Ancient History: Resources for Teachers

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The Secretary
Macquarie Ancient History Association
Ancient History/Faculty of Arts
Macquarie University
NSW 2109
FAX 02 - 9850 8240

Editorial correspondence should be directed to
The Editor
Ancient History: Resources for Teachers
Ancient History/Faculty of Arts
Macquarie University
NSW 2109
FAX 02 - 9850 8240

Notes on Contributors

Bruce Harris
Founding Editor, 1971–1974

Boyo Ockinga
Editor, 1994–1995

Graham Joyner
Editor, 1991–1993

Lea Beness
Editor, 2005–

Tom Hillard

Bill Leadbetter
Editor, 1996–1998

Rosalinde Kearsley
Editor, 1988–1991

Edwin Judge
Editor, 1980

Doug Kelly
Editor, 1973–1974
FROM MARIUS TO SULLA: Part 1
Lea Beness, Tom Hillard

The largely contemporaneous and interlocked careers of these two men (both of them iconic in Roman history) spanned a period of fundamental transformations. Scholars will continue to debate the dates at which we might say the Roman Republic came to an end and the ‘Empire’ began (49 BC, and Caesar’s march on Rome; 44, and the declaration of Caesar’s dictatorship for life; 42, and the battle of Philippi; 31, and the battle of Actium; the Augustan settlement of 27; the accession of Tiberius in AD 14—and even points beyond), but the important transformations occurred over time—and the careers of Marius and Sulla ought to be seen from that perspective for the ways in which they illustrate the changes afoot. We would like to utilize a brief survey of their political lives and aspirations to highlight just some of the landmark and transforming events between 107 and 82 BC. What we want to emphasize are the traditional elements in Roman politics (in particular, the quest for glory through political achievement) and the new. With regard to the latter, the survey will show the ways in which the changing nature of Roman politics impacted on the careers of Marius and Sulla and the ways in which Marius and Sulla themselves transformed the political scene. But also, we would like to underline the extent to which the supernatural played a significant role in Roman history. The extent to which

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1 This paper largely replicates a public lecture delivered by Hillard to NSW Higher School Certificate students at a Macquarie Ancient History Association Roman History Study Day (8 May, 2004), and incorporates a good deal of material from a paper on Marius delivered earlier by Beness at the Ancient History Teachers’ Conference (12 April 1997). On the day of the former lecture, Margaret Parker was in attendance in her official capacity and expressed great satisfaction that a topic of such interest to her remained a focus at such conventions. We offer it to her here in salutation of her great services to the MAHA and to the HSC community, taking the opportunity to incorporate some more recently available material, but the paper does not purport to be in any way comprehensive of modern scholarship, and there is no attempt to provide a full treatment of the two men’s careers (too to introduce novel readings); the overview is impressionistic—and uneven, at that. To those who wish to explore the detail, we shall offer, as we go along, references to the much fuller coverage of these careers in such works as T.F. Carney, A Biography of C. Marius (Proceedings of the African Classical Associations Suppl. No. 1, Assen, Netherlands 1961). E. Badia, Lucius Sulla: The Deadly Reformer (The Seventh Todd Memorial Lecture, Sydney 1970). E. Ghibli, ‘Marius e Sulla’, in Hildagard Tzortzinis (ed.), Anfänge und Niedergang der römischen Welt 1.1 (Berlin 1972) 764-805, Arthur Keyneven, Sulla. The Last Republicans (1982, 2nd edition, London and New York 2005), and Richard J. Evans, Gaius Marius: A Political Biography (Proteria 1994). The phallic icons are, indeed, intended as providing ‘resources for teachers’ (as idiosyncratic as some are).

2 Attention to the supernatural gripped Roman minds, ‘high’ and ‘low’ should not be underestimated. (Academics are, on the whole, rational beings. They can, at times, let this propensity for rational thought blind them to the irrational and distort their understanding of historical events.)

3 Marius’ career could not have begun in a more traditional way. He sought fame on the battlefield—and he did so under felicitous conditions (felicitous, that is, from the Roman perspective). His commanding officer was P. Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus, the man who had destroyed Carthage. If one was to hope for advancement in Roman public life, the connections which one formed and cultivated during early military service could play a key role. It must have seemed that Marius could not have wished for a more auspicious start. His first service as a soldier was in a campaign against the Celtiberians when Scipio Aemilianus was besieging Numantia, and he attracted the notice of his general by excelling the other young men in bravery, and by his very cheerful acceptance of the changed regimen that Scipio introduced into his army when it was spoiled by luxury and extravagance. It is said, too, that ‘the encountered and laid low an enemy in the sight of his general.’ (Plut. Mari. 3.2, Loeb trans.)

4 A young man of well-to-do parentage who hoped to carve out a public career of distinction would thus seek to distinguish himself on the battlefield (indeed, at this historical stage, it was the convention—a rule, said Polybius—that no one could seek public office without having served in ten military seasons). This was the opportunity for first displaying one’s virtus, literally, manliness. Challenging a prominent enemy to single combat was

5 As Badian says, discussing the killing of Tiberius Gracchus, ‘Scholars, being largely rationalists, have tended to neglect the sexual aspects.’ E. Badian, ‘The Pig and the Priest’, in Herbert Hefner and Kurt Tomaszchitz (eds), Ad Fontes! Festschrift für Gerhard Dobesch zum fünfundsiebzigsten Geburtstag am 15. September 2004 (Wien 2004) 263-272, at 263 n. 1.


7 For an amusing anecdote of how Marius impressed Scipo (in the upkeep of his pack animal), see Plut. Mar. 13.2. (The item is often lost in the Cimbrian war narrative.)

8 Cicero, On Duties (a treatise cum manual addressed to his son) 2.45. On the ten-year service rule, Polyb. 6.18.4. This world is not one without reasonance in the modern era, it lasted into (the dawn of the) the twentieth century at least. On the eve of that century, in 1897 and early 1898, Churchill lobbied hard, first to join an expedition to the Tirah (which proved stillborn), and later to join General Kitchener’s campaign to re-conquer the Sudan from the Dervishes. He enlisted
an obvious start—and an option taken up by a great number of known individuals. In this fashion, a man was literally marked for distinction—not simply with the scars that Roman leaders would go on to proudly display, but by the awarding of very specific badges of honour, some of them requiring ongoing public recognition when the awardee returned to Rome. In such a

the not inconsiderable help of his mother (in a fashion that we could well imagine a young member of the Roman elite entrusting a well-connected mother), writing to her: “Oh, how I wish I could work you up over Egypt! I know you could do it with all your influence—and all the people you know. It is a pushing age and we must shine with the best. After Titha and Egypt—then I think I shall turn from war to peace and politics. That is—[if I get through it all right]” (Douglas S. Russell, “Li. Churchill, 4th Queen’s Own Hussars,” Proceedings of the International Churchill Societies 1994-95 (Boston, 28th October 1995, The Churchill Centre and Museum at the Churchill War Rooms, London <http://www.winstonchurchill.org/learn/biography/the-mildec/churchill-4th-queens-own-hussars>). His letters are valuable testimony to values at the very point when technology would change the face of warfare, and indeed transforms it substantially. An earlier episode—in India—had already illustrated the aim of the enterprise. Courage was for spectacle. Without witness, there was considerably less point. In one engagement young Churchill had recovered the body of a fallen comrade at great personal danger; “later he complained to his mother that, on the one hand, his uniform was stained with the other man’s blood, and on the other, that no-one appeared to notice this act of gallantry—given an audience there is no act too daring or too noble. Without the gallantry things are different.” (Richard Hough, Winston and Clementine. The Triumph of the Churchill [London 1999] 82).

