

SEMPRONIA, Q. CURIUS, AND THE DECLINE OF ROMAN *GENTES* IN SALLUST’S *BELLUM CATILINAE**

Abstract: In the *Bellum Catilinae*, Sallust includes detailed character sketches of two Catilinarian conspirators: Q. Curius and Sempronia. Based on a number of lexical and syntactical similarities between the two sketches, this article proposes interpreting them as a matched pair, one that provides a narrative pendant to the earlier pairing of Sallust and Catiline. The article then argues that Sallust singles out Curius and Sempronia as compelling exemplars of the conspiracy because they (and Curius’ mistress Fulvia) synecdochally symbolise the downfall of three Roman *gentes*—a downfall that was already visible in the recent renaming of the Basilicas Sempronia and Fulvia.

Keywords: Sallust, *Bellum Catilinae*, Catiline, Sempronia, Q. Curius, Fulvia, Forum Romanum, Basilica Sempronia, Basilica Fulvia

Introduction

Among the many Catilinarian conspirators Sallust names in his *Bellum Catilinae*, two in particular have left scholars scratching their heads: Q. Curius, a former senator, the lover of Fulvia, and the ultimate betrayer of the conspiracy (*Cat.* 17.4, 23.1–3, 26.3), and Sempronia, the lone named female member of Catiline’s retinue (25, 40.5). Especially puzzling is why these two individuals, of all the others Sallust could have discussed, receive detailed character sketches (23.1–3, 25). This question has proved most vexing in the case of the otherwise unknown Sempronia, with a majority of recent scholarship concluding that she uniquely illustrates the thesis of decline and moral depravity that Sallust describes in his work.¹ Less consideration has been given to Curius, whose role in betraying the conspiracy by way of his lover, Fulvia, is at least attested by other ancient historians—though, of course, these

* For comments on earlier versions of this piece, I’d like to thank the anonymous readers for *Histos*, Gil Renberg, and Dan-el Padilla Peralta, who also generously shared with me a draft of his in-progress work on Sallust. The text of Sallust is from Reynolds (1991). All translations are my own.

¹ For example, Syme (1964) 133–4 believes she was ‘welcome to fill space, lend variety, and exhibit a female counterpart to Catiline’. Tiffou (1973) 366 n. 43 argues that her presence among the conspirators contributed to the conspiracy’s discredit. Boyd (1987) 185 considers her presence ‘both thematically appropriate to and structurally significant for the greater concerns of Sallust’s monograph’. Milnor (2009) 280 credits Sempronia with an important ‘historiographical task’: ‘she represents the extent to which the masculinity of public life is being threatened by Catiline and his band of effeminate followers’. And most recently, Balmaceda (2017) 78–9 has argued that Sempronia shows ‘important aspects of Sallust’s thinking about the nature and pervasiveness of political decline’.

other historians may have simply used Sallust as a source text.² The general consensus among scholars is that Curius is merely a 'typical Catilinarian' who merits attention because of his status as 'Cicero's chief informant'.³

This article proposes an alternative way to make sense of the space Sallust devotes to both individuals, arguing that the two should be read together as a matched pair. I make this argument based primarily on two observations. First, a number of lexical parallels between the two character sketches suggest that both individuals are cut from the same cloth. Secondly, as a narrative device, the pairing of these two provides a nice bookend to the first part of the monograph, capping off a section that began with another pairing of character sketches: Sallust and Catiline (3.3–4.2, 4.5–5.8).⁴ As to why Sallust would choose Curius and Sempronia specifically as narrative counterparts to himself and Catiline, it is true, as I will show, that both individuals embody qualities typical of the other Catilinarians. However, I will also offer a more speculative answer to this question, suggesting that Curius (and his mistress Fulvia) and Sempronia proved compelling exemplars of moral decay because they could synecdochally represent the downfall of three Roman *gentes*: the Sempronii, the Fulvii, and to a much lesser extent the Curii. This downfall, moreover, was already reified in Rome's monumental landscape by the recent rebuilding and renaming of two basilicas in the Forum Romanum.

