paradox. There are at least two sides that fight for control of the political community, each claiming legitimacy. But by virtue of that claim, they deny the same quality to other fellow citizens who now become enemies and are expelled from the shared civic body, relinquishing their *status ciuitatis*. When Lange proposes that *bellum ciuile* may have been invented to justify killings, he is pointing out a real consequence of being deprived of said status and all the rights that come associated with it.⁴⁵

To appreciate fully Armitage's paradigm of *bellum ciuile*, we must explain how the relationship between legitimacy and public violence lies at the centre of Cicero's idea of the *salus rei publicae*. For him, the Senate was the seat of an *auctoritas* that represented the ultimate guarantee of the right of the *res publica* to defend itself. Its legitimacy was never in doubt. Thus, those comprising the *concordia ordinum* or the *consensus omnium bonorum* could subvert the legal order by declaring a state of emergency, as *uim ui repellere licet* (*Dig.* 43.16.1.27). In his more extreme manifestations, this does not even require an official declaration, being self-evident to a good and wise citizen. This view is displayed in the fourth *Oration against Catiline* (*Cat.* 4.5.10, 4.7.15, 4.10.22), where Cicero argues that being guilty of *perduellio* and aspiring to the tyranny imply an automatic forfeiture of *status ciuitatis*. Becoming a *hostis* is crossing a line into an absolute category, and means the automatic expulsion from the body of citizens, depriving the affected person of any rights and equating him with non-human beasts (*Phil.* 13.1–2; *Off.* 3.32).⁴⁶

By contrast, the question of legitimacy is not directly addressed in Sallust's *discordia ciuilis*. In his texts, both sides can be dishonest and assault the *res publica* in the name of the common good (*Cat.* 38.3; *Hist.* 1.12M = 1–12R); hence the distance with which he positions himself with respect to the contending parties. Particularly revealing is his purely relational use of the term *hostis*. Gone is the absolute meaning so characteristic of Cicero; it becomes simply 'enemy' from the point of view of the narrative protagonist. This is the name given to the troops of the consul Antony when seen from Catiline's perspective (*Cat.* 56.4, 57.5, 58.6, 58.21, 60.1, 60.4, 60.5, 60.7), something that would be inconceivable to Cicero. Even the destruction of Catiline's army is presented with a certain equidistance, focussing on the bitterness of a victory that had cost the lives of fellow citizens, friends and relatives (61).

5. A GREEK CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR A ROMAN REALITY

We find in Sallust a Roman historian who approaches the complex recent history of his political community with an essentially Greek attitude. Armitage's premise is sound:

⁴⁵ Lange (n. 41), 137.

⁴⁶ Cicero thinks of *auctoritas patrum* in the same way that Schmitt conceives sovereignty, as the ability to decide on the exception: C. Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (Chicago and London, 2005), 5; see also A. Duplá, 'Política y violencia en la reflexión ciceroniana: legalidad, legitimidad, oportunismo', in M. Campagno, J. Gallego and C.G. García Mac Gaw (edd.), *El Estado en el Mediterráneo Antiguo: Egipto, Grecia y Roma* (Buenos Aires, 2011), 358–66 and P. López Barja de Quiroga, 'Cicero: *bellum iustum* and the enemy criminal law', in M. Bergsmo and E.J. Buis, *Philosophical Foundations of International Criminal Law: Correlating Thinkers* (Brussels, 2018), 57–84.

Sulla's march against Rome marked the emergence of a new paradigm in the way civil conflicts were understood. This framework was distinctly Roman and qualitatively different from the previous one of Greek origin. Their fusion into a single conception, as Lange proposes, appears difficult, at least at the time of Sallust and Cicero, since they were appealing to different sets of values.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, this did not imply the abandonment of the old model; the paradigm of *stasis* remained an acceptable conceptual framework for an elite steeped in Greek culture. This is the case of Sallust, who conceptualizes the civil conflicts that ravaged the Republic according to the model outlined by Agamben. For him, civil wars are the most violent extreme on a scale that begins with *stasis*, with internal discord.

As Straumann points out, Cicero is interested in the legal and political remedies that will keep the *bella ciuilia* at bay, which he will apply with unrelenting violence if necessary. By contrast, Sallust the historian shares with Thucydides both a bleak understanding of human nature and a greater focus on tracing the origins of civil strife rather than giving a practical account of how it could be avoided. The institutional proposals of the *Epistulae* are long gone, substituted by a grim prognosis on the body of the *res publica*, as it was old and afflicted by a disease without cure. Its only hope lies in a *metus hostilis* that is both contingent and presented in moral terms; without this enemy, the *dissensio ciuilis* that is always lurking arises, with an inevitability that was even deterministic.⁴⁸

This *dissensio ciuilis*, with its politicization of social life, triggers the ideology that pits the different parts of the *res publica* against each other in their political cycles: a confrontation in which the Senate and the people are situated in opposite corners and in which Sallust—as a historian—is reluctant to take part. This desire for impartiality, ironic though it may seem to us when we consider his political career, has a clear consequence for his role as a historian of civil conflicts. Questions of legitimacy are relegated to the background, something unthinkable in Cicero's texts and one of the central pillars of the Roman model of *bellum ciuile* formulated by Armitage.

Sallust's work allows us to defend the coexistence in the final phase of the Republic of two alternative notions of an 'essentially contested concept': in other words, two threads in the narrative of the *pestifera bella ciuilia*, each presided over by its own internal logic. This implies the existence between both paradigms of limits, sometimes diffuse and intersected by mutual influences, but ultimately recognizable. Both Sallust and Cicero are proof of this. In any case, it could be asked to what extent the decision to resort to one model or the other was a simple question of personal preference or was influenced by the ideological coordinates of each author. Is there a degree of causality between one approach to civil conflict and the main political divide of the moment,

⁴⁷ The lines between paradigms appear to be much more blurred in the case of Greek-speaking Roman historians from the Imperial era, such as Appian or Cassius Dio, as pointed out in K. Welch, 'Appian and civil war: a history without an ending', in C.H. Lange and F.J. Vervaet (edd.), *The Historiography of Late Republican Civil War* (Leiden and Boston, 2019), 439–66 and J.M. Madsen, 'In the shadow of civil war: Cassius Dio and his *Roman History*', in C.H. Lange and F.J. Vervaet (edd.), *The Historiography of Late Republican Civil War* (Leiden and Boston, 2019), 467–501.

⁴⁸ Vassiliades (n. 19), 511–48, 597–9; at 545, he attributes this decision to Thucydides' influence. Straumann (n. 44), 143–4 points out the propensity of Roman thinkers such as Cicero to articulate their reflections about civil war in relation to what remedies—legal and political—ought to be taken to avoid it; he contrasts this with Thucydides' approach, who is interested only in explaining the causes and symptoms of the war that ravaged Greece.

between the *optimates* and the *populares*? A correlation? Or is it simply a matter of chance? The answer to a question on this scale goes beyond the scope of an article; however, the clear contrast between the model used by Sallust and the model defended by Cicero would benefit from further research.

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