For Cato the elder, Plutarch, Cato maior 1.6; for Scipio Africanus, Plutarch, Aemilias Paulinas 22.3-4 (personal pursuit of fleeing enemies), Cicero, Tusculan Disputations 4.50 (single combat), for Pompey, Plutarch, Pompey 7.2: For single combat more generally, see S.P. Oakley, “Single combat in the Roman Republic,” Classical Quarterly 35 (1985) 392-410 (commenting on the importance of corporate solidarity and individual initiative in the Roman army); Thomas Wiedemann, “Single combat and being Roman,” Ancient Society 27 (1996) 91-103 (on the different forms of single combat). Many other young men who would go on to historically prominent careers would begin by distinguishing themselves in battle in a variety of ways. For Scipio Africanus, whose personal feats are alluded to above, see A. Aitkin, Scipio Africanus (Oxford 1967) 18; 46-47; 62. For Tiberius Gracchus, see Plutarch, Tiberius Gracchus 4-5. For Gaius Gracchus, Plutarch, Ages and Clomesses and the Gracchi Compared 3.2. Caesar famously won the corona civica for saving the life of another citizen on the battlefield.

On this whole topic, including an observation of developments over time, see Myles McDonald, Roman Military Virtus et the Roman Republic (Cambridge 2006). For discussions, focusing in particular upon Marius, see pp. 265-292.

On casualties, the healed vestiges of wounds taken in war (and on their display when seeking subsequent political empowerment), Mathew Leigh, “Wounding and popular rhetoric at Rome”, Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies 46 (1999) 195-216. For one particularly illustrative example of display, Livy 45.39.16-17 (on M. Servilius Pulex Genuinus, who must have been close to 80 years of age at the time, addressing a Roman assembly in 167). I have on twenty-three occasions challenged and fought an enemy; I brought back the spoils of every man with whom I dealt. I possess a body adorned with honourable scars, every one of

fashion, Marius, Plutarch tells us, was advanced to many honours by Scipio. Still, Marius had his work cut out. He had not been born into Rome’s political elite; he came from Arpinum, a hilltown over one hundred kilometres south-east of Rome in what was formerly Volscin country—more specifically, from Cirrhetoan (Ceretiae), a village in the territory of Arpinum. Stories, however, that he grew up in straitened nastic circumstances and that he served first as a soldier in the ranks emanate from first-century AD rhetoric that sought to juxtapose a (falsely) simple beginning with his later greatness.

[A] son of Arpinum once toiled as a ploughboy, for hire, In the Voliscian hills, and afterwards joined the army— Centurion-batt, his brains half eagedgled out whenever He leaned on his spade, took a brothker from camp-outrenching. Yet this was the same man who faced the threat of Teutoic Invasions, who single-handed stood up in this mortal crisis And saved the trembling City. So when the ravens

then received in front.” He then stripped, it is said, and told in which war he had received each wound. (Loeb trans.).

Marius, we are told, was proud of his (Sallust, Jugurthine War 85.29). “I cannot, to justify your confidence [be sure to the assembled citizen], display family portraits (imagines) of the triumphs and consohnps of my forefathers; but, if the occasion requires it, I can show you scars (ostia), a bower (vittam), emblems (phalerae) and other military prizes, as well as scars on my chest. These are my portraits, these my patet of nobility …” The ‘spears’ were the hastae donatiae, headless spears presented for valor; the phalerae were metal discs or bosses representing military decorations. Richard J. Evans (‘Displaying honourable scars: a Roman gimmick’, Acta Classica 42 [1999] 77-94) thinks that this practice became ‘discussed’ after the Hannibalic war, such exposure being looked upon as ‘exhibitionist’. That hardly takes into fair account the episode in 167, cited above, which is described by Plutarch (Aemilias Paulinas 31) as carrying the day. Honours in the form of specific badges, crowns etc., were given out with great ceremony; cf. Polybius 6.39.1–11; Pliny, Natural History 16.9-14, for a history of such awards; and Aulus Gallus, Attic Nights 5.6. Oaths were required by beneficiaries and witnesses; Pliny, NF 16.12; cf. Livy 26.68.5-13 (on the strict investigation that might precede award). Such honours could indeed be awarded to men of the ranks (as can be seen in the material cited above). For a notable example, see Livy 42.34 (Sp. Lusitanius—of centurion’s rank—had, he could announce in 171 BC, been awarded six cornuae civicae (civic crowns), and been rewarded for bravery on thirty-four occasions). We hear of men actually in battle with their insignia and military decorations ‘shining’ (see Ross Cowan, Roman Battle Tactics 109 BC–AD 131 (Oxford 2007), 6, for references and illustrations; cf. J.E. Sandys, Latin Epigraphy. An Introduction to the Study of Latin Inscriptions (London 1927) 77-78). After the awarding of a corona civica, or civic crown, given out for the saving of another citizen’s life, all other citizens were required to rise upon the approach of the recipient. Ongoing social recognition was an essential element of the honours system in Rome.

Plutarch, Marius 3.3.
Swooped down to feast on those giant barbarian
carcasses, the largest they'd ever seen, his colleague
shared in his triumph, but all the cheers were for Marius.
(Juvénal 8.245–254, Penguin trans.)

Plutarch swallowed this hook, line and sinker (and it is an image that Marius might well have cultivated).

Born of parents who were altogether obscure—poor people who lived by the
labour of their own hands... it was not till late that he saw the city or got a
taste for city ways (Marius 3.1).

The reality was rather different. Marius' immediate family had links to
the families of Arpinum's local aristocracy and would have been a family of
means. If Marius worked on the land, it was probably because, he, like Cato,
close to. The fact that Marius was found in the train of Scipio was no doubt
due to these connections; and it is no surprise when he emerges, early in his
career, as a representative of what we may call 'big business interests', those
exploiting Rome's expanding power and influence in the Mediterranean
world.8

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8 On Cato (and for an image similarly distorted by Plutarch), see Plutarch, Cato maior 1.
(That was an image cultivated by Cato himself. The same was possibly true of Marius.)
Juvenal and Plutarch should not be faulted solely. No less perspicacious an historian as
Tacitus slips, during one of his more superficial historical overviews, into a class
contrasting of Marius and Sulla, with Sulla from the nobility and Marius 'from the dogs
of society' (c plebe infima; Hist. 2.43). Even those appreciative of Tacitus' talent cannot
excuse this 'conventional antithesis', in the case of Marius 'incorrect and misleading' (R.

Diodorus (24:55.38.1) tells us that Marius was reputed to be a demotichos (tax-farmer)—
e.g., one of the publicani. Note also in the anecdote from Valerius Maximus (below
[6.11]) we learn that Marius served in the cavalry contingent at Numantia. An event did not
suffer from a century's lags when he took a break from digging. See also the curious
throwaway statement of the older Pliny (Natural History 36.116), tantalizingly allusive, that
M. Aemilius Scævola whilst a leader of the community (principis civitatis) acted as 'the
pursue' (or a refugee!) for the companions of Marius as they plundered the provinces
(Mariami sodalicii ripinarum provinciarum vixit). What it is that lies behind this
fascinating claim is elusive, but it is a clear reference to Marius' contacts in the communal
world. (The passage is discussed by Gabba [Introductory note], 773.) Curran usefully
underlined this aspect of Marius' background in his effective recasting of Marius' image.
See his chapters IV ('Open association with big business interests') and V ('As figurehead of
big business interests in foreign politics'), esp. 13–6. On Marius' background, Curran,
8:14. For the problems associated with the source tradition, Curran, 2–7.

It is probable that Marius had gone out to Spain as part of Scipio's cohors amicae—
the 500 clients and friends that Scipio took with him from Rome. On these, see Appian,
Spanish Wars 84.

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When we first come across Marius in his early twenties, he is dining in
company with Scipio, and within arm's length, sure enough evidence of
Marius' station. No matter how outstanding in the heat of battle, a ranker did
not have the occasion to dine with the general in this fashion.10 The event
recorded was to be a significant one in Marius' life.