Parallel Lives

With the phrase 'character sketch'—what other scholars have called 'portraits'—I mean passages that provide detailed (i.e., multi-sentence, multi-

² Ancient evidence for Curius is limited: Cic. *Clu.* 117–34; Suet. *Iul.* 17; App. *BC* 2.3; Cic. *Tog. Candid.* ap. Ascon. 93, with Ascon. ad loc.; possibly Cic. *Att.* 1.1.2. On the identification of Curius as a historical figure, see Vretska (1976) 337; Marshall (1978); Ryan (1994) 259–61. Sallust's Curius is likely split into two entries in the *RE*: IV (1901) 1839–40, s.v. 'Curius I, 7'.

³ So McGushin (1987) 44. Syme (1964) 69 is left longing for more, querying why Sallust omitted discussions of any of the other leading conspirators, many of whom played far more significant roles in the conspiracy and afterward.

⁴ Paul (1985) 17 views the portrait of Sempronia as a pendant to the portrait of Catiline, but makes no mention of Curius: 'The portraits of Catiline and Sempronia, therefore, bracket what is in effect an extended introduction to the conspiracy proper'. Wilkins (1994) 84–90 echoes this point and further notes the parallels between Curius and Sempronia, likewise arguing for a literary function to the character sketches, namely that they (Curius, Fulvia, and Sempronia) 'form a bridge between the narration of Catiline's first speech and its aftermath and the beginning of the narrative pertaining to the active conspiracy' (89). By contrast, Cadoux (1980) 97 rejects the interpretation that Sempronia's sketch 'marks the transition from the account of the introductory circumstances to that of the conspiracy proper', though he does find compelling the argument that the sketch of Sempronia provides a counterpart to that of Catiline.

clausal) information about an individual's nature and family origins.⁵ There are six such passages in Sallust's monograph, which neatly comprise three pairs: the sketches of Sallust and Catiline (3.3–4.2, 4.5–5.8), Curius and Sempronia (23.1–3, 25), and Cato and Caesar (54), of which the last has been most discussed in modern scholarship.⁶ At other points in his monograph Sallust does occasionally provide multiple details about a figure's background and motivations, but never in complete, independent clauses; his preferred syntactic structure in these cases, as it often is, is asyndeton. Cn. Piso, for example, is *adulescens nobilis, summae audaciae, egens, factiosus* ('a young noble, of extreme recklessness, needy, and seditious', 18.4), and M. Crassus is *hominem nobilem, maxumis divitiis, summa potentia* ('a noble man, of exceeding wealth and greatest power', 48.5). By contrast, Sallust commits 85 words to his description of Curius and 110 words to his description of Sempronia, addressing their family origins, relationships, character and manners, and ultimate fall from grace—deploying asyndeton in neither sketch.

As he commences the character sketches of Curius and Sempronia, Sallust adopts not only a similar phraseology, but also a similar lexicon (23.1–3; 25.1–2, 4):

sed in ea coniuratione fuit Q. Curius, natus haud obscuro loco, flagitiis atque facinoribus coopertus, quem censores senatu probri gratia moverant. [2] huic homini non minor vanitas inerat quam audacia ... [3] erat ei cum Fulvia, muliere nobili, stupri vetus consuetudo; quoi cum minus gratus esset quia inopia minus largiri poterat, repente glorians maria montisque polliceri coepit et minari interdum ferro ...

sed in iis erat Sempronia, quae multa saepe virilis audaciae facinora commiserat. [2] haec mulier genere atque forma, praeterea viro liberis satis fortunata fuit ... [4] sed ea saepe antehac ... luxuria atque inopia praeceps abierat ...

Now in that conspiracy was Quintus Curius, a man not of low birth, but one deep in crimes and misdeeds, whom the censors had removed from the senate because of his disreputableness. This man was possessed of no less perfidy than recklessness ... He was in a long-term illicit relationship with Fulvia, a noble woman; when he became less appealing to her because his poverty inhibited his largesse, he suddenly turned to boasting—promising her seas and mountains—and to threatening her with a sword

⁵ On Sallust's portraits, see, e.g., Mathieu (1997); Utard (2011).

