

Recent studies interpreting cultural relationships in antiquity have been moving away from approaches based on alterity and conceptions of the “Other” (Dauge 1981, Hall 1989) towards methods focusing on multi-culturalism and representations based on “reciprocal perspectives and intertwined traditions” (ed. Gruen 2005, p. 7). While this newer, “multi-cultural” approach has made significant headway in the study of other ancient cultures, a Roman/Other dichotomy still pervades scholarship on Roman historiography and literary interpretations (Syed 2005). This is particularly true of the study of Sallust, where recent and still-authoritative works continue to either assert the existence of a strong Roman/Barbarian dichotomy or take it for granted (Green 1993, Claasen 1993, Morstein-Marx 2001, Due 2000). A re-examination of the representation of Numidians in Sallust's *Bellum Iugurthinum* promises to further our understanding of how this particular Roman voice regarded Numidians in relation to their African neighbors and Rome herself, thereby shedding new light on issues of identity and the use of ancient stereotypes in other Roman historical authors. My contention is that while Sallust's monograph might superficially seem illustrative of the Roman/Other dichotomy, closer analysis reveals numerous instances where this dichotomy breaks down and Numidian and Roman are assimilated to each other rather than contrasted.

The Roman/Other dichotomy is repeatedly complicated or even elided in the *Bellum Iugurthinum*. Sallust unmistakably elevates Numidians above other African people in three key ways – his ethnography (*BJ* 17-19), his refusal to use the term *barbarus* (and derivatives) in reference to them though it is applied to other North African neighbors, and his attribution to the Numidians of Roman-style order and discipline while denying it to other peoples.

A further complication of the dichotomy arises from Sallust's frequent assimilation of Numidian and Roman. Most telling is his willingness at significant moments to portray Romans and Numidians as exhibiting comparable military *virtus*, despite recent assertions to the contrary (McDonnell 2006). Sallust's narration of battle scenes and subsequent reactions show that Numidians can employ the *virtus* and tactics allegedly specific to Romans - and vice-versa (*BJ* 38, 57-8, 60, 75-6, 91), since, as has been shown by Wheeler 1988, *virtus* and trickery are compatible.

Finally, Sallust's narrative itself presupposes that Numidians have a sound understanding of both the substance and potential effects of Roman military *virtus* aside from simply exhibiting this *virtus* by deed. The words, actions, and calculations of Sallust's Jugurtha, Micipsa, and even Bomilcar impute to Numidians conceptions of *virtus* that might otherwise be designated “Roman”. Jugurtha's recognition of the importance of hierarchy for *virtus* along with his pre-battle exhortations to his Numidian troops are but two key examples of this common understanding of a central moral value (*BJ* 49, 74, 101).

Sallust illustrates the capacity to ignore, or at the very least blur, cultural differences in his portrayal of Roman and Numidian; he is capable of seeing these two people behaving in similar ways with similar values. This re-interpretation of Sallust's Numidian highlights the complex interaction of cultural similarity and distinction and complements a new, potentially fruitful approach for examining Roman perspectives on other cultures (e.g. the Gauls, Riggsby 2006) bound by a lengthy history of conflict and cooperation.