... once, when the talk after a meal had turned to the subject of generals, one
of those present, whether from genuine curiosity or to give pleasure to Scipio,
asked him to whom the Roman People should look to find such a leader in the
military or political sense (a hegemon or prostates) who might follow him,
and Scipio gently tapped Marius on the shoulder as he reclined next to him,
saying "Here, perhaps." (Plut. Mor. 3.3)11

Many find this anecdote to be, as they say, just too good (to be true). It seems
like an apocryphal story invented after Marius' subsequent rise to
prominence. One of the present authors is not so inclined to dismiss it12—and
it is worth pausing to contemplate the circumstances of Marius' induction
into public life and the historical context within which his career began. At
the age of twenty-three, Marius had probably seen prior military service, but
his Spanish adventure possibly served as his introduction to the wider
world.13 Scipio was Rome's outstanding general. He had held two
consultations and a censorship. He had been honoured with one of Rome's

9 In hostile political polemic we hear of soldiers being present, at their moral peril, in a
general's tent (Gaius Gracchus, ad populum cum ex Sardinia redit, frg. 26 Malcovevi
[= Aulus Gellius, Attic Nights 15.12.2]), but that was an altogether different situation. They
were not there to dine, Marius was present in the company of Scipio's friends. And Scipio
carefully cultivated an image of noble probity, in contradistinction to so many of his peers
(see below).

10 Cf. Valerius Maximus 8.17.7.

11 The seven consulships and two splendid triumphs of C. Marius lie embedded in a single remark
of the younger Africanus. For until the day of his death Marius delighted to recall that when he
was serving in the cavalry of Scipio at Numantia, somebody asked the latter at dinner what
equally great general the Republic would turn to if anything should happen to him. Scipio
looked across to Marius, who was 'above him on the couch' (i.e., reclining in the place next to
him), and said "Petreius, this one'.

12 Beness remains sceptical. The assertion in Valerius Maximus (above) that the story was
broadcast by Marius himself, hardly surprising, strengthens the scepticism of Beness. The
double reference to the incident may suggest that it was retained by Livy (which settles the
question neither one way nor another).

13 Amongst those serving as subordinate officers with this army, he will have met Jugurtha, a
prince of Numidia. The international flavour of the camp was enriched by those far-flung
"cities and kings friendly to Scipio" that dispatched auxiliary troops (Appian, Spanish
Wars 84). Whilst in winter quarters (234/133 BC), Scipio was joined by forces from Africa
(twelve elephants and a group of archers and slingers; Appian, Spanish Wars 89; cf. Michael
Dobson, The Army of the Roman Republic, The Second Century BC, Polybius and the
Campos at Numantia, Spain (Oxford 2009) 45.)
most significant triumphs (for the destruction of Carthage), and was in expectation of another, having been sent to Spain to take in hand one of Rome's most troublesome theatres of war—to clean up the mess, as it were. He was, at the time, a hegemon without peer. Prostate? There were many at Rome who would have disputed any claim on Scipio's part to be the leading statesman, but at this stage, the People would have had none of that. Scipio was the darling of the wider populace. And Rome was about to enter troubled times. Depending on the timing of this supposed dinner table conversation, the news of victories, terrible victories, might already have reached Spain. (The first news will have been that Scipio's brother-in-law Tiberius Gracchus was introducing controversial land reform legislation that Scipio's friend Laelius had contemplated but dropped because of the opposition of vested interests. That will have been followed by the news that Gracchus had engineered the deposition of a tribune who had not respected, a unprecedented political event, then by news that Gracchus was standing for a second tribunate, an unprecedented continuity of office tenure, and then that 300 people, together with Gracchus, a sacrosanct tribune, had been clubbed to death on the Capitol hill, Rome's religious centre.) There were some, in retrospect (Plutarch amongst them), who were to say that the troubles in Rome would not have come to the head that they did, if Scipio had been present. And, in the wake of that trouble having erupted, there may have been talk in Rome of the need of a helmman, a leader, perhaps even—in a sense that was novel at Rome—of a dictatorship. It is also possible that strange prophecies were circulating in Spain, in the territory of the Areovici (that is to say, in the region in which Scipio was operating), that a king would arise in Spain. If such a prophecy was circulating, there was no reason to suppose that its origin was pro-Roman. Likewise, there is no reason to suppose that a people so alert to the ominous, did not contemplate the possibilities. If the wine flowed in Scipio's tent (he was not one given to excess), the consumption might have become lateral. Scipio was without issue (a cause for concern in any aristocratic family acutely aware of the need for descendants to maintain the sacred rights of the family), and in a loveless marriage (unlikely to be productive). In his early fifties (and without the prospect of a divorce short of major political fallout), Scipio had not adopted an heir. (He was to go to his grave—or rather, sarcophagus—without one.) In this light, it is feasible that a friend or flatterer raised the thorny question—a friend, not without real concern; a flatterer, in the way of pinning the hopes of the Republic on Scipio. But Scipio's response, if as Plutarch tells it (and Plutarch says that this was the way Marius told it), was extraordinary—and we might imagine electrifying. For all the municipal wealth he may have enjoyed, Marius was the outsider. He was the one who lacked the 'symbolic capital' (as the contemporary elite had come to understand it), that is to say, a name which resonated with the public on account of the homines that could be tallied against it. (To this concept, we shall return shortly.) But Marius' lack of same is worth contemplating here. Christian Meier, in his biography of Julius Caesar, stresses what he calls Caesar's outsider-status. (In German, the word Außenseiter has a greater punch and apposition because of its ready association with a sporting context.) What Meier clearly has in mind is a certain psychological alienation, or apartness, that enabled Caesar to see a different reality to that embraced by Rome's political elite (we should obviously avoid the word 'establishment'). That's as may be. But, it is worthwhile reflecting upon the extent to which Außenseiter had an impact, not only on the way in which Romans came to see themselves—through the works of those not born in Rome (Cicero, Varro, Sallust, Catullus and Virgil, 18 Just to complicate the matter, there was, in Further Spain, a Roman commander (Dosc. Iulius Brutus Calpurnius, cos. 138), who had led a Roman army for the first time to the shores of the Atlantic and who had possibly been in that military command for an extraordinary five years (this calculation being based on the evidence of Eutropius, Breviarium, 4:19, that Brutus did not celebrate his triumph in Rome until 133 BC). Was he another candidate for extraordinary elevation? And since we are looking here at the aspirations of the young Marius, there is no need to assume that the prophecy, if it was circulating, did not excite the hopes of more than those who were currently in command. Could it be that such unrealistic aspirations swam into the consciousness of the politically active at so early a date in terms of the history of the Roman Republic? Hillard, at least, is prepared, in the light of all the evidence to be considered below, to contemplate the possibility. 19 On the marriage (to Graecina) of Sempronius, Appian, Civil Wars 1:20. 20 Christian Meier, Caesar (1982, Eng. trans. London 1995). See, in particular, his chapters 1 'Caesar and Rome: Two Realities' (esp. 10–14) and 3 'Crisis and Outsiders'; cf. 19–20; 23; 72; 91; 112–5; 140–41; 338; 562; 483.)
for instance), but on Rome’s political destiny. Was the outsider more likely to envisage a different reality, and think outside the square?