⁶ See, e.g., McConaghy (1973) 116–38; Batstone (1988); Levene (2000) 180–90.

Now among them was Sempronia, who had often committed many crimes of masculine recklessness. This woman, in her birth and appearance, and with her husband and children too, was sufficiently fortunate ... But oftentimes before the conspiracy she had fallen headlong into ruin owing to her luxury and poverty

The opening clause of each displays nearly identical syntax and diction: the conjunction *sed*, followed by the preposition *in* with an ablative form of the pronoun *is*, followed by a past tense form of the verb *sum*, followed by the name of the conspirator in the nominative.⁷ Nowhere else in his monograph does Sallust use such phraseology.⁸ Moreover, the next sentence in each character sketch also begins with a similar construction: a form of the demonstrative *hic* modifying the nouns *homo* and *mulier*. From the very start, then, Sallust flags these two passages as parallel.

Sallust further ties Curius and Sempronia together by including similar content in their character sketches, sometimes repeating lexical items, sometimes not. On the one hand, in both cases he alludes in an understated way to the characters' noble heritage and equally noble companions: Curius is a man 'not of low birth' (*natus haud obscuro loco*, 23.1) who is in a relationship with Fulvia, a 'noble woman' (*mulieri nobili*, 23.3), while Sempronia is 'fortunate enough ... in her birth ... and husband too' (*genere ... praeterea viro ... satis fortunata fuit*, 25.2).⁹ On the other hand, Sallust attributes three acts or qualities to both Curius and Sempronia that align them closely not just with each other, but with Catiline and the other Catilinarians: *audacia* (23.2, 25.1), *facinora* (23.1, 25.1), and *inopia* (23.3, 25.4). Indeed, all three terms appear earlier in the work in key passages, suggesting that their presence in these two character sketches is neither coincidental nor insignificant. Not only that, but no other individual in the work is similarly described with this trio of words in the same passage—not even Catiline himself.

Of the three terms, *audacia* most clearly establishes Curius and Sempronia in the tradition of the Catilinarians, and at the same time it distinguishes them

⁷ The similarity is observed by Ramsey (2007) 132 but its implications are dismissed, as Ramsey believes the passage on Sempronia 'does not further the narrative but merely forms a digression that illustrates the type of women referred to above (24.3–4)'. Cadoux (1980) 112–13 likewise notes the repetition of *sed* (but nothing else), concluding that the significance of the repetition is 'nil'.

⁸ The closest parallel to this construction is *Cat.* 51.35: *sed in magna civitate multa et varia ingenia sunt* ('but in a large state, there are many different characters').

⁹ The characterisation of Fulvia as 'noble' in this instance is particularly notable since she is one of only five named individuals described with the adjective *nobilis* in the *Bellum Catilinae*; the other four are Catiline (*nobili genere natus*, 5.1), the Vestal virgin who is Catiline's lover (*cum virgine nobili*, 15.1), Cn. Piso (*adulescens nobilis*, 18.4), and M. Crassus (*hominem nobilem*, 48.5). For discussion of *nobilis* and its significance to Sallust, see Paananen (1972) 64–8.

as exemplars of Sallust's narrative of decline.¹⁰ *Audacia* features prominently at the beginning of Sallust's monograph as one of the three vices that have overtaken traditional Roman virtues—a vice that even Sallust nearly succumbed to as a youth: *nam pro pudore, pro abstinentia, pro virtute audacia, largitio, avaritia vigebant* ('For instead of modesty, instead of self-restraint, instead of virtue, recklessness, bribery, and greed prevailed', 3.3). Catiline likewise possesses a reckless mind (*animus audax*, 5.4), and he accordingly assembles a group of conspirators—of whom Curius is one—who are driven by the greatest recklessness (*plurimum audaciae*, 17.2).

