Classical Perspectives at the End of Antiquity:

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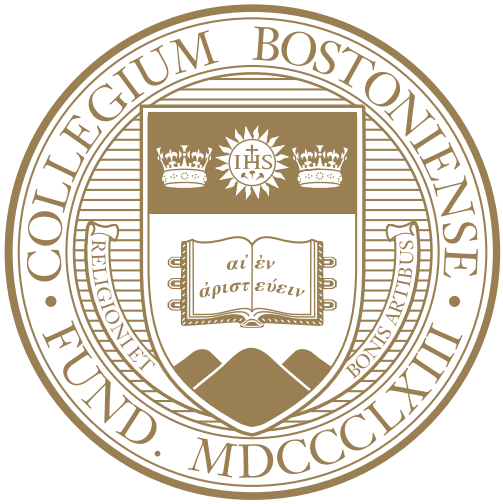

Classical Perspectives at the End of Antiquity

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> Truly, when [Constantius] came to the forum of Trajan, a unique construction under the heavens, as we deem, likewise deemed a marvel by the gods, he was stopped and was transfixed, as he wrapped his mind around the giant structures, which are not describable nor will they be achieved again by mortals.[1]

This quote from Ammianus' long description of Constantius II's *adventus* to Rome in 357 CE is the culmination of the emperor's tour of Rome during a triumphal procession. He passes through the city and sees "[the] glories of the Eternal City,"[2] before finally reaching Trajan's Forum. Constantius is struck with awe when he sees Rome for the first time–in much the same way a tourist might today when walking through Rome. Rome loomed large in the Roman consciousness with the city's 1000-year history and the monuments, which populated the urban space and, in many ways, physically embodies that history. This status was so ingrained that even in the fourth century when the city had lost much of its significance, "[Constantius] was eager to see Rome."[3] Ammianus deems Constantius' awe to be appropriate as he describes the forum as a "unique construction;" however, he ends this statement with a pronouncement that men will not attain an accomplishment of that caliber again. In this despondent prediction, Ammianus communicates a view that a gulf exists–e.g. in culture, military, religion, prestige–between the past glories of Rome and the present age in which he lives.

This gulf–or rather the interpretation of it as inherently bad–is emblematic of the common Greco-Roman belief that the present represents a decline from the past. Hesiod, a traditional moralizing poet, illustrated this belief with the "Myth of the Five Ages of Man" in *Works and*

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[1] Amm. Marc. 16.10.15. *verum, cum ad Traiani forum venisset, singularem sub omni caelo structuram, ut opinamur, etiam numinum assensione mirabilem, haerebat attonitus, per giganteos contextus circumferens mentem, nec relatu effabiles, nec rursus mortalibus appetendos.* All translations in this text are my own unless otherwise specified.
[2] Amm. Marc. 16.10.14. *haec decora urbis aeternae*.
[3] Ibid. 16.10.1. *Romam visere gaudiebat.*

Days.[4] The myth described five successive ages of humans that grew progressively worse beginning with gold and ending with the current age of iron; the underlying claim is that change is bad. The *adventus* highlights one example of change: the imperial presence, or lack thereof, at Rome. The *Urbs* had been the capital of the Roman State for as long as it had existed,[5] but its preeminent status in the empire was thrown into question in the fourth century. Emperors did not live in Rome after 306 CE and they visited Rome just six confirmed times up through 395 CE.[6] The lack of an imperial presence in Rome had become the new norm as the center of focus for the empire was shifting east and north–to Constantinople and the frontiers on the Danube and the Rhine. Ammianus describes Rome through the medium of its ancient–and timeless–monuments. Through his contrast of these monuments with the present age, he implies that Rome is in decline, or at least has declined from its apogee in the second century.