This service in Spain may well have functioned, as we said above, as Marius’ introduction to the wider world, but had it been welcoming? Did the other staff officers embrace the talented newcomer to their circle? The general’s text (the word contubernium, or tent-group, was used figuratively in this regard) served as an induction ceremony. Ernest Badian elastisizes this nicely:

Contubernium was the cement of the rei publica ... It was the [rite of passage] where the young upper-class adolescent became an accepted member of his class, came to know his [equals] and his seniors, and made some of the contacts that would assure his future, at whatever level it was to develop. Sons of senators and sons of equites served together: it was contubernium that ensured the basic homogeneity of the upper class, political and non-political, and that made it possible to open the doors of the Curia [the Senate house] to Equites and to promote some of them even to the consulship. One might perhaps compare its social function to that of Arnold’s public school in England.21

Here Marius moved in a fairly illustrious circle.22 The other officers included Scipio’s brother, Quintus Fabius Maximus Aemilianus (who had been a consul in 145),23 Scipio’s nephew, Quintus Fabius Maximus (later called Allobrogicus) (who would be a consul in 121);24 Scmepnus Asellio, the historian;25 Publius Rutilius Rufus (the philosopher who would write history and become one of the consuls of 105);26 Jughurta (a Numidian prince); Gaius Memmius (possibly the very active tribune of 111 who would, in that year, have war declared on Jugurthia); Gaius Caecilius Metellus Capuarus, a son of the great Q. Metellus Macedonicus, later consul in 113 and censor in 102;27 Gaius Lucilius the satirist;28 Aemilius’ brother-in-law, Gaius Gracchus,29 and possibly Polybius himself, who wrote a monograph on the

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30 Cicero, Letters to his Friends, 5.12.2; his presence is doubted by some, cf., e.g., F. W. Walbank, A Historical Commentary on Polybius (Oxford 1970) 16.

31 The class of 134 did not go forward with a strong esprit de corps. Metellus Macedonicus, the father of Capuarus (see above), was a major opponent of Scipio towards the end of the latter’s career (see J.L. Henley and T.W. Hillard, ‘Another Voice against the Tyranny’ of Scipio Aemilius in 129 BC?’, Historia (forthcoming); the Metelli were no friends of the Gracchi (Cicero, Brutus 81; Plutarch, Tiberius Gracchus 14.3); P. Rutilius Rufus emerged as the bitter traducer of Marius’ achievements (Carney [introduction note] 3); Memmius became a thorn in the side of Jugurtha (Sallust, Jugurthine War 25.2; 30.31).—and, of course, Jugurtha died an enemy of Rome (foussing Scipio’s advice [Sallust, Jugurthine War 8.2]). A contributing factor may well have been Scipio’s relationship with his subordinates. Memmius was told he was a disgrace and seems to have been put on thirty days’ detention—or was he simply dismissed after thirty days’ service? (Scipio dismissed in the baggage carried by the pack-animals of Memmius — wine-cooler set with precious stones, the work of Thrasyllus [a Corinthian potter], and said to him, “By such conduct you have made yourself useless to me and your country for thirty days, but useless to yourself for your whole lifetime.”) (Patricius, Moralia 201C — Scipio detribuit Memmum 17 [trans. Babington, Frontinus, Strategems 9.1.1] C. Caecilius Metellus Capuarus, probably on the occasion of service under Scipio, was told that if his mother was to give birth to a fifth child she’d give birth to an ass (Cicero, Concerning Oratory 2.297)—the suggestion being that she was giving birth to children of diminishing intelligence, and a play of words on the fact that Capuarus suggested a goat. So not all of Scipio’s staff went away with the pat on the back that Marius did. (On Scipio’s generally uncompromising attitude in Spain, see Valerius Maximi 2.7.1; and Appian, Spanish Wars 85 [a passage quoted below in n. 45].)

32 Livy 38.36.7.

33 Thus Cicero was pilloried by T. Manlius Torquatus in 62 (Cicero, In Defence of Sulla 22), a full century and a quarter after receiving the franchise (and around seventy years after Marius’ service at Numantia).

34 On all this, see Gary D. Farney, Ethnic Identity and Aristocratic Competition in Republican Rome (Cambridge 2007) 29. Farney’s first chapter deals with the concept of duae patriae.
aware of the debt.\textsuperscript{35} When Marius was at Numantia, that way had not yet been paved.

We return to the ‘prophecy’. Scipio’s spontaneous response to the question posed is not difficult to align with what we know of Scipio. He was an appreciator of ‘manliness’—and was saying that merit would have to prevail—‘perhaps’.\textsuperscript{36} His gaze on Marius, Scipio possibly saw himself as an outsider to the end. Coming though he did from the heart of the nobility (his birth-father twice consul, twice a triumphator; his mother the daughter of a consul; himself adopted by the son of the outstanding Scipio Africanus, vanquisher of Hannibal; married to the daughter of a man twice consul, twice a triumphator), Scipio chose to stand apart. Adopted into the family of the Scipiones, he had not initially been comfortable with the expectations upon him.\textsuperscript{37} He came from a family which had emphasised the virtues of poverty (his father had died proudly poor,\textsuperscript{38} one of his sisters had been married to the son of Cato [who preached austerity], and another had married into the Aelii Tubercorones [who made constrained circumstances their emblem]). The Scipiones, on the other hand, had advertised their wealth (see Polybius 31.26.1, on the paraphernalia of the widow of Africanus the Elder). When Scipio Aemilianus inherited this, he gave it away. His relations with his Scipionic cousins (the Nasicae) were formally impeccable,\textsuperscript{39} he put them in his (and social) debt. But Scipio opted to separate himself—ostentatiously—from an elite he considered degenerate, isolating himself from the prevalent social trends of the day.\textsuperscript{40} A ruling class, born to Rome’s predominant standing in the Mediterranean (firmly established in 168 at the battle of Pydna), had thought to enjoy its opportunities for leisure.\textsuperscript{41} Against this ‘decadence’, Scipio set his face.\textsuperscript{42} Rome had even witnessed, with regard to the campaigning in Spain, a reluctance on the part of the Romans eligible for military service, a reluctance to serve that was unprecedented in living memory.\textsuperscript{43} Once back in command (in Spain, where this episode took place), Scipio set himself to the rigorous overhauling of military discipline.

\textsuperscript{35} Cf. Farney (n.34) 47; referencing Wiseman.
\textsuperscript{36} And perhaps Scipio was one given to thought along the lines of après moi, le déluge.
\textsuperscript{37} Polybius 31.23 (a first-hand witness). Scipio asked Polybius if he (sc. the latter) had the same opinion of him as he had everybody else (that he was an inadequate representative of his new family).
\textsuperscript{38} Plutarch, \textit{Aemilius Paullus}, 39.10—"poverty" being a relative thing.
\textsuperscript{39} Polybius 31.27.
\textsuperscript{40} This was Scipio’s ‘badge of honour’; Polybius 31.25.
\textsuperscript{41} Polybius 31.25.
\textsuperscript{42} Polybius, loc.cit. Contemporary evidence exists in a fragment of one of Scipio’s speeches; \textit{adversus P. Sulpicium Galium}, frag. 17 Malcovati (= Aulaeus Gallius, \textit{Atic Nights} 6.12.1).
\textsuperscript{43} Polybius 25.4.3–14.

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Anecdotes rehearse his sneering disdain for the laxities he found within the Roman army in Spain (see below). Appian records his clearance of ‘baggage’ in the Roman camps.\textsuperscript{44} Small wonder that Marius’ commitment to military life drew the appreciation of Scipio.\textsuperscript{45} Those from Scipio’s peer-group who served under him as often as not (as we have seen above) felt the barbed lashings of his tongue.\textsuperscript{46} In admiration of Scipio, Marius may have learned contempt for Rome’s nobility.

\textsuperscript{44} First to go were the traders and heuristai (‘female-companions’); Appian, \textit{Spanish Wars} 84. (This was reminiscent of his purging of the army at Carthage in 147 [Appian, \textit{Punic Wars} 1:117].) Anecdotal evidence: Attis (n.5) 259–62, nos 33–42b.

\textsuperscript{45} It is perhaps worthwhile quoting Appian at some length on Scipio’s regimen. Here, indeed, we might see Marius as the heir of Scipio.

