

## **Ammianus, the Romans and Constantius II:**

### **Res Gestae XIV.6 and XVI.10**

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In the *History* of Ammianus Marcellinus there are a large number of digressions, the majority of which conform to the practices of ancient historiography, which included them as a necessary background to the narrative text.<sup>1</sup> Two of the digressions have, however, attracted particular attention as quite unusual within the tradition, those in which Ammianus discusses in vitriolic language the inhabitants of the city of Rome (XIV.6 and XXVIII.4).<sup>2</sup> Since both of these so-called “Roman” digressions cover the same material and in many respects the second seems to be an expansion and variation of the first, scholars have always discussed them together. Neither of these digressions has a particular connection to the narrative which surrounds it, both are generalising, and both emphasise the vices of their subjects in language that varies from ironic to openly sarcastic, so that they have been compared to the work of the Roman satirists.<sup>3</sup> The strongly moralising stance which they display reflects, albeit in an exaggerated form, the general tone of the *History*. It is usually and plausibly held, however, that the very real and personal anger evident in these digressions was a consequence of Ammianus' own experience when, some time after 378 A.D., with high expectations he arrived in the city of Rome intending to settle there and write his *History*, only to have these expectations dashed by the indifferent, even hostile, reception he found there. Indeed, the discussion of these digressions usually stops at this point: they are read as little more than a petulant expression of personal pique.<sup>4</sup>

Two difficulties in interpreting these digressions, even as nothing more than expressions of personal pique, arose out of the observations that, elsewhere in the *History*, Ammianus' view of the city of Rome is clearly one of adoration and that his general political opinions often seem in accord with those of the main object of his attack, the contemporary Roman senatorial order, to such an extent that at one time he was identified as a member of an alleged circle which gathered around the senatorial leader Q. Aurelius Symmachus.<sup>5</sup> One scholar attempted to remove these difficulties by pointing out that the digressions conformed to parts of a formal speech criticising a city (*psogos poleôs*) and that they were, therefore, artificial exercises with little force and reality in the *History*.<sup>6</sup> While these digressions, like other parts of the *History*, do show formal links to the epideictic tradition, this has not been accepted as a satisfactory explanation for their inclusion by Ammianus. Indeed, the difficulty of the relationship between Ammianus' views and those prevailing in the senatorial order has been removed by the demonstration that there is no evidence that a "circle" of Symmachus ever existed and that Ammianus' own opinions are rather more independent than often assumed.<sup>7</sup> As for Ammianus' adoration of the city of Rome, there is no difficulty as long as his attitude towards the city is distinguished from that towards its inhabitants.<sup>8</sup>

Beyond the commonality of subject matter, there is no particular reason for considering the two digressions together. Ammianus first terminated his *History* at the end of the twenty-fifth book with the death of the emperor Julian in 363, the return of his army from Persia, and the death of his short-lived successor, Jovian.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the two digressions were not linked in the original plan,<sup>10</sup> and they might profitably be considered separately in the contexts in which they occur. In the case of the first digression this is the narrative of the emperor Constantius II and his relations with his two Caesars, Gallus and, far more importantly, Julian (that is, books XIV to XXI, covering the years 353 to 361). Within this part of the *History* the most obvious point of comparison is XVI.10, the account of Constantius' formal entry (*adventus*) into Rome in 357.

Ammianus addresses the first Roman digression to *peregrini* like himself (that is, citizens of the Roman Empire who did not possess the local citizenship of Rome),<sup>11</sup> and he undertakes to explain why, when his narrative turns to events at Rome, it recounts nothing but, "riots, taverns and similar low activities" (XIV.6.2: *seditiones...et tabernas et vilitates harum similes alias*). Although he says that he will give reasons for

this (*causas perstringam*), he, in fact, offers a two-part exposition, first a brief account of the rise of Rome divided into biological ages (3-6) and then a catalogue of the vices of the inhabitants of Rome divided into nobles and plebeians (7-26).<sup>12</sup> The catalogue is based upon personal observation and experience and is thus anachronistic, since the dramatic date is 353-56 whereas Ammianus was only in Rome after 378.<sup>13</sup> Although when he introduces the catalogue he professes to be describing the vices of a few (*levitas paucorum incondita*), when he ends the parts on the nobles and the plebeians he appears to envisage the generality of the inhabitants as the target of his strictures (24: *haec nobilium instituta*; 26: *plebem innumeram*). As has been noted, the strictures themselves clearly and closely reflect Ammianus' strongly moralising views on the causes of the failure of the Roman Empire.<sup>14</sup> Thus, it would appear that this digression, even if its origin lay in personal pique, offers a fundamental, if localised, commentary on the ills of the Roman world at the end of the fourth century and is an important part of Ammianus' historical argument.

