

Sallust is unique among Roman historians for his frequent inclusion of epistolary texts in his works. In all, six letters are embedded in the corpus of his historical writing; by contrast, Livy, Tacitus, Ammianus, and the fragments of Sallust's predecessors and contemporaries in the Roman historiographical tradition are almost devoid of direct epistolary quotation. Most modern commentators have found it sufficient to point out that Sallust's letters serve to support his authority as a historian (e.g., Paladini 1961, 27; McGushin 1977, 189; cf. also Marincola 1997, 103-7), and that they differ little in purpose from his set speeches (e.g., von Carolsfeld 1888, Paladini 1961, Büchner 1982, all *passim*; cf. also Paul 1984, 104). This paper argues that Sallust's willingness to include texts of this kind in his historical works reflects his recognition of the special narrative possibilities of the epistolary form. Three particular aspects of Sallust's use of embedded letters will be analyzed:

First, the letters are often employed to mark transitions in the narrative. Letters implicitly (and often explicitly) manifest and maintain distance, both spatial and chronological. (Trapp 2003, 38-9) This aspect of their nature makes them particularly apt devices with which to mask a narrative transition: either a change of physical setting or some measure of time, or both. Each of Sallust's embedded letters can readily be seen to perform this simple function; but Sallust often employs them to mark more complex types of transitions, as well. The letter of Catiline to Catulus (*BC* 35), for instance, marks a thematic shift in the monograph as it carries the narrative away from the procedural particulars of Catiline's conspiracy in Rome (*res domi*) and toward the fully-realized armed rebellion (*res militiae*).

Second, Sallust makes clever use of another particular quality of letters. The distantiative force of the epistolary form, when it is set (verbatim, in indirect speech, or in *précis*) within a larger narrative, engenders in it an intrinsic duality: the letter's contents are effectively separated from the letter itself as an object in the narrative, causing it to exist at both intra- and extra-diegetic levels (cf. Grethlein 2006). Embedded letters thus differ from set speeches in that a conscientious historian can manipulate this duality for his own narrative purposes. For example, Lentulus' intercepted missive (*BC* 44.5) had provided a key piece of Cicero's case against Catiline; the consul of 63 took pains to keep the letter's seal intact until it could be read out in the Senate (*Cat.* 3.10-12). Sallust, however, reveals the letter's contents in a very different (and, it could be argued, more natural) place: at the point of Lentulus' pen as he writes. The historian cannot in his narrative manipulate the physical object of the letter without a fiction, but by displacing its actual text he can rob Cicero of his dramatic courtroom reveal and so distinguish his own account.

Third, Sallust is aware of the intertextual capacity of his letters. Although literary allusions abound in Sallust's works, he does not employ them in simple or haphazard fashion; he means them to work not only against the bare vocabulary of the *locus imitandus*, but against its context as well. (Renehan 1976) Thus the text of Pompey's letter to the Senate (*Hist.* 2.82, McGushin) does not simply evoke the similar subject matter of the letter of Nicias in Thucydides' history (7.11-15), but calls to mind its contrasting tenor and the very different moral qualities of its author. Likewise, the letter of Mithridates (*Hist.* 4.67) echoes the themes and details of the Scipios' diplomatic overtures to Prusias of Bithynia in 196 (Polybius 21.11.1-2), but by giving Rome's enemy the voice, Sallust offers an effective rebuttal and a historical and moral corrective to the ideology of Roman foreign policy.