\textsuperscript{46} When he arrived he expected all traders and hucksters; also the scavengers and diviners, whom the soldiers were continually consulting because they were demonized by defile. For the future he forbade the bringing in of anything not necessary, or any vicissitudes for purposes of divination. He offered all wagons and their superfluous contents to be sold, and all pack animals, except such as he designated, to remain. For cooking utensils it was permitted to have only a spit, a brass kettle, and one cup. Their food was limited to plain boiled and seasoned meats. They were forbidden to have beds, and Scipio was the first one to sleep on straw. He forbade them to ride males when on the march; “for what can you expect in a war,” said he, “from a man who is not able to walk?” Those who had served to behave and insist upon being riden by Scipio, who said that only males, having no hands, needed other to rub them. Thus in a short time he brought them back to good order. He accustomed them also to respect and fear himself by being difficult of access and sparing of favour, especially favour contrary to regulations. He often said that those generals who were severe and strict in the observance of laws were servicable to their own men, while those who were easy going and beneficial were useful only to the enemy. The soldiers of the latter, he said, might be joyful but insubordinate, while the others, although distraught, would be obedient and ready for all emergencies. (Appian, \textit{Spanish Wars} 85; \textit{Hispanic White Trousers}.)

The description of Scipio’s retrenching of his army continues into the next passage (n.6). It is worth consulting with an eye to the future Marius. Cf. Livy, \textit{Samnium} 57.

\textsuperscript{46} Takes, for example, his readiness to insult the whole Motilien clan; Cicero, \textit{Concerning Oratory} 2.267 (as glossed above [note 31]). Other examples were collected by Plutarch in his \textit{apophthegmata Scipionum} ("The Sayings of Scipio").

The nobility placed great store in what has come to be called ‘symbolic capital’. For useful discussions of the latter, see Karl-Lothar Hübnerkepp, ‘Konsens und Konkurrenz. Die politische Kultur der römischen Republik in neuer Sicht’ [Consensus and Competition. The Political Culture of the Roman Republic in Modern Overviews], \textit{Ris.} 88.2 (2006) 360–96 (where at pp. 382-6 he discusses ‘The Conventions of Consensus: Symbolic Capital’.); observing, even alas, the unbridling accountant’s attention to such things as the numbers of consulships and triumphs won by each family) and ‘Hierarchie und Konsens. Pompey in der politischen Kultur der römischen Republik’, in A.H. Arweiler and B.M. Gauly (eds), \textit{Machtfragen. Zur kulturellen Reproduktion und Konstruktion von Macht in Antike, Mittelelter und Neuzeit} (Stuttgart 2008) 79–126 (where he observes, at pp. 106–7, that—to translate roughly—"this symbolic capital" did not remain constant, automatically issuing an ever accessible high interest. It needed, rather, a constant top up. It ‘wore out’—if one could not recall the community’s attention to recent achievements).

In that latter observation is the rub. Scipio was underlining the original concept of nobilitas. The elite was not supposed to be an aristocracy born to its position, but a meritocracy. This was a rekindling of the word’s essence, of which the ‘new men’ would make much.
endorsement, but, in praising him, Scipio perhaps set him further apart than his birth had already established.

Perhaps, as we said, Scipio, however much he was concerned with what would be the Roman memory of him, was not concerned with what would actually follow after his death (which he was not envisaging). Marius was concerned with the future. And from Scipio, it can be imagined, he learned much. One legacy will have been the military craft overall. Another legacy was in the need for army reform and for the rigorous imposition of the ‘old’ discipline. The major reform of army structure is usually (and rightly) associated with the changes instituted by Marius in the last decade of the century (see below), but many changes were in quiet progress, the movement towards the more flexible cohort-structure, for instance. We might contemplate other lessons imparted. When the members of Scipio’s comitium asked their general—during, say, a common meal—if he would ‘favour them with an anecdote’ what sort of recollections would Scipio make of political life in Rome? A fierce social conservative, he was—at the same time—a political opportunist, ready to grasp any chance, often at the expense of convention, to advance his own career. Scipio had held his

48 It is noteworthy that Scipio’s major success in the Numantian campaign followed from his establishment of Numantia with a series of forts (see Appian, Spanish Wars 90-92). Did Marius’ wartime reminiscences circulate within the familia? (There was nothing casual in the passing down of such lore in Roman households.) His nephew, fourteen years old at the time of Marius’ death, was virtually to bring Rome’s Gallic wars to an end with the strangling circumvallation of the town of Alcetia in 52 BC.

49 The chronology of the transition to cohorts is less certain than the organisational changes involved. It is suggested here as occurring during the second half of the second century, the first of all in Spain. The perceived advantages of it in Spain then perhaps caused it to spread to other areas by the end of the century, with the final move from maniples occurring during the Jugurthine War, which is the last attested use of maniples.” (Dobson [n.13] 408)

50 Contemplate Alan Astin’s vivid assessment of Scipio’s place in Roman political history. In so far as Scipio’s career does have long-term significance (and Astin has just offered a controversial judgement on which he characterises that career in terms of its “curiously negative quality”), this lies in its relationship to the decline of the Roman Republic. That decline into the confusion and civil wars from which the Principate was to emerge was long and complex phenomenon, and it has engendered much controversy. None the less, among the multitude of factors which together constituted the causes there is no doubt that considerable importance is to be attached to the growth of popularise methods, and to the increasing readiness to subliminate constitutional requirements and the rule of law to immediate and personal advantage. In this process Scipio played a substantial role. It is one of the characteristics of his career that, with conspicuous success, he ploughed his own advancement both above usage and the law, that in the furtherance of his own ambitions he cultivated and exploited popular favour as an instrument with which to defy the Senate. In so doing he not only provided formal precedents but helped to break down psychological barriers, to create a political atmosphere in which such methods could be sanctioned and, because of their evident success, continued. Both in this way and by assisting in the creation of a situation of tense factional hostility, in which his own methods had made popular appeal a key factor, he did much to give the political crisis of 133 its particular shape and intensity.” (Astin, [n.7] 242-43)
Scipio might have imparted other lessons: an appreciation of Homer, of Greek sophistry, of Greek philosophy, and of shell-collecting—but these seem to have had little effect on the boy from Arpinum. 54

And Marius may have found inspiration in still another quarter. He was not a man whose birth and common sense would have marked out for leadership in any historically significant fashion. But his destiny did (and Marius was convinced). Later in his life, at a grim moment—in 87 (when those around him were fearful that his death was imminent), he reassured them with a childhood reminiscence (about which he had kept quiet until that point?). When he was a child and still living in the country, he had caught in his cloak a falling eagle’s nest. Within it, seven nestlings. His parents were thunderstruck (as well they might be), and consulted seers (manteis), who prophesied that the young lad would go on to hold the highest command and position of leadership seven times (Plutarch, Marius 36.5). How long had Marius nursed the ambition of this being confirmed at consul level in Rome? He was, Valerius Maximus informs us (6.9.14), disabused early of any hope that the prophecy might refer to municipal honours. He was rejected for hometown honours (the passage is quoted below). That might be uninformative rhetoric—but the prophecy (if it was historical) was a heady one. 55

The chief reason for rejecting it will be modern scepticism that an individual could be persuaded of the efficacy of such a sign. That will not do. The evidence is overwhelmingly in favour of such beliefs guiding the ancients. But Plutarch offers another qualification, reporting the ancient scepticism of those pointed out that an eagle never lays more than two eggs—and, indeed, the modern observation is that an eagle does not lay more than three eggs at a time (which some in the ancient world also saw). But that is no reason to disbelieve that Marius was retelling a story that had been with him since his earliest youth. Marius’ parents were amazed precisely because the

54 On Marius’ epigram of learning (in this regard), see Sallust, The Jugurthine War 85.32. The old man of Arpinum did not perhaps encourage an expansion of cultural horizons. We know the opinion of one—Cicero’s grandfather. It was the same, he thought, with Romans as with Syrian slaves; “the better he could speak Greek, the more wary you had of the sly cost” (Cicero, Concerning Oratory 2.265 (out rough translation)). On Scipio’s cultural tastes, Cicero, Tusculan Disputations 2.63; Velleius Paterculus i.13.3; cf. Astin [n.5] 15–17. On Scipio’s shell-collecting, Valerius Maximus 8.8.1.