The first part of the digression identifies four stages in Rome's development: infancy and childhood (*ab incunabulis ad pueritiae tempus extremum*), adulthood (*aetas adulta*), maturity (*iuvenis et vir*), and old age (*senium tranquillitas*), which are correlated with her military and political expansion and consolidation.<sup>15</sup> Ammianus calls Rome eternal (3: *victura dum erunt homines*) and explains her rise to power by positing an eternal treaty (*foedus pacis aeternae*) between Virtue and Fortune, which are usually at odds (*plerumque dissidentes*). At the end of this section (6) he describes Rome as *domina et regina*, the senate as *reverenda cum auctoritate*, and the name of the people as *circumspectum et verecundum*. In his transition to the vices of the inhabitants, he refers to a saying of the Greek lyric poet Simonides which he translates as *beate perfecto ratione victuro, ante alia patriam esse convenit gloriosam* (7: "for one to live blessedly in accord with perfect reason, one ought above all to have a glorious fatherland").<sup>16</sup> The whole passage, with its emphasis upon Rome's creation of and responsibility for its empire, appears to suggest that since the pact between Virtue and Fortune was made for the city, it is the city which guarantees this pact for the Roman Empire and thus underwrites its security. This sentiment that the eternity of Rome guarantees the survival of the Empire was especially strong, amongst pagans and Christians alike, at the end of the fourth century.<sup>17</sup>

Although Ammianus proposes to discuss the vices of all the inhabitants of Rome, the only part he considers at any length is the nobility. Only a few themes are introduced, which are summarised by their consequence: “nothing memorable or serious is done at Rome” (26: *memorable nihil vel serium agi Romae*). First is mentioned the erection of statues to themselves, although they are earned by no memorable achievement (8); next they parade their costly accoutrements and their wealth, which again both mask and betray their lack of personal worth (9-11). Hypocritical and ungenerous, they are offhand and unwelcoming to strangers (*advenae*), especially if they are learned and serious (*eruditos et sobrios*) (12-15). Gluttony is noted in passing, and ostentatious processions are described at length in mock military terms (16-17). Ammianus then complains that the love of learning has been so utterly effaced by frivolous pursuits that when foreigners (*peregrini*) were expelled during a food shortage, while the practitioners of the liberal arts were thrown out of the city, actresses, dancing girls, and other entertainers were permitted to remain (18-20). The arrogant rejection of those not born within the boundary of Rome is contrasted with the old days when the city was *virtutum omnium domicilium* (21). The only exceptions are the childless bachelors who are courted with great obsequiousness, since the greed of the nobility is the one impulse which will arouse them to activity, even to a measure of courage (22-24). This diatribe is then rounded out by a brief sally against the disgusting and fatuous plebeians (25-26).

Ammianus, after his usual manner, emphasises these vices by contrasting them with the virtues of the ancients through exempla and quotations.<sup>18</sup> The examples of ancient achievement are almost all military, in contrast with the treatment of the contemporary nobility, where a military element is introduced only in irony.<sup>19</sup> Apart from the brief section on the plebeians, Ammianus’ attack is founded on only three themes: the frivolity, empty ostentation, and lack of moderation of the nobility; their rejection of foreigners; and their scorn for serious learning. These themes echo concerns which are fundamental to the whole *History*: the importance of a moral capacity for the military success vital to the preservation of the Empire;<sup>20</sup> the importance of a traditional education in imparting this capacity and instilling an awareness of the grandeur of Rome;<sup>21</sup> and—a very personal concern for Ammianus—the inclusive nature of the Roman Empire, especially in respect of its Greek component.<sup>22</sup>