Sallust further shows Curius' and Sempronia's aptitude for the conspiracy by indicting them for their commission of 'misdeeds' (*facinora*). In fact, Curius in particular epitomises the depravity of the Catilinarians, as he uniquely among the named conspirators gains notoriety for both 'crimes' and 'misdeeds' (*flagitiis atque facinoribus*, 23.1).¹¹ This pairing of terms applies earlier to the conspirators as a group; specifically, when Sallust describes the gang of unsavoury characters with whom Catiline has surrounded himself, he refers to them as a 'throng of [men guilty of] every kind of crime and misdeed' who had 'racked up significant debt to buy their way out of a crime or misdeed' (*omnium flagitiorum atque facinorum ... catervas ... quique alienum aes grande conflaverat quo flagitium aut facinus redimeret*, 14.1–2). This collocation of 'crimes and misdeeds' appears one more time later in the monograph, when Sallust paints a bleak picture of a Rome that has been flooded with reprobates who then fomented, or at least facilitated Catiline's rebellion: 'all those whom a crime or misdeed had expelled from their home had flowed into Rome as if into a ship's bilgewater' (*omnes quos flagitium aut facinus domo expulerat, in Romam sicut in sentinam confluerant*, 37.5). For Curius alone to bear the distinction of being credited with both *flagitia* and *facinora*, when these are the defining acts of the conspirators as a group, accordingly makes him a fitting representative of the conspiracy.

That Sempronia should be ascribed only misdeeds (*facinora*, 25.1), however, does not diminish her significance as a counterpart to Curius and as a model Catilinarian. After all, *facinus* is precisely the word that Sallust uses to characterise the Catilinarian conspiracy when he is explaining what motivated the writing of his monograph in the first place (*id facinus*, 4.4), and Catiline and the Catilinarians' commission of, or association with, *facinora* repeatedly earns them Sallust's condemnation (7.6, 13.4, 14.1–2, 15.3, 16.1, 18.8, 20.3, 22.3, 28.3, 51.15, 51.23, 52.36). Although the valences of *facinus* shift throughout the

¹⁰ On *audacia*, and especially its ambiguous meanings throughout the *Bellum Catilinae*, see Bruggisser (2002); Langerwerf (2015) 161–6. For a list of other appearances of *audacia* in the monograph, see Wilkins (1994) 160 (though the group is problematically and oversimplistically labelled 'Bravery'). On *audacia* in late Republican political vocabulary more generally, see Wirszubski (1961).

¹¹ For other appearances of these terms in the *Bellum Catilinae*, see Wilkins (1994) 157–8.

monograph—usually carrying the pejorative connotation of a ‘misdeed’ (11.4, 32.2, 37.5, 48.2, 49.4, 51.6), but in its first and last instances referring to a ‘deed’ in a neutral sense (2.9, 53.2)—its strong and repeated associations with the conspiracy suggest that the term as applied to Sempronia is intended to tie her to the other conspirators.¹² Sallust’s further clarification that Sempronia’s ‘misdeeds’ are those of ‘masculine recklessness’ (*virilis audaciae*)—picking up on the *audacia* also connected to the Catilinarians—only underscores how suitably Sempronia acts as a representative of the conspiracy, particularly because the adjective *virilis* indicates that Sempronia’s recklessness is just like that of her male counterparts.

Lastly, Sallust connects the character sketches of Curius and Sempronia by commenting on both individuals’ poverty (*inopia*, 23.3, 25.4).¹³ Perhaps unsurprisingly, the first person whom Sallust criticises for their *inopia* is Catiline (5.7), and *inopia* reappears elsewhere as a defining quality of the other conspirators (17.5, 18.4).¹⁴ While Sallust does not list *inopia* among the early vices that nearly tempted him in his youth, two other qualities of a similar type that do appear among these early vices—*largitio* and *avaritia* (3.3)—are connected to the idea of *inopia*. After all, Sallust specifies that Curius’ *inopia* prevents his further largesse (*minus largiri poterat*, 23.3), which seems to suggest that *inopia* is the result of, or at least the inverse of, *largitio*.¹⁵