55 Plutarch (Marius 4.1) says that Marius took Scipio’s utterance at Numantia as if it were a divine prophecy. (Plutarch indicates here that he took this from a source; “it is said”—legatus). If Marius came to the episode ‘primed’, as it were, he may well have thought that the gods were speaking through Scipio.

56 This particular trust in fortune, by the way, was not something which Scipio would have encouraged—though obviously there had been considerable attention paid to such things in the Roman camps. Scipio had found the context of such methods. As part of his reorganization of the discipline and discipline, he drove out all the omens (the soothsayers or clairvoyants) and the divus (the diviners) “whom the soldiers consulted continually, having become extremely anxious because of their lack of success—and for the future, he forbade the bringing into the camp all unnecessary items, even a sacrificial victim prepared for sacrifice” (Appian, Spanish Wars 85 [quoted above]; the translation here is a modified version of that given by J.S. Richardson, Appian Wars of the Romans in Iberia [Warminster 2000]). This report, however, serves as a useful reminder of just how seriously such predictions were taken by those in the Roman forces. The atmosphere in the Roman camps investing Numantia was a fertile seedbed. Scipio’s concern was simply that the careful attention to individual destinies would interfere with the collective enterprise. Only, his destiny ultimately mattered.

57 It should not surprise anyone that this important item did not escape the eagle eye of the late Emerius Bulbus. In a lecture delivered at the University of Sydney on the 11th of September 1969, he suggested that “this motif should often be taken much more seriously than it nowadays is” (Lucius Sulla, The Deadly Reformer [Sydney 1970] 77–69). (That challenge was in effect taken up by Wyciak [n.25].)
Numantia (such things were remembered and, literally, applauded by the community)\(^{55}\) served him well, and he clawed his way into the quaestorship sometime between 123 and 121 in his mid-thirties.\(^{60}\) Valerius Maximus speaks of him as battering his way into the Senate House rather than entering it.

Marius is remarkable above all for his struggle against fortune. He sustained all its assaults with the greatest courage and with equal vigour of mind and spirit. Judged unworthy of honours at Arpinum, he sought the quaestorship at Rome. Then, enduring electoral defeats, he rather broke his way into the curia than entered. (Val. Max. 6.9.14)\(^ {61}\)

We might also believe that his military reputation had brought him to the attention of the Metellii, whose patronage tipped the balance in his favour.\(^ {62}\) (It might seem as if the old-boy network from Scipio’s camp at Numantia was working after all.) They might have expected that they would have a reliable adherent whose military experience would serve them well when they took up provincial commands.\(^ {63}\)

The evidence is somewhat contradictory. Sallust speaks of his military renown opening multiple doors—and a steady upward progress.

\(^{55}\) By way of illustration, see Plutarch, Life of Scipio Africanus 4.3. In Marius’ case, we have the explicit testimony of Sallust (AUG 63.4–5) (see below).

\(^{60}\) For a discussion of the possible chronology of Marius’ career at this point, and for references to other literature, see T.R.S. Broughton, MRZ (Atlanta 1986) 3.139–40.

\(^{61}\) The rest of the passage reveals its high-flown rhetorical nature (rather in the vein of the Juvenal passage cited earlier).

In his petition for the tribunate and the aedilship he suffered again on the Field [of Mars], a similar humiliation. When he stood for the priesthood, Marius could manage no better than bottom place among those elected. Even that success was fraught with danger, for he was charged with electoral corruption and only just managed to win a narrow acquittal from the judges. Yet, from this Marius, so low-born at Arpinum, (considered) so ignoble at Rome, so laughable a candidate, there came forth that Marius who subjected Africa, who drove King Jugurtha before his chariot, who destroyed the armies of the Troianœ and Cinæni, whose two temples were seen in the city, whose seven centurions were written in the list, who returning from exile was elected consul and who, prescribed, became the prescriber in turn. What more inconsistent and variable than the list of this man? whom, if he is to be placed amongst the illustrious, then the most miserable, if amongst the fortunate, he is deemed as the most fortunate of all.

That would lead some, like Richard Evans (introductory notes 32–35), to reject the evidence altogether, suggesting that Marius never held a quaestorship, that being an unnecessary step in the cause. That is possible, despite later testimony to the contrary—and no direct evidence can be adduced to confirm it.\(^ {62}\)

\(^{62}\) Plutarch, Marius 4.1.

\(^{63}\) See Plutarch, loc. cit. for Metellus patrocinium. This inclines some to date his quaestorship to the year of a Metellus consul, Q. Metellus Balearicus (cos. 123). Such precise synchronicity is not necessary.

The result [of Marius’ earliest manifestation of talent] was that when he first sought the office of military tribune from the people, the greater number did not know him by sight; yet his deeds were familiar and he was elected by the vote of all the tribes. Then, after that success, he won office after office, always so conducting himself in each of them as to be regarded worthy of a higher position than that which he was holding. (AUG 63.4–5)

Whatever the case, once he had attained senatorial rank, it is clear that his career was one of varying fortunes. (This was, to a degree, in alignment with the times which were, as the Chinese curse puts it, ‘interesting’. Round the time of Marius’ quaestorship, Rome witnessed the blaze of Gaius Gracchus’ tribunates in 123 and 122. So many things could be said of this epochal set of episodes. We choose only four significant developments. Gaius Gracchus succeeded—where his brother had failed—in holding two successive terms of office; he introduced—in the form of grain subsidies—the concept of ‘government-sponsored’ popular welfare; he introduced the equites to political power [that class outside the senate some of whom were already very powerful men by dint of financial clout], and that his career was distinguished by the senatorial declaration of what would come to be called the senatus consultum ultimum, in effect, martial law and the suspension of civil liberties. In the tumult that followed, Gaius Gracchus and three thousand of his adherents and followers were killed. The “people” [demos], says Plutarch, was cowed.\(^ {64}\)

On Marius’ chequered (and controversial) career, Plutarch (Life of Marius 4–5) provides details that flesh out Valerius Maximus’ flourish at 6.9.14, and these will be too well known to teachers to need rehearsal here. His independence (possibly exercised in the interests of his business friends) and his readiness to cock a snook even at the Metellii (when threatened with being reined in)\(^ {65}\) might—in the light of our previous discussion—be explained by an unquestioning belief in his divinely ordained destiny.\(^ {66}\) Yet, after a

\(^{64}\) For references, see MRZ (n.4) 2, 513–18; 517–18; 520–521, or the Aitnus website <http://www.aitnus.org/> (an extremely useful resource for teachers), under the years 123 to 121. On the ‘cowing’ of the demos, see Plutarch, Life of Gaius Gracchus 18.2.

\(^{65}\) On Marius’ dramatic repudiation of his Metellian loyalties, see Plutarch, Marius 4. For an explanation of the rise of the equestrian order as background to the career of Marius, see Gaius (introductory note) 765–771.

\(^{66}\) One would have thought that the Metellii were not a clan at which one would safely thumb one’s nose. In an earlier generation the poet Naevius would find to his cost that one did not treat lightly the Metellian achievement (Pseudo-Asconius, at Cic. Deor.10.29, citing Naevius’ Africæorum cum Metelis, which will be found most conveniently in translation in E.H. Warmington’s Remains of Old Latin 2 [Cambridge, Massachusetts 1936] 154–155). This Metellian offence at Naevius’ all too free pen is thought to lie behind the poet’s titles in
praetorship (into which, according to the evidence, he scraped) and a lucrative praetorian command in Spain (which at least fulfilled the coffers—after the demands of previous electoral campaigns, and undertook a degree of independence henceforward), his career seemed, in spite of a marriage alliance with the patrician Alii Caesares (ever ready to secure access to ready cash reserves), to have reached its natural plateau—according to natural reckoning, Marius knew better.