While the exempla, quotations, and the historian's own acerbic comments provide the commentary on the vices of the Roman nobles, the introductory section on the rise of Rome's power not only provides the historical background but also sets out many of the key terms of Roman political ideology: *tranquillitas*, *iustitia*, *libertas*, *prosperitas*, *concordia*, *pax*, *securitas*.<sup>23</sup> These are manifestations of the treaty between Virtue and Fortune, and they, like the survival of Rome and the Roman Empire, are dependent upon its continuation. As has been recognised, the treaty itself symbolises the alliance of divine support (*fortuna*) with human qualities (*virtus*), two conceptions which are linked by Ammianus elsewhere when he describes success.<sup>24</sup> Thus, the retreat from *virtus* entailed both the practical dangers of corruption and military failure and also the possibility of abandonment by the divine. For Ammianus, like any educated Roman, was well aware that a treaty (*foedus*), even an "eternal" one, could be broken by the default of one of the parties. By positing a treaty without a specific time limit,<sup>25</sup> Ammianus is suggesting that Rome can be eternal, but that this eternity is conditional upon human virtue. In this light he is calling for a return to traditional moral standards as a necessary condition for Rome's survival.<sup>26</sup>

That the first Roman digression is much more than a rhetorical exercise or a disconnected expression of disappointment and anger can be demonstrated by the way in which its themes link with another chapter on Rome and the Romans, XVI.10, which describes a visit (*adventus*) by the emperor Constantius II to the city in 357. The image of Rome and the Romans which is presented there is a far cry from the excoriation of the inhabitants of the city in XIV.6. Now we are given the timeless, eternal Rome residing in the memory of her past greatness and the glories still alive in her magnificent fabric. The senate and people are on this occasion presented in their traditional roles demanded by the formalities of the imperial *adventus*. The senators who attend Constantius are described as "the reverend likenesses of the patrician stock" (5: *reverendas patriciae stirpis effigies*), and the people, in contrast with their usual propensity to disorder, are said to have behaved with old-time freedom and moderation (13: *dicacitate plebis oblectabatur [sc. Constantius], nec superbae nec a libertate coalita desciscentis*). Constantius, who while in the city moderated his usual despotic behaviour (13: *reverenter modum ipse quoque debitum servans*), is said to have thought when he beheld the senators, "not, like Cineas, Pyrrhus' envoy, that it was an assembly of kings, but that it was a sanctuary of the whole world" (5: *non ut Cineas ille Pyrrhi legatus, in unum coactum multitudinem regum, sed asylum mundi totius adesse*).

The picture drawn here is a complete contrast to the xenophobic, exclusivistic and self-indulgent reality alleged by Ammianus in XVI.6. The artificiality and falseness of the present situation are emphasised by the historian in a number of ways. At the beginning of the piece Ammianus says that Constantius wished to visit Rome in order to display his ostentatious retinue to a populace, “who were living quietly...never wishing nor expecting to see this or anything like it” (XVI.10.2: *agenti tranquillius...haec vel simile quicquam videre nec speranti umquam nec optanti*).<sup>27</sup> The emperor’s desire to display “an excessively long procession, standards stiff with gold, and a handsome retinue” (2: *pompam nimis extentam, rigentiaque auro vexilla, et pulchritudinem stipatorum*) despite no significant military achievement is contrasted with the heroes of old, introduced as exempla, who became famous *actibus magnificis* with few attendants and no ceremony.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, Ammianus condemns Constantius for “wishing, after the destruction of Magnentius, to triumph over Roman blood, although he had no right to do so” (1: *post Magnenti exitium, absque nomine ex sanguine Romano triumphaturus*), thereby suggesting that the *adventus* was a formal triumph when it probably was not.<sup>29</sup> To present the *adventus* as a triumph was very much to Ammianus’ purpose, as will be seen below.

Ammianus’ description of the entry into Rome by Constantius contains elements which demand comparison with the feckless senators of XIV.6. Just as they flaunt their statues, costly apparel, and wealth in lieu of any significant achievements, so Constantius flaunts his false-triumphal equipage. Indeed, the same word, *figmentum*, is used both of the undeserved statues erected by the senators (XIV.6.8) and of the unmoving (*immobilem*) icon that Constantius becomes in his public outings: “these things, though they were a pose, were, together with other aspects of his personal behaviour, evidence of great endurance granted to him alone, as was given to believe,” comments the cynical historian (10: *quae licet affectabat, erant tamen haec et alia quaedam in citeriore vita, patientiae non mediocris indicia, ut existimari dabatur, uni illi concessae*). The irony here is complex. The timeless ceremonial role of the senators is undermined by the recollection of XIV.6. The debasement of the virtue of *patientia* contrasts with the endurance shown by Julian and other emperors, especially in time of war; and the quality of *immobilitas* is frequently attached to emperors (especially Julian) and their armies on the battlefield defending the Empire.<sup>30</sup>