Lest there be any doubt that Sallust is pivoting to a new section of his monograph following his discussion of Curius and Sempronia, and so lest there be any doubt that Sallust is ascribing to Curius and Sempronia an important narrative function, the opening line of the next chapter proves the point: *his rebus comparatis Catilina ...* (‘with these preparations complete, Catiline ...’, 26.1). Having finished explaining how Catiline assembled his conspirators, and thus how Catiline (structurally) surrounded himself with like individuals—of whom Curius and Sempronia are two—Sallust can now transition to recounting the main action of the conspiracy. In a similar fashion, Sallust had postponed commencing his narrative about the conspiracy until he had delivered his character sketch of Catiline, which appeared shortly after Sallust’s sketch of himself: *de quouis hominis moribus pauca prius explananda sunt, quam initium narrandi faciam* (‘a few things must be explained about the behaviour and habits of this man [sc. Catiline] before I begin my narrative’, 4.5).¹⁶ The marked placement

¹² For *facinus* in the sense of a ‘misdeed’ (*scelus* or *crimen*), see *TLL* VI.1.77.74–78.48.

¹³ For discussion of debt in Sallust, under which category *inopia* falls, see Shaw (1975). Wilkins (1994) 158 lists other appearances of *inopia*.

¹⁴ Cf. Cic. *Cat.* 2.20, 4.17 on the *egentes* among the Catilinarians.

¹⁵ Cf. *Cat.* 37.7, where *inopia* and *largitio* are presented as opposites: *praeterea iuventus, quae in agris manuum mercede inopiam toleraverat, privatis atque publicis largitionibus excita urbanum otium ingrato labori praetulerat*.

¹⁶ On the proem, see, e.g., Feeney (1994); Krebs (2008).

of both sets of character sketches at the conclusion of specific sections of the monograph further encourages reading them as pendants to each other.

How the Mighty Have Fallen

It remains to ask why Sallust would single out Curius and Sempronia specifically as model conspirators, particularly given how many other individuals from equally noble, if not more noble families allied themselves with Catiline. Indeed, while Curius and Sempronia certainly evince, or at least are ascribed, all of the major characteristics common to Catiline and the other conspirators, as historical figures—at least to the extent that their biographies can be reconstructed—they are hardly the most prominent actors.¹⁷ Nevertheless, I would argue that they have sufficiently distinguished pedigrees through their respective *gentes*—or, in the case of Curius, through his mistress Fulvia's *gens*—to make their downfalls compelling (and possibly even gratifying) stories for readers of Sallust's monograph. Whoever they may have been, therefore, was irrelevant; what and who they stood for was far more likely to resonate with Sallust's audience.

I begin with Sempronia. Roman naming conventions for women stipulate that they adopt the feminine form of the *nomen gentile*, and so this makes it difficult to associate Sallust's Sempronia definitively with a known historical figure. The only identifying information Sallust provides is the name of Sempronia's husband, D. Brutus, at whose house Sempronia facilitates a meeting between P. Gabinius, one of the conspirators, and envoys from the Allobroges (*Cat.* 40.5). Scholars generally agree that this must be D. Iunius Brutus (cos. 77 BCE), who was absent from Rome in 63, and that this then makes Sempronia the mother (or stepmother) of D. Iunius Brutus Albinus, the assassin of Caesar.¹⁸ Beyond this, however, little else can be reconstructed of Sempronia's life or parentage, though conjectures abound.¹⁹ Regardless, what

¹⁷ Syme (1964) 69, questioning Sallust's attention to Curius, muses that 'Sallust could have invented some deleterious label for L. Cassius Longinus', and that 'Something also could perhaps have been added to the detriment of ... [P. Lentulus] Sura', implying that these individuals could just as easily have been subjected to Sallust's scrutiny.

¹⁸ So, e.g., Syme (1964) 133–5; Vretska (1976) 347–8, 456; Ramsey (2007) 133. The question of Brutus' and Sempronia's identities is taken up most fully by Cadoux (1980), who effectively (if not unintentionally) illustrates the perils of seeking historical figures to whom we might attach the names 'Brutus' and 'Sempronia'.

¹⁹ The most widely repeated theories make Sempronia either a daughter of C. Gracchus—though this is commonly dismissed as implausible—or the sister of 'Sempronia, Tuditani filia', wife of Fulvius Bambalio and mother of the Fulvia married alternately to Clodius, Curio, and Antony, which would therefore make Sallust's Sempronia the aunt of Fulvia. See Syme (1964) 134–5; Cadoux (1980) 104–10.