Almost inexplicably, he is next found on the staff of a Metellus in Africa (in 109), fighting his old acquaintance, Jugurtha. One explanation is that the Metellus simply had to acknowledge Marius' superior talents in matters military. That might seem lame (although to dismiss the thought out of hand would be to underestimate both Marius' reputation for military expertise and the pressure upon the Metelli to achieve in a military enterprise that had so far been marked by the conspicuous failure of their peers. Aristocratic credibility had significantly diminished, and the public gaze was unfriendly). Another explanation, essayed by Carney, is that Q. Metellus Numidicus (cos. 109) included Marius on his staff "to placate the homefront", Marius now being "pre-eminent among the publicans". It is worth noting that the war in Africa had been virtually thrust upon a reluctant and hesitant Senate by an insistent business class. Roman and Italian entrepreneurs were not interested in choosing a succession of Roman triumphs (each of them claiming a tally of 5000 enemy dead); they wanted to see territories opened to business and the regions in between rendered safe for travel and transport. The town of Vaga provides a snapshot of business activity in Africa. It was, said Sallust, "the most frequented emporium of the entire empire—where many men of the Italian race traded and made their home."

The Senate had shilly-shallied. The war, when it came, was a popularis initiative. It was put to the People by one of the tribunes, C.

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67 On the command in Spain, and its profits, see the succinct discussion of Carney (introduction note) 23–24.
68 The Caesares were still at this exercise of offering the cachet of their ancient name in exchange for financial advantage in the 80s; cf. Suetonius, Dives Italiae 1.
69 One need only think of the failures of L. Calpurnius Bestis (cos. 111) and Sp. Postumius Albinius (cos. 110). But there was more. The 'Mamilius Commission', set up by virtue of a plebiscite of 109 confirmed popular suspicions. Its terms (on which, see below) were an indictment in themselves, but the findings were even worse. The Commission claimed four consular 'scolds' (see below, n.76). Sallust is explicit; via a via popularie redemption, nobilitas, once an advantage, was now an impediment (see Sallust, Jugurthine War 75, quoted below in the text). And popular perceptions would now play a major role in the way history unfolded.
70 Carney (introduction note) 26.
71 Sallust, Jugurthine War 47.
Memmius (possibly one of the class of 134). Even so, the senatorial leadership seemed to lack lustre. Its generals seemed either incompetent, or too ready to compromise. Public patience ran out (putting to one side who it was in Rome that represented the ‘public’). A string of military defeats on Rome’s northern frontier had put senatorial military ineptitude beyond forbearance. (This will be dealt with further below and in Part 2 of this article.) The People, once cowed, were cowed no longer. In 121, the nobility had taken drastic steps to maintain the more traditional balance of power. One of the justifications would have been that they were the guardians of the State’s safety, the salus rei publicae. They were demonstrating that they were unable to secure that safety when it really mattered (and there was genuine fear in Rome concerning the northern threat). Incompetence and hesitation lead easily to charges of corruption. In 109, the year of Metellus Numidicus’ consulship, another tribune, Gaius Mamilianus Limetanus promulgated a bill setting up a ‘special court’—the extraordinary quaestor Mamiliana. Its terms of reference were remarkable. It was to investigate and prosecute those who had incited Jugurtha to ignore the decrees of the Senate, who had accepted bribes from him (as legates or as commanders), who had given over deserters or elephants to Jugurtha, who had made agreements with him concerning war and peace. The charges were extraordinary in themselves. The results, more so. Four consuls went down. A ‘noble’ name was no longer an asset; it was a liability (see Sallust’s comment, quoted below).

It is not implausible that the Metelli ‘reconciled’ with their old associate as a sop to public opinion (and the fact that we are talking about ‘public opinion’ is in itself remarkable). The nobility were on notice. Marius went to Africa, and his education, now almost complete, continued. We have in mind Marius’ thinking with regard to the gradual evolution of Rome’s army structure. If we follow the judgment of Sallust, Q. Metellus Numidicus was not only the best of a bad lot; he was a highly competent general worthy of approbation. (It comes initially as a shock that Sallust, who has heralded as his theme in this monograph the “first [effective] challenge to the arrogance of the nobility [superbia nobilitatis]” [5.1], does not present matters in black and white, his picture of the rise of Marius is not presented as a panegyric.) At the battle of the River Mutilius (109 BC), so vividly portrayed by Sallust (and a narrative worth reading in its own right), the historian perhaps offers a picture of the last deployment of the Roman army in its old manipular form. (It is, at least, the last recorded deployment.) The traditional three lines of infantry proved inadequate to dislodging Jugurtha’s troops from a strategic hill and Metellus had successful recourse to a regrouping of his troops into more flexible cohorts.

Marius was no doubt taking notes. His primary objective, however, was taking command. He wanted the consulship (which we have suggested he believed was his by divine sanction), and he felt that his time had come. Not surprisingly, the edge to his ambition was given, we are told by Sallust, by another prophecy:

At about the same time [the winter of 109/108], it chanced that when Gaious Marius was offering victims to the gods at Utica a soothsayer (haruspex) declared that a great and marvellous career awaited him; the oracles accordingly advised him, trusting in the gods, to carry out what he had in mind and put his fortune to the test as often as possible, predicting that all his undertakings would have a happy issue. (Sallust, Jugurthine War 63.1; trans. Rolfe)

This was the cue he had awaited. Sallust seems aware of prior expectations, thought he does not elaborate: “Even before his time [Marius] was consumed by a great desire for the consulship, having all the qualifications except an ancient lineage (propter vetustatem familias).” Marius went for it. His white-

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72 Sallust, Jugurthine War 27.30-34.
73 We can see the gist of such an argument in Cicero’s Defence of P. Scipio 103 (with regard to the resistance confronting the legislation of Tiberius Gracchus).
75 Sallust, Jugurthine War, 65.
76 L. Calpurnius Bestia (cos. 111), the man who had initiated hostilities with Jugurtha, Sp. Postumius Albinus (cos. 110), his successor; C. Porcius Catus (cos. 114); and L. Opimius (cos. 121), who had been a member of a diplomatic mission to Jugurtha.
77 The political process in Rome had always been (or was always meant to be) an open process. Karl-J. Hölzlzkamp, Reconstructing the Roman Republic. An Ancient Political Culture and Modern Research (Princeton 2010) 72-73. But there had also been, more often than not, a discipline imposed from above; cf. E. Flag, ‘Entscheidung und Konsens Zu den Feldern der politischen Kommunikation zwischen Aristokratie und Plebs’, in M. Jene (cd.), Demokratie in Rom? Der Rolle des Volkes in der Politik der römischen Republik? (Stuttgart 1999) 77-127 (arguing that the People’s assembly was a Konsensorium, wherein votes in deference followed the guidance of their ‘betters’; and see also the references to further German scholarship in T. Hillard, ‘Rei publica in theory and practice’, in T. Welch, et al. (eds.), Roman Crossings. Theory and Practice in the Roman Republic (Swansea 2005) 28-29, n.34. On extraordinary occasions, the public made its feelings felt without encouragement. This was one such occasion, and it represents a shift in the nature of Rome’s political process. Marius’ rise reflects that shift.
78 Sallust judged Metellus “great and wise” (45.1; cf. 52.1). Marius, moreover, saw Metellus in a situation similar to that which had faced his mentor, Scipio Aemilius, in Spain. The army was weak, disorganized and ill-disciplined. Metellus threw himself into the task, spurring no energy, but opted for a strategy finely balanced between severity and indulgence (45.1). Metellus’ temperance was a valuable lesson.
79 Sallust, Jugurthine War 49-52.
80 Sallust, Jugurthine War 51.3. Cf. Cowan (n.6) 23.
a thing of his commander’s position is well known (and needs no elaboration here); the details can be found in Sallust (Borgia War 66–69) and in Plutarch (Marius 7–8).