The ironical play upon lack of military achievement in a military (that is, triumphal) context continues and is again intensified by comparison with XIV.6. The

processions of both the unmilitary senators and the unmilitary emperor are set out in military terms. Those in charge of the senatorial households are likened to “skilled battle commanders” (XIV.6.17: *proeliorum periti rectores*) lining up first the *catervas densas...et fortes*, then the light-armed troops, and last the reserves. Under their leadership are carefully drawn up, “as if the camp watchword had been given” (*velut tessera data castrensi*), the weavers, kitchen help, slaves, plebeians, and eunuchs. Constantius’ *adventus*, on the other hand, a genuine military procession with real soldiers, is dismissively characterised “as if he were going to terrify the Euphrates or the Rhine with the sight of his weaponry” (XVI.10.6: *tamquam Euphraten armorum specie territurus aut Rhenum*). The emperor who, according to Ammianus, was a failure in all his foreign wars<sup>31</sup> is claiming a triumph, which by right could only be celebrated over a foreign foe, by virtue of his success in a civil war. He is also marshalling a formidable force (4: *agminibus formidandis tamquam acie ducebatur instructa*) as if he were intending to terrify a foreign enemy, while, in fact, he is going amongst a multi-ethnic yet xenophobic population of Rome. In short, Ammianus presents the processions of both senators and emperor as empty and worthless charades.<sup>32</sup>

In the second part of the account of Constantius’ visit to Rome the emphasis shifts from the emperor and his procession to the city itself, “the home of empire and all the virtues” (XVI.10.13: *imperii virtutumque omnium larem*), which reduces the august visitor to the role of a stricken sightseer. As Constantius tours around, the wonders pile up one after another, reducing him to stunned amazement (13: *obstipuit...praestriatus*); he observes the many sights rigid with awe (17: *multis igitur cum stupore visis horrendo*); and the Forum of Trajan turns him to real, not ceremonial, immobility (15: *haerebat...attonitus*). Ammianus’ phraseology here, especially the words *attonitus* and *stupore*, is resonant of his descriptions of enemy soldiers overcome by the might of Roman forces.<sup>33</sup> Constantius, who entered Rome *triumphaturus* (1), is now as *imperator* (17) overcome by the reality of “the most august place of all” (20: *augustissima omnium sede*), his triumphant and ceremonial immobility crushed by the eternal immobility of the City and reduced to the motionless stupor of the defeated enemy.<sup>34</sup> The emperor, Rome’s legal heir (XIV.6.5: *Caesaribus tamquam liberis suis regenda patrimonia iura [sc. Roma] permisit*), is found wanting, revealed in his unfounded pride (cf. XVI.10.4: *[Constantius] elatus honoribus magnis*). The sham is pointed up by the astute Persian Ormisdas, who, when Constantius proposed to erect an equestrian statue comparable to that of Trajan, said, “First...emperor, order a

comparable stable to be built, if you can. For the horse which you intend to make ought to roam as widely as the one at which we are looking” (16: *ante...imperator, stabulum tale condi iubeto, si vales; equus quem fabricare disponis, ita late succedat, ut iste quem videmus*). Constantius never built his horse.<sup>35</sup>

Behind and in contrast with the empty posturings of the Roman senators and their emperor stand not only the fabric and history of the Eternal City, but also the man who in Ammianus’ eyes was a true son of Rome, the Caesar Julian. Indeed, towards the end of the chapter on Constantius’ visit to Rome, Julian is introduced in the report (XVI.10.18-19)—adverse to Constantius’ side—that the emperor’s wife Eusebia had Julian’s wife brought to Rome and induced to miscarry so that Julian should not have an heir (19: *ne fortissimi viri suboles appareret*).<sup>36</sup>

From his first appearance in the *History*, Julian is the chosen one with the deportment of a true emperor: “eyes awesome and terrible”; “an emperor merciful...and fortunate”; “a cure for the common disasters in his...*adventus*”; “a saving guardian-angel had shone forth” (XV.8.16: *oculos cum venustate terribilis*; 21: *imperatorem clementem...et faustum; communiumque remedium aerumnarum in eius...adventu, salutarem genium affulsisse*). The contrast with Constantius, whom Ammianus consistently depicts as ineffective, cruel, and suspicious, is established immediately and is carried over into book XVI as its organising principle. The chapters of the sixteenth book are:

- 1     praise of Julian
- 2-4   Julian’s military activity in Gaul in 356
- 5     catalogue and illustration of Julian’s virtues
- 6-8   accusations against high officials, including Julian, before Constantius
- 9     attempt to open peace talks with the Persian king
- 10    Constantius’ *adventus* into Rome
- 11-12 Julian attacks the Alamanni in 357 and crushes their army at Strasburg

At the very beginning of book XVI, Julian’s virtues are introduced with a promise that his achievements as Caesar in Gaul will be described, which are such as to amount almost to material for a panegyric: in Ammianus’ words (XVI.1.2), *quas per Gallias virtute felicitateque correxit, multis veterum factis fortibus praestant*. Julian is said throughout his life to have been accompanied by “some law of a better life” (4: *lex*

*quaedam vitae melioris*), and he is compared with the glorious emperors of old: Titus in his *prudencia*; Trajan in *bellorum gloriosis cursibus*; Antoninus Pius in his *clementia*; and Marcus Aurelius in his *rectae perfectaeque rationis indigine*. Julian not only incorporates all the royal virtues, but he is also the favourite of Fortune; that is, he personifies the old *foedus* between Virtue and Fortuna.<sup>37</sup>

This, then, is the context in which the “triumph” of Constantius is placed and which further diminishes it: praise of Julian and narratives of his military successes against foreign enemies, which are set against activity at the court of Constantius that reflects no credit upon the emperor. Moreover, the description of Constantius’ supposed triumph is immediately followed by the longest section and climax of the book, the account of Julian’s campaigning in 357 which culminated in the unexpected and smashing victory at Strasburg, a victory which, according to Ammianus (XVI.12.67-70), Constantius tried to claim for himself, suppressing the role of Julian.

In this context the “triumph” of Constantius is presented as the sham which Ammianus held it to be. It is undermined in three ways: overt criticism; detrimental comparison, direct and implied, with Julian; and the ironical resonances of the first Roman digression. The points which Ammianus raises in XIV.6 are, therefore, serious and fundamental to his political and historical judgment. Here, as throughout the *History*, they are communicated directly by comment and argument and indirectly through comparison and cross-reference, often ironical.<sup>38</sup> Ammianus was a pagan, but the precise nature of his beliefs and in what respects they influenced his historical judgment are a matter of debate.<sup>39</sup> It is also unclear whether his conception of the alliance of Virtue and Fortune reflects religious beliefs or symbolises an ethical and political position. It is very clear, however, that the ethical and political views underlying XIV.6 and XVI.10 were very real for the historian and are a significant part of the fundamental vision of his *History*: the value, or rather the necessity, of an ethically informed leadership and morally sound endeavour by both the ruler and the ruled. When Julian says on his deathbed, “I have stood unshaken, accustomed to trample under foot the storm winds of chance” (XXV.3.18: *steti fundatus, turbines calcare fortuitorum assuefactus*), this assertion of the value of well-founded human endeavour reflects Ammianus’ historical creed, before which the empty immobility of Constantius sinks to nothing.<sup>40</sup>

In the final book of his *History* (XXXI.5.10-17), Ammianus takes issue with those who say that the Gothic devastation of the Balkans in 377-78 was the greatest disaster the state had ever encountered. In opposition to this view he cites the Teutonic and Cimbric attacks at the end of the second century B.C., the invasions during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, and the Gothic wars during the reigns of Decius, Claudius II, and Aurelian. In explaining the recovery under Marcus Aurelius he offers a comprehensive statement which is both an implicit condemnation of the present ills and also a prescription for recovery: “the old-time sobriety had not yet been infected by the softness of a more dissolute life and did not gasp for ostentatious banquets and corrupt gains. But, with unanimous zeal, highest and lowest alike, united, hastened on behalf of the republic to a noble death as if to some calm and tranquil harbour” (14: *quod nondum solutioris vitae mollitie sobria vetustas infecta nec ambitiosis mensis nec flagitiosis quaestibus inhiabat, sed unanimanti ardore, summi et infimi inter se congruentes, ad speciosam pro re publica mortem tamquam ad portum aliquem tranquillum properabant et placidum*).<sup>41</sup> Set against this prescription, the strictures against the inhabitants of Rome and their emperor are very real and very relevant.