I suggest we can be certain of is that Sallust wanted his reader to know that Sempronia came from a prominent Roman family (*genere ... satis fortunata fuit*, 25.2), and that through her marriage she was associated with another prominent Roman family (*viro ... satis fortunata fuit*, 25.2).²⁰ After all, the *gens* Sempronia had a long and storied history dating back to the early decades of the Roman Republic, providing Sallust's Sempronia with an impressive roster of possible ancestors, no matter which of the many branches of the *gens* she came from.²¹

The *gens* Curia, by contrast, was far less distinguished than the Sempronii. Nonetheless, one notable ancestor—perhaps the only one of any note, in fact—could be held up in the middle of the first century BCE as a model for precisely the opposite qualities and behaviours embodied by Sallust's Q. Curius: M'. Curius Dentatus, thrice consul in the early third century.²² Cicero, for example, celebrates Dentatus' abstemiousness (*continentia*) in a passage from *De Senectute*, quoting Dentatus' response to an envoy of Samnites: 'it seems that glory lies not in having gold oneself but in ruling over those who do have it' (*non enim aurum habere praeclarum sibi videri dixit, sed eis qui haberent aurum imperare*, Cic. *Sen.* 55). Beyond Dentatus, though, no other member of the *gens* seems to have stood out enough to merit detailed discussion by an ancient author, thereby calling into question just how elite the *gens* Curia could be considered to be by the time of Sallust's writing.

Perhaps a more compelling reason for Sallust to use Curius to exemplify the downfall of Roman *gentes* is the latter's association with Fulvia, representative of the *gens* Fulvia, another one of Rome's storied families. Indeed, Fulvia's affiliation with Curius, and especially her characterisation as a *mulier nobilis* (*Cat.* 23.3), not only enhance the distinction of Curius—just as Sallust's claim that Sempronia was 'fortunate in her husband' (*viro ... fortunata*, 25.2) enhances the distinction of Sempronia—but also place her own *gens* under the microscope. The Fulvii, as with the Sempronii, could claim a number of noteworthy Romans in their family tree, including M. Fulvius Nobilior, the former consul of the early second century BCE. Sallust, in fact, creates the conditions for thinking of precisely this man in relation to Curius by including among the named conspirators—a list in which Curius himself appears—a certain M. Fulvius Nobilior of equestrian rank (17.4). The character sketch of Curius, then, becomes a vehicle not simply for criticising the *gens* Curia, but also and especially for introducing (and maligning) the *gens* Fulvia.

²⁰ Syme (1964) 134, in fact, argues that Sallust's reference to D. Brutus by way of Sempronia is meant 'to put the reader in mind of D. Brutus, not in a friendly way'.

²¹ For a family tree of the *gens* Sempronia, see Cadoux (1980) 121–2.

²² *RE* IV (1901) 1841–5, s.v. 'Curius 9'.

In addition to the denigration of these famous *gentes* in Sallust's text, recent changes in Rome's urban-monumental landscape by the time Sallust was writing in the 40s BCE—and likely also at the time of the conspiracy in 63—could reinforce Sallust's portrayal of the Sempronii and Fulvii as 'great houses of the plebeian *nobilitas* now in eclipse'.²³ The *gens* Sempronia, at least in the 60s BCE, was visibly associated with one of the largest buildings in the Forum Romanum, the Basilica Sempronia. According to Livy, the censor T. Sempronius Gracchus erected the basilica in 169 BCE at public expense on the south side of the Forum, building it in the former location of the atrium house owned by the famous general P. Cornelius Scipio Africanus (Liv. 44.16.10). In 54 BCE, however, the basilica was demolished and rebuilt by Julius Caesar; by the building's inauguration in 46 BCE, if not before, it was renamed the Basilica Iulia.²⁴