The rest is history (and well known, at that). Two aspects of his rise to the consulship call, however, for emphasis. One is the involvement of the equites (those people whose business interests would increasingly drive Rome’s foreign policy and whose interest in this particular war has been elaborated above). 81

[Marius won over] also a number of Roman Equites who were either serving in the army or engaged in trade, persuading them, partly by his personal influence and partly by raising their hopes of peace, to write to their friends in Rome severely criticizing Metellus’s conduct of the war and demanding that Marius should be given the command. In this way he secured a large body of supporters who urged his claims to the consulship in the most complimentary terms; and just at that particular time the commons, taking advantage of the defeat inflicted on the nobles by the law of Mamilius, were doing all they could to get new men elected. Thus everything favoured Marius (Sallust, Jugurthine War 65 [Penguin trans.]).

Notice there also the reference to another significant aspect of Marius’ success—the letter-writing campaign (a lesson he had learned from Scipio?). 82 It bore fruit.

The Roman populace, on learning the contents of the letters that had been written concerning Metellus and Marius, had readily believed the assertions made about them. Metellus’s noble birth, which formerly had been regarded as a distinction, now made him unpopular, while his rival’s humble origin won him increased favour. (Sallust, Jugurthine War 75)

Marius's sweeping into the consulship is a true reflection of changing (and extraordinary) times. Rome would never be quite the same.

... seditious tribunes were exciting the mob in every public meeting they demanded Metellus’s head and exaggerated the virtues of Marius. In the end the lower classes (plebes) were roused to such a pitch that all the artisans and peasants, whose ability to earn or to obtain credit depended solely on the labour of their hands, left their work to follow Marius about, regarding their own needs as less important than his advancement. The result was that the nobles were defeated, and for the first time in many years a newcomer to politics was elected consul. Later on, when the tribune Titus Mamilius Manemus called on a fully attended Assembly of the People to choose a commander for the Jugurthine war, they all voted for Marius. A decree which the Senate had passed shortly before, retaining Metellus in his command, was thus rendered ineffective. (Sallust, Jugurthine War 73)

Sallust, who has made clear at the outset of the monograph, as we noted above, that his focus will be on the challenge noted out to the ‘arrogance of the nobility’ and who thus implicitly castigates Rome’s elite for its failings, does not intend that we should read this, the triumph of Marius, in a positive light. It had been promoted by ‘seditious magistrates’ (seditiosi magistratus). 83 And they had worked their inflammatory wiles on the vulgus. He shared the distaste of his class for those people who earned their living in such menial ways. 84 The world had been turned topsy-turvy. Sallust was plainly unsettled. How on earth, we might ask, did such people (the butchers, bakers and craftsmen) effect this? We are talking about the comitia centuriae, Rome’s assembly of the centuries, in which the citizenry were arranged in order of wealth and in which the wealthier members of Roman society not only voted first but were in a position to decide the outcome even without recourse to the votes of ‘lesser’ centuries. Plainly the interest of the equites ensured the requisite number of votes in the appropriate centuries, but there was something more. The grows and glowing eyes of the trademen (Sallust’s plebes) created an atmosphere of anxiety (the threat of violent public unrest should Marius not be elected) and came to represent communal discontent to such an extent that the privileged members of society could not ignore it. The nobilitas had lost its grip on leadership. 85

81 See our brief discussion of commercial interests and Roman foreign policy (providing references to previous scholarship) in 'Choosing Friends, bone and flesh': in the second century BC; in 'It miliarii virtus orem terram popere hase: impurr coegit: the transformation of Roman imperium, 146–50 BC', chapters 10 and 11 in D. Hoyos (ed.), Brill’s Companion to Roman Imperialism (forthcoming).

82 On letter-writing in favor of Scipio, see above, n.51.

83 The Penguin translation (see above) leaves ahead in specifying that tribunes were to blame.

84 Cf. Sallust’s disdain, a few sections on, for the capite censi; the plebeians (mounted by head alone [for lack of property]), who were Marius’ ‘natural allies’, Jugurthine War 60–63. For Cicero’s disdain for those of menial livelihood, see On Duties 1.150–51; cf. P.A. Brunt, ‘The Roman Mob’, Past and Present 35 (1966) 23–27, esp. pp. 24–25; and (in more detail on this point) N. Wood, Cicero’s Social and Political Thought (Berkley 1988) 97–100. Wages were the very mark of servitude. Sallust, it is clear here subscribed to the same line of thought.

85 The enormity of the outcome is stressed by our sources. Now, who might represent the first of their family to enter the Senate, were not meant to rise this high. This was untoward. Cicero, in the opening speech of his own consulship (and himself a novus), gives way to rhetorical excess.
Marius would then redefine leadership (but only in a sense). The long oration that the historian puts into his mouth at this point (and Sallust says that Marius’ speech was ‘along these lines’ [huiusmodi]) distances Marius it would seem fundamentally from the values of Rome’s contemporary political elite but just as essentially restates the traditional aspects of nobilitas (Jugurthine War 85).30

For all the restatement of conventional values, Marius’ consulsships mark a true watershed in Rome’s history. In this outline of his rise, we have seen so much that was characteristic of Rome’s political elite, but also much that illuminates the new age dawning. We would like to continue this overview, both with regard to the ramifications of Marius’ success and by looking at the rise of Sulla in a subsequent volume of the journal (all the while with an eye to the growing role played in political developments by an attentiveness on the part of Rome’s governing elite and its public to onima [omens, prodigies and signs]).

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30 I am the first ‘new’ man, after a very long interval, almost more remote than our times can remember, where you have made consul; that position, which the nobility held sacred by guards and fortified in every way, you have broken open, and have shown your desire that it should in future be open to merit, allowing me to take the lead. (Cicero, On the Agrarian law 2.1.3)

The rhetoric is excessive in the sense that when he talks about the memory of ‘remote times’, he glides over not only Marius, but the consuls of 105 (Ca. Mallius Maximus) and 94 (C. Cottaus Cal dus). In this generation it had been Marius who forged the path. But, as for the barrier that Marius faced, Sallust confirms something of the prevailing spirits to which Cicero alludes.

Even then (i.e., as late as 168), although the Plautus might ordiner color magistratus, the culprit passed the consulship on from hand to hand amongst its own elite ranks. No novus (‘new man’) was an illusion or outstanding on account of his deeds to be considered worthy of that honour (epictionibus) which would be regarded as ‘useful’ (pueri politicus) in the event. (Sallust, Jugurthine War 63)

It was not ‘recent’ to be.

This episode, the consular elections of 108, is dealt with in some detail (by way of elaborative and analytical gloss) by Alexander Yakobson, in the opening chapter of his Elections and Electioneering in Rome. A Study in the Political System of the Late Republic (Historia Einzelschrift 128, Stuttgart 1999) 13–19, and is recommended reading—even if its placement in his monograph at this point gives the event a paradigmatic force that we feel underplays its extraordinary nature in favour of Yakobson’s suggestion, only tentative at this point, that “the common people” might have “a real say at consular elections” (18). This cast Yakobson’s overall proposition, shared with a school of thought prominent at the turn of the millennium, that there was indeed a significant democratic element in the Roman political setup (for the standard-bearing set of studies which championed this proposition, see the articles collected in F. Millar, The Roman Republic and the Augustan Revolution [Chapel Hill and London 2002] 85–182, and for an overarching statement of the theory, see F. Millar, The Crowds in Rome in the Late Republic [Ann Arbor 1998]), et al., Yakobson 107–108 (even where he acknowledges that the incident was “exceptional”); 185; 216; and his conclusions (229–233). For a rather different take on the nature of Roman politics, see the literature cited in n.77.

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