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### Notes

1 See, in general, H. Cichocka, “Die Konzeption des Exkursus im Geschichtswerk des Ammianus Marcellinus,” *Eos* 63 (1975), pp. 329-40, which concentrates on the form of the digressions; A.M. Emmett, “Introductions and Conclusions to Digressions in Ammianus Marcellinus,” *Museum Philologicum Londiniense* 5 (1981), pp. 15-31; and also Emmett “Digressions in the Lost Books of Ammianus Marcellinus” in B. Croke and A.M. Emmett, eds, *History and Historians in Late Antiquity* (Sydney: Pergamon Press, 1983), pp. 42-53. All quotations from Ammianus Marcellinus’ *History* are taken from the edition of C.U. Clark, 2nd. ed. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1963).

2 To them should be added XXX.4.3-22, an angry denunciation of the incompetence and rapacity of lawyers in the eastern part of the Roman empire, which reflects Ammianus’ personal experience.

3 Cf. G. Sabbah, *La méthode d’Ammien Marcellin* (Paris: Société d’Édition “Les Belles Lettres,” 1978), p. 180 n8; D. Wiesen, *Saint Jerome as a Satirist* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1964), *passim*.

4 See, for example, E.A. Thompson, "Ammianus and the Romans," *Greece and Rome* 11 (1941-2), pp. 130-34; T.D. Barnes, "Literary Convention, Nostalgia and Reality in Ammianus Marcellinus," in G. Clarke, ed. *Reading the Past in Late Antiquity* (Sydney: National Univ. Press, 1990), p. 69; J. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1989), pp. 413-16. Matthews remarks on "Ammianus' descriptions of Rome to which he gave great importance in the design of his History" (p. 413) without further elaboration. He appears not to be referring specifically to the digressions but to all the many passages in which Ammianus describes events at Rome and which indicate the importance of the city in his eyes. As is noted by A. Demandt, *Zeitkritik und Geschichtsbild im Werk Ammians* (Bonn: Rudolf Habelt Verlag, 1965), p. 118, when Ammianus narrates events at Rome his reference point is the urban prefects, not the senate and people.

5 Ammianus' love for Rome: Demandt, *Zeitkritik*, pp. 115-18; F. Paschoud, *Roma Aeterna* (Rome: Institut Suisse de Rome, 1967), pp. 59f.

6 R. Pack, "The Roman Digressions of Ammianus Marcellinus," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 84 (1953), pp. 181-89.

7 A.D.E. Cameron, "The Roman Friends of Ammianus," *Journal of Roman Studies* 54 (1964), pp. 15-28.

8 Cf. Paschoud, *Roma Aeterna*, pp. 61 and 66f.

9 XXVI.1.1: *dictis impensiore cura rerum ordinibus ad usque memoriae confinia propioris, consueverat iam referre a notioribus pedem.*

10 Cf. E.A. Thompson, *The Historical Work of Ammianus Marcellinus* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1947), p. 118; Pack, "Roman Digressions," p. 181.

11 It is occasionally, and wrongly, assumed that in addressing *peregrini*, Ammianus is casting himself as a Roman (see, for example, J.C. Rolfe in the Loeb edition, vol. I, p. 36 n1). But the force of the whole digression lies in the identification of Ammianus with the *peregrini*. Ammianus' words are: *et quoniam mirari posse quosdam peregrinos existimo, haec lecturos forsitan (si contigerit), quam ob rem cum oratio ad ea monstranda deflexerit quae Romae geruntur*, in which he seems to be making a distinction between the present listeners to his readings of the *History* at Rome (*oratio*) and later readers (*lecturos*) of the written version, some of whom might be *peregrini*.

12 Cf. H. Drexler, *Ammianstudien* (Hildesheim, New York: Georg Olms Verlag,

1974), p. 36: “*Wir fragen: causae wofür, für den Bericht, oder für die Tatsachen selbst? Das Folgende bringt überhaupt keine causae.*”

13 Pack, “Roman Digressions,” at n10. It is usually assumed that the digression is a factual compilation based upon Ammianus’ personal experiences and observation.

14 See, for example, W. Ensslin, *Zur Geschichtsschreibung und Weltanschauung des Ammianus Marcellinus* (Klio, Beiheft 13 [Leipzig: Dieterich, 1914]), p. 10; R.C. Blockley, *Ammianus Marcellinus. A Study in his Historiography and Political Thought* (Brussels: Latomus, 1975), pp. 27-29; J. Vogt, “Ammianus Marcellinus als erzählender Geschichtsschreiber der Spätzeit,” *Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur in Mainz, Abh. der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse* (1963.8), Wiesbaden, 1963, pp. 824-25; Demandt, *Zeitkritik*, pp. 11f.