Similarly, as part of Caesar's rebuilding and reorganising of the Forum Romanum in the 50s and 40s BCE, another prominent basilica was targeted: the Basilica Fulvia. Livy recounts that M. Fulvius Nobilior erected the original Basilica Fulvia on the north side of the Forum in 179 BCE (Liv. 40.41.5). Plutarch, however, relates that the rebuilding of the basilica was begun in 55 BCE by Aemilius Paulus (cos. 50) and then ultimately renamed the Basilica Paul[i]; more importantly for my argument, this rebuilding, according to Plutarch, was funded by some of the 1,500 talents given to Paulus by Caesar.²⁵ By the time Sallust published his monograph in the late 40s BCE, therefore, two buildings that were originally associated with the *gentes* Sempronia and Fulvia, both of which were probably still standing and associated with those *gentes* in 63, had been torn down and replaced by buildings associated with Caesar, a man with whom Sallust had allied himself during the civil wars of the 40s, and a man whom Sallust subsequently celebrated for his role in the debate over the punishment of the conspirators under house arrest (*Cat.* 51). Accordingly, one possible explanation for Sallust's particular focus on Sempronia, Curius, and Fulvia is their potential to operate as proxies for their respective *gentes*, and so to reaffirm a narrative of decline that was already visible in the rebuilt and renamed monuments once associated with two of these families.

²³ Syme (1964) 135.

²⁴ On the two phases of the building, see *LTUR* I.177–9, s.v. 'Basilica Iulia'; 187–8, s.v. 'Basilica Sempronia'.

²⁵ Plut. *Caes.* 29.3. On the building, see *LTUR* I.173–5, s.v. 'Basilica Fulvia'; 183–7, s.v. 'Basilica Paul[i]'. A note in Varro, *LL* 6.4 suggests that the building was actually named the Basilica Aemilia et Fulvia before it was renamed the Basilica Paul[i].

Conclusion

This article set out to make two primary arguments. First, based on a number of syntactic and lexical parallels between Sallust's character sketches of Q. Curius and Sempronia, it argued that Curius and Sempronia can be read productively as a matched pair intended to provide a bookend to the first part of Sallust's monograph, mirroring the earlier pairing of Sallust and Catiline. Second, it proposed that one way of understanding why Sallust selected Curius and Sempronia specifically as narrative counterparts to himself and Catiline is to view the former pair as representatives of the *gentes* Curia and Sempronia (and, by extension, Fulvia), and so to see them as reflecting and reifying the decline of these noble houses—a decline already visible in the renaming of two basilicas in the Forum Romanum.

An issue that this article has avoided is the historical identities of Curius and Sempronia, and especially how and whether their identities may have influenced Sallust's selection of them as model representatives of the Catilinarian conspirators. As alluded to in the previous section, an attempt to determine who Curius and Sempronia actually were seems a fruitless endeavour, not least because it is questionable whether an ancient reader would have had a firm grasp on the familial backgrounds of specific actors from the 70s and 60s BCE.²⁶ Rather than focusing on the historical identities of Curius, Sempronia, and others, we might profit instead from thinking of these individuals as signifiers of broader themes adumbrated in the monograph, namely as exemplars of gentilicial decline—emblematic of what Dan-el Padilla Peralta, in an unpublished paper, has called Sallust's 'onomastics of complicity'.²⁷ Accordingly, while there is certainly room (and perhaps even a need) for a detailed scholarly analysis of the historical figures named by Sallust in the *Bellum Catilinae*, an equally fruitful endeavour, I suggest, would be to think about the cumulative effect of Sallust's onomastics on the thesis of his monograph, particularly in light of the context in which Sallust was writing. To be sure, with civil conflict once more ramping up and a wave of proscriptions being launched in Rome in 43 BCE, naming names could have dire consequences for the named.²⁸

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²⁶ Not only that, but as Cadoux's (1980) heroic efforts to identify Sempronia demonstrate, the task is virtually impossible.

²⁷ Padilla Peralta (2011).

²⁸ A similar conclusion is reached by Padilla Peralta (2011), who also writes about 'the indexing of names to violence', and encourages further work on the 'onomastics of violence—as embodied in the Sullan and triumviral proscriptions and as mobilized in triumviral-period texts, among them the *BC*'.

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