What does it mean for Ammianus to have this view? The model I propose for considering Late Antiquity's relationship with its past is Europe's own relationship with Antiquity.[7] Antiquity has cast a long shadow over every succeeding period of Europe with its influence ranging from aesthetic in art and architecture to politics with democracy and Republicanism. In these and other cases, Classical Antiquity is often lionized and viewed as worthy of emulation. The way successive ages–post-antique Europe receives most, though certainly not all, of the attention–have received, interpreted, and responded to the Classical Tradition is encompassed in

[4] Hesiod *Works and Days* 106-201.
[5] My use of "capital" here, and elsewhere in this project, is anachronistic in that the Romans did not conceive of government or the state in the same way as we do. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this project I will use the term "capital" to refer to the principal city of government– i.e., the imperial residence.
[6] McEvoy (2010), 151-152.
[7] Silk, Gildenhard, and Barrow (2014). Though my use of "Europe" here can refer to almost any period of European history, I am principally referring to the Renaissance through Enlightenment.

Reception Studies.[8] Butler, in his introduction to a collection of essays, gave this as the purpose of Reception studies: "'tradition' is not just what happens to the past after the past, but an extension of the question why the past, qua past, continues to compel our attention."[9]

Like the Renaissance Age that would follow 1000 years later, Late Antiquity was deeply indebted to–and as Constantius' *adventus* demonstrates, surrounded by–their ancestors. Late antique Romans were compelled by Antiquity: they lived among ancient monuments and read the works of a canonical list of authors. And although the Roman Empire still existed in the fourth century (and well past that in the form of the Byzantine Empire), the Romans of the fourth century both were and were not "classical." They may have spoken Latin (at least at Rome and in the West), have called themselves Roman, and have lived under an Emperor who took the title of Caesar; nevertheless, they were still very different from Virgil and Tacitus who both notionally had those same qualities. Roman society of the fourth century was dramatically different from that of the late Republic and early Principate. It is therefore possible to treat late antique society in the same framework as Europe in their idealization of antiquity. Although they were Romans and some could very reasonably see themselves as peers to Virgil or Tacitus, they were also living in a fundamentally different time and those centuries in between changed how they thought and acted. While Late Antiquity and Early Modern Europe are certainly not equivalent,

[8] See Butler (2016), a recent collection of essays on Classical Reception as well as Grafton, Most, and Settis (2010), a dictionary on the Classical Tradition. "The Classical Tradition" at its most narrow sense refers to the corpus of literature like Homer and Virgil, but more broadly speaking it is the entirety of antiquity that can and has influenced following generations from buildings and images to practices and ideas.
[9] Butler (2016), 15.

both regarded the late Republic and early Principate as pinnacles of human achievement.[10] It is in this framework that Ammianus and others like him constructed many aspects of their worldview.

Rome and the Romans changed significantly during the four centuries between Augustus and Ammianus; some individuals were very conscious of these changes. Ammianus is our principal historian of the fourth century. Ammianus consciously frames his work as a continuation of Tacitus' *Histories*;[11] this reflects what Ammianus saw himself as: a traditional historian of Rome.[12] Another such individual is Symmachus, who was a senator with a successful career, who was the Urban Prefect of Rome in 384 CE. Symmachus can also be regarded as a "Pliny of the fourth century," as he wrote hundreds of letters to a variety of individuals. It is in these letters–especially in his dispatches to the Emperor–that he reveals his beliefs on the importance of tradition–especially as it relates to religion.[13] I aim to show that Ammianus and Symmachus deliberately positioned themselves within the Classical Tradition as heirs to Virgil and Cicero (et al.) and it is as their heirs that they critiqued the world in which they lived. I will examine how they portrayed their world in relation to the past through three discrete (though related) aspects of society in fourth century Rome. I will begin by examining Rome's cultural prestige in the changing empire and how Ammianus attempted to counter this. Next, I will examine Ammianus' portrayal of the *Romanitas* (i.e. conduct, mores, and tastes) of the fourth century residents of the city. Finally I will turn to Symmachus to explore the place of traditional Roman religion in fourth century Rome.

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[10] Ammianus is a good example of this phenomenon in antiquity; Edward Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* also presents this viewpoint to Early Modern Europe.
[11] His epilogue (Amm. Marc. 31.16.9) states that "I have put forth these things (events) from the Principate of Caesar Nerva to the death of Valens." This directly follows the scope of the *Histories* that Tacitus says will cover Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian.
[12] See Fornara (1992b), Wilshire (1973), and Kelly (2012) for Tacitus' influence on Ammianus.
[13] See Salzman (1989).

I: *Roma Aeterna*

If Cicero was dropped into Rome in 357 CE at Constantius' *adventus* (Amm. Marc. 16.10) and informed of the present state of the Empire, he would have been shocked, if not appalled, by Rome's diminished status.[14] Cicero had a great awareness of the symbolic importance of Rome and would have been affected by Rome's loss of preeminence and the loss of political relevance just as he was bothered by Pompey's plan to abandon Rome because Caesar was marching on the city.[15] Of course Cicero was not in Rome in the fourth century, but his viewpoint–that of Rome's preeminence–was not lost due in part to the enduring influence that history and historical precedents can have. Ammianus consciously inherited this tradition in creating the *Res Gestae.* In the extant books, Ammianus espouses a vision for the Empire focused on the *Urbs* and deeply indebted to the classical tradition of the cultural high water of the late Republic and early Principate, as exemplified by Cicero, Livy, and Virgil.

Our principal guide to the events of the fourth century–or, at least, to events of the 25 years covered in the extant portion of his history–is Ammianus Marcellinus. Despite this notable position and the consequential attention by scholars, who have alternatively praised or derided his work, we still do not know much about our author.[16] In fact, he is the only reliable source

[14] The choice of Cicero as the example here relates to the sheer quantity of allusions-both direct and indirect-to Cicero in *Res Gestae*. Ammianus was clearly well read in Ciceronian literature and thought highly of him, which is indeed interesting because Cicero was a staunch Republican in the twilight of the Republic and Ammianus lived under the well-established Imperial system that had replaced it. See Blockley (1998), 309-310.

[15] Cicero. *Att.* 7.11, especially 7.11.3: "What do you think of Pompey's plan [to abandon Rome to Caesar]? ... In this instance nothing is more absurd. Would you abandon the city?…He says that the Republic is not in the walls. But it is in the altars and the hearths."

[16] Positive evaluations of Ammianus' work include Matthews (1989) and Kelly (2012), which especially praises Ammianus' literary sensibilities. Cf. Barnes (1998) and Thompson (1947), which give less favorable evaluations.

concerning his life, but he only intermittently and unevenly reveals information.[17] The sole indication he gives towards his origins is a statement in the epilogue where he calls himself "a former soldier and a Greek."[18] That Ammianus was a *quondam miles* is evident from Ammianus' own appearances as a soldier on campaign with Julian and Ursicinus.[19] However, his use of the ethnic descriptor *Graecus* does not do much to place his origins beyond that he is indisputably from the Greek east–and, more importantly, not from Rome.[20] It has been well established that Ammianus wrote in Rome: he was definitely in Rome by the late 380s, though very possibly earlier than this, and his stay was an extended residence–not a visit.[21] However, what makes his residency in Rome more interesting is the claim that Kelly pairs with it: "Ammianus also wrote, in a sense, *for* Rome."[22] This is supported in the manner that Ammianus shaped the narrative with consideration for his audience. The text places an unusually strong emphasis on Rome: Ammianus considers the city as *here*, he returns to the city for each of the city prefectures to cover the urban disorder, and a number of the grandest and most developed scenes take place in

[17] There is a notable letter from Libanius, addressed to a certain "Marcellinus" over which much ink has been spilled, but it is regarded as suspect. Fornara (1992a) convincingly argues that the Marcellinus in question is a different individual from the historian. Cf. Thomson (1947), who takes the traditional view and uses this letter (Libanius *Epistulae* 1063) as a basis to argue that Ammianus is from Antioch.
[18] Amm. Marc. 31.16.9 *miles quondam et graecus.*
[19] Ammianus served on the staff of Ursicinus and later in Julian's Persian campaign and he is also clearly versed in military matters. Ursicinus appears in the first 7 books, see especially 15 and 18-20. See 23-25 for Julian's campaign, death, and the Roman army's retreat. For Ammianus' military involvement see Crump (1973).
[20] See above at n. 17. Fornara (1992)(a), 339, argues that without the letter there is little evidence to support the traditional interpretation of Ammianus' residence in Antioch. He instead suggests the Balkans, in general, and Thessaloniki, in particular. Cf Gavin Kelly (2008), 114-117, who counters this by asserting that there is, in fact, sufficient evidence within the text to support the claim that Ammianus lived in Antioch.
[21] See Matthews 2010, 201, Momigliano (1974), 1394, Thompson (1942), 49, Kelly (2008), 109.
[22] Kelly (2008), 109.

Rome.[23] The particular emphasis given to the city is striking because Rome had become politically insignificant. The narrative is localized and an objective is revealed: by giving greater prominence to Rome than would be warranted if Ammianus were writing the *Res Gestae* as a narrative of the great achievements of the Empire (especially those of the Emperors in the vein of Augustus' *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*), which would largely eschew Rome in favor of Constantinople and the frontiers, Ammianus reveals a classicizing agenda in favor of the traditional construction of Rome as the center of the story.

Ammianus' vision for the empire did not reflect reality during the fourth century. During the Third Century Crisis, Rome was understandably sidelined as competing factions fought for control–and failed to maintain it. Despite the chaos, the mythos of the city remained strong as indicated by the *ludi saeculares* to celebrate the city's millennial by Philip the Arab in 248 CE.[24] Rome's cultural milieu maintained the gravitas of empire even as its political importance was fading. Rome's fading political relevance became more apparent during the rule of Diocletian, which began in 284 CE and during which he enacted the most dramatic reforms since Augustus.[25] One of the more momentous changes he made was the establishment of the Tetrarchy, a novel–though ultimately brief–arrangement of co-rule.[26] The creation of administrative centers at cities like Nicomedia enabled the Tetrarchs to be active in more than one region, but also had the effect of diminishing Rome as an imperial center.[27] The Tetrarchy

[23] Matthews 2010, 201, 204-205; Kelly (2003), 588.
[24] Potter (2014), 236; Zosimus gives a description of the *ludi saeculares* at the beginning of Book 2 of the *Nova Historia.*
[25] Potter (2014), 275-6.
[26] Cameron (1993), 31, which describes the multi-year process that created the Tetrarchy.
[27] Cameron (1993), 32, which emphasizes the singular concept that made the Tetrarchy succeed as long as it did, short as that was, which was consent. The tetrarchs engaged in propaganda and gave themselves titles and *ad hoc* areas of rule, but the system was based on consent and

inevitably broke down and the resulting power struggle ended with Constantine I triumphing as the sole emperor in 324 CE.[28] That year, he founded a city on the Bosporus at the site of Byzantium, which was to become *Altera Roma* and indicative of Rome's declining status.[29]

It was not especially unusual, or improper, for Constantine to establish a city bearing his name as evidenced by the existence of several Caesareas throughout the empire among the other namesake cities that were founded (or re-founded) to honor the emperor or imperial family such as Adrianople in Thrace, in addition to the *Coloniae Augustae*.[30] However, Constantinople was immediately marked as different from these cities. He instituted a grain dole (*cura annonae*) there, which mimicked the system that had existed in Rome since the Republic.[31] This distinguished the city and elevated it though it is important to recognize that, while an unusual institution, the grain dole was not unique to Rome previously as Alexandria had also distributed one since the third century CE.[32] Far more predictive of Constantinople's future preeminent status in the new political landscape of Late Antiquity was the establishment of a Senate there by Constantine. Although Constantinople's Senate was explicitly "inferior in rank" to Rome's at its establishment and that status was communicated in the senators' title of *viri clari* as opposed to

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ultimately failed when it was lacking. She also lays out on pg. 42-43 the formation of these administrative centers and the effect on Rome.

[28] Cameron (1993), 47-52.

[29] Potter (2014), 376-377.

[30] Braund (1984), 107-8. He lists the examples of cities named after the emperor or his family during the Julio-Claudian era, See Mann (1963) for a sense via inscriptional evidence of the proliferation of cities called *Colonia Augusta* or *Colonia Julia.*

[31] Cameron (1993), 121-122.

[32] Haas (1997), 77-78. Cf. Grig and Kelly (2012), 10. Grig and Kelly are concerned specifically with the relationship between Constantinople and Rome and so they note that Rome had previously been the only city to *import* the grain for the dole, which was a large and expensive undertaking with a very high cost should it fail.

Rome's *viri clarissimi*, Constantius would soon grant it parallel status in the 350s.[33] It was this reorganization of Constantinople's Senate as the "Senate in the East" (splitting jurisdiction with the Senate at Rome) in 357 and the appointment of a city prefect to govern the city, which finalized the rise of Constantinople as a–if not yet "the"– capital.[34] Although Constantine did not establish Constantinople with the express intent of replacing Rome nor was Rome's decline dependent on the rise of Constantinople, the contrasting realities of these dual cities provides a helpful starting point for looking at Rome's evolving position.

Ammianus balks at this reality and instead directs the narrative to Rome through dramatic set pieces and digressions.[35] He uses Constantius' *adventus* (16.10) to make a classicizing statement about Rome through a historical comparison. Ammianus could have presented this tour of the city in a number of ways: that Constantius visited Rome is a matter of fact, but it is the choice of presentation (i.e. the detail and length) that is significant. Ammianus uses the descriptions of Rome to continuously remind the reader of the timelessness and grandeur of the city, describing it as "the home of empire and every virtue."[36] This effect continues to build as the procession moves further into the city:

> Whatever [Constantius] might see first, he expected it to surpass all else: the sanctuaries of Tarpeian Jove, which surpasses [all] as much as the divine surpasses the earth; the baths which were constructed in the size of provinces; the

[33] Kelly (2003), 596. Anonymous Valesianus *Origo Constantini* 30: "there he (Constantine) also established a Senate of an inferior rank, he called them *clari"* (*ibi etiam senatum constituit secundi ordinis; claros vocavit).*

[34] Vanderspoel (1995), 55-60, in particular, the sections which pertain to Themistius' and Libanius' attempts to navigate the evolving position of Constantinople and how it related to Rome's status.

[35] The most pertinent set piece that occurs in the main narrative is *adventus* at 16.10. For digressions, the two extended sequences on the people of Rome at 14.6 and 28.4 are notable examples of this type.

[36] Amm. Marc. 16.10.13. *Proinde Romam ingressus imperii virtutumque omnium larem.*

> mass of the amphitheater which was strengthened by the structure of Tiburtine stone and to the summit of which human vision can hardly reach; the Pantheon, like a rounded district, vaulted in celestial beauty; and the elevated summits of the columns rise with a climbable platform (stairs) and holding statues of prior Principes; and the temple of the city and the forum of peace and the theatre of Pompey and the Odeum and the Stadium and among these other glories of the eternal city.[37]

Everything about the image that Constantius is presented is monumental in scale and it blurs the lines between the *Urbs* and the empire: the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus is "divine;" the baths are like provinces; the amphitheater is a skyscraper; the Pantheon, a city district. Ammianus lingers extensively on the *adventus*; the grandiose imagery elevates the city, and plays with the synecdoche that Rome is the empire, which blurs the line between city and empire, *urbs* and *orbis*. The blurring of the boundaries between city and empire ties the two together as a unit, a necessary condition to justify Ammianus' *Urbs*-centric viewpoint.

This image of Rome as equivalent to the Empire is further reinforced by the earlier digression on the Roman people at 14.6 that personifies Rome and relates her history as a metaphorical human lifespan: "when Rome first rose into worldly splendor by the auspices" and the *Urbs* went out and "brought back triumphs" from the *orbis*.[38] He presents Rome's history in the form of a person's life of growing up as in the early period, maturing into an empire, and

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[37] Amm. Marc. 16.10.14. *quicquid viderat primum, id eminere inter alia cuncta sperabat: Iovis Tarpei delubra, quantum terrenis divina praecellunt: lavacra in modum provinciarum exstructa: amphitheatri molem solidatam lapidis Tiburtini compage, ad cuius summitatem aegre visio humana conscendit: Pantheum velut regionem teretem speciosa celsitudine fornicatam: elatosque vertices scansili suggestu consurgunt et priorum principum imitamenta portantes, et Urbis templum forumque Pacis et Pompei theatrum et Odeum et Stadium aliaque inter haec decora urbis aeternae.*

[38] Amm. Marc. 14.6.3. *Tempore quo primis auspiciis in mundanum fulgorem surgeret [Roma].*

then growing old before handing over the empire to the Emperors. However, Gavin Kelly notes the ambiguity of this metaphor's meaning as it uses, in addition to the spatial blurring of the *orbis* with the *urbis,* a temporal contraction in relating the Roman Empire to a human life.[39] Implicit in this Rome-as-man metaphor is a historicizing approach as Ammianus looks backwards in laying out a case for his Rome-centric narrative. John Matthews suggests that the digression at 14.6 is "where Ammianus sets out most fully his ideal of Rome."[40] This digression does explicitly reflect on the events that built the Roman Empire with the city firmly at the center, but the *adventus* (16.10) actually makes the case in a far more profound manner by presenting a scene in the very recent past and in the recognizable physical space of Rome. In the first digression on Rome (14.6), Ammianus seems to imply that Rome is decaying if the aging metaphor is taken to its natural conclusion, though Matthews does point out that Ammianus breaks from the metaphor through the transition to Imperial rule and ties Rome to the success (and quality) of the emperors.[41] In spite of that qualification, the *adventus* goes further and prods the question that is raised by the digression at 14.6: what happens when the quality of the emperors declines?

Ammianus centers the focus on Rome's history as represented by the monuments built by past *principes*. Constantius' *adventus* tours the city with a narrow focus as Ammianus emphasizes the Imperial monuments, several of which are immediately recognizable as such: victory columns, the Pantheon (as rebuilt by Hadrian), the Flavian Amphitheatre, the early Imperial bath complexes (these vary in dating, but notable early ones are the Baths of Agrippa,

[39] Kelly (2003), 595.
[40] Matthews 2010, 201.
[41] Matthews 2010, 208.

Nero, Titus, and Trajan, Commodus).[42] Additionally, Ammianus names several less well-known–even obscure–monuments: the Temple of the City, the Forum of Peace, the Odeum, and the Stadium. Yet, these too are Imperial constructions, all dating to the first or second century CE: the Temple of the City is an alternative name for the Temple of Venus and Rome, which was constructed by Hadrian; the Forum of Peace refers to Vespasian's Forum and the Temple of Peace; the Odeum and Stadium were both built by Domitian on the Campus Martius.[43] Even the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, which dates to the early Republic, was destroyed and restored several times so Ammianus is describing a structure built by Domitian.[44] The accumulation of *exempla* from this period idealizes it in the way Ammianus describes Trajan's forum: "it is not describable nor will it be achieved again by mortals."[45] Constantius saw the achievements and antiquity of Rome and was humbled. With the sequence, Ammianus makes a classicizing and historical comparison between the past and present–and more subtly, east and west. Though Ammianus does not state it explicitly, Constantinople comes to mind when reading the passage of this "eastern" emperor seeing the *urbs* for the first time with an implicit hierarchy defined. This hierarchy implies both that Rome is the greater city, but also, through *orbis-urbis* blurring, that the Roman Empire was superior when city of Rome was at the heart of the empire.

However, Ammianus also