15 A long discussion of this section will be found in Demandt, *Zeitkritik*, pp. 118-42.

16 On the likelihood that this is a free-floating maxim rather than a true Simonidean fragment, see the Budé edition of Ammianus, vol. I, p. 206 n46.

17 It underlies the agony of Jerome when he heard the news of the capture of Rome in 410. See esp. *In Ezech. I praef.: in una urbe totus orbis interiit*, and the commentary of Paschoud, *Roma Aeterna*, pp. 218-21, on this and other passages.

18 Exempla: XIV.6.8-11, 17, 21, 25; literary quotations: XIV.6.7, 8, 16. On Ammianus’ use of exempla, see R.C. Blockley, “Ammianus Marcellinus’s Use of Exempla,” *Florilegium* 13 (1994), pp. 53-64.

19 References to ancient Roman military successes: XIV.6.4-5, 8, 10-11; military language used ironically of contemporary behaviour at XIV.6.16-17.

20 See below pp.9-10.

21 On the importance of education and culture to Ammianus, see P.-M. Camus, *Ammien Marcellin* (Paris: Société d’Édition “Les Belles Lettres,” 1967), pp. 74-109.

22 The importance of the provinces in Ammianus’ *History* implies inclusiveness. The importance of the Greek element, especially linguistic and cultural, is generally recognised; and Ammianus himself makes frequent references, indirectly and directly, to his Greekness (most famously in the epilogue to the *History* [XXXI.16.9]: *miles quondam et Graecus*). Sabbah, *La méthode*, pp. 536f., does make some remarks on the Greek element in the *History* from his interest in the authorial stance. I am aware of

no systematic study of Ammianus' sociopolitical views in respect of the national inclusiveness of the Roman Empire; but there appears to be considerable material in the *History*.

23 Demandt, *Zeitkritik*, p. 129.

24 See esp. XXVII.2.4 (on the successful ambush of some Alamanni); *hoc prospero rerum effectu quem virtus peregerat et fortuna*; and see n37 below for passages concerning Julian. Camus, *Ammien Marcellin*, pp. 193-96, discusses this linkage in Ammianus and calls it "*une véritable loi de l'histoire*" (p. 193). The theme is also a commonplace of panegyric and flattery in general (cf. XV.8.2). On the importance of Fortune to Ammianus (and to Julian), see Camus, pp. 176-81.

25 In 532, the Romans and Persians actually made a treaty of "endless" peace (Procopius, *BP* I.22.17). It lasted only eight years.

26 Demandt, *Zeitkritik*, pp. 142-47, sees in Ammianus a tension between the traditional view on the decline of Rome found in, for example, Sallust and Tacitus, and the belief (which Ammianus shared with his contemporaries) in the eternity of Rome. Demandt thinks that Ammianus abandoned the *Dekadenztheorie*. Paschoud, *Roma Aeterna*, pp. 67-69, suggests an unresolved incoherence between Ammianus' belief in the eternity of Rome and the corruption which he describes. The interpretation offered in the text serves to remove these problems by having Ammianus combine the two theories to arrive at a sort of "conditional" eternity. This is not to espouse the view of J. Gimzane, *Ammien Marcellin, sa vie et son oeuvre* (Toulouse, 1889), p. 379ff., that Ammianus somehow foresaw the fall of the Roman Empire.

27 The incongruity between the idealised picture of the senate and people on this occasion and the direct criticism of Constantius in this chapter (and, I should add, the usual picture of the inhabitants of Rome) has been ascribed to the use of two sources, the idealising one being the aristocratic leader and historian, Nicomachus Flavianus (W. Hartke, *Römische Kinderkaiser* [Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1951], p. 305f.; W. Ensslin, *Geschichtsschreibung*, p. 28). Whether or not Ammianus used two sources, in my view the incongruity is deliberate and ironical.

28 The exempla are: Julius Caesar, who tried to cross the Adriatic in a fisherman's boat in a storm to gather his legions in Italy; Claudius II, who, like the Decii, vowed himself to death before a battle with the Goths; and Galerius, who in person together with ordinary soldiers reconnoitred the enemy's positions. The contrast is, therefore, both with Constantius' lack of personal action and his desire for empty ceremony.

29 Hartke, *Römische Kinderkaiser*, p. 305, viewed Ammianus' claim as malicious and thought that the *adventus* was connected with the emperor's anniversary celebration. Matthews, *Roman Empire*, p. 514 n4, lists some of the recent discussions of the event. His following comment is pertinent: "since Ammianus viewed the event in a 'triumphal' context, this is clearly a possible perspective (or plausible distortion)." For other omissions and distortions in Ammianus' account, see Y.-M. Duval, "La venue à Rome de l'empereur Constance II en 357 d'après Ammien Marcellin," *Caesarodunum* 5 (1970), pp. 299-304. For the purpose of this discussion I completely ignore the possibility of resonances between Ammianus' account and the triumphal entry of Theodosius I into Rome in 389 (see Matthews, *Roman Empire*, p. 11).

30 Julian's endurance: XVI.5.4-5; XXI.9.2; XXV.4.4-6 and 10. For *immobilitas* as unyieldingness on the battlefield, see XVI.12.3 and 38; XXIV.6.6; XXXI.7.11; and n40 below.

31 See esp. XXI.16.15: *ut autem in externis bellis hic princeps fuit saucius et afflictus, ita prospere succedentibus pugnis civilibus tumidus.*

32 Hartke, *Römische Kinderkaiser*, pp. 307f., noted also the military resonance of *transcurso Ocriculo* at XVI.10.4. The speed of movement here implied was one of the military virtues of Julian (e.g. XVII.8.4; XXI.9.6-10.1) so that an ironical comparison also underlies this phrase.

33 This is especially so with *praestriatus* (e.g. XVII.10.2; XXVIII.5.3; XXIX.5.8 and 15; XXX.6.2; XXXI.7.7) and *stupore* (e.g. XVIII.2.17; XXX.5.13; XXXI.3.7; 15.12).

34 In this sentence I follow Sabbah, *La méthode*, pp. 570-72, in some, but not all, of his interpretation.

35 Ormisdas added a second *bon mot* saying, when asked what he thought of Rome, "*id tantum sibi placuisset...quod didicisset ibi quoque homines mori*" (XVI.10.16). This *memento mori* could be interpreted as a direct slap at Constantius' pretensions (so Sabbah, *La méthode*, p. 572). Instead of erecting an equestrian statue Constantius, *quia sufflantes adulatorum ex more...sine modo strepebant* (XVII.4.12), conveyed an obelisk from Alexandria, where it had been left at the death of Constantine, and had it erected at Rome.

36 Hartke, *Römische Kinderkaiser*, pp. 305f., noted that an implicit contrast between Constantius and Julian underlies XVI.10.

37 Camus, *Ammien Marcellin*, pp. 176-81, noted that the cult of Fortune was revived by Julian and that Ammianus always associates Julian and Fortune. For Julian as the embodiment of Virtue and Fortune, see esp. XVI.12.18: *per se, felicissime omnium Caesar, quo te fortuna prosperior ducit; tandem per te virtutem et consilia militare sentimus*. It is also implicit in the posthumous discussion of Julian at XXV.4.

38 The most comprehensive discussion of Ammianus' techniques of direct argument and of persuasion is Sabbah, *La méthode*, pp. 575-94. Although Sabbah (p. 13 and n12) recognises Ammianus' use of cross references, which he calls "*composition par échos*," he shows little recognition of Ammianus' use of irony, which I believe occurs in many parts of the *History*. Drexler, *Ammianstudien*, pp. 29-34, distinguishes between the two Roman digressions by arguing that the second (XXVIII.4) makes ironical use of exempla, whereas the first (XVI.6) does not. It is true that there is irony in the second digression, so heavy as to be mere sarcasm. The irony is also present in the first, but it is more pervasive and subtle.

39 R. Rike, *Apex Omnium. Religion in the Res Gestae of Ammianus* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: Univ. of California Press, 1987) well brings out the complexity of the matter and makes a strong case for an anti-Christian stance in the *History*.

40 For the conception of the army as a bulwark see XVI.12.20 and 49; XXXI.13.2. For *immobilitas* see n30 above. For the spiritual dimension of the conception of immobility, see J. Fontaine, "Un cliché de la spiritualité: *stetit immobilis*," in G. Wirth, ed. *Romanitas-Christianitas. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte und Literatur der römischen Kaiserzeit, Johannes Straub zum 70 Geburtstag gewidmet* (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1982), pp. 528-52.

41 On the importance of character in the outcome of battles, see R.C. Blockley, "Ammianus on the Battle of Strasburg: Art and Analysis in the History," *Phoenix* 31 (1977), pp. 218-31, esp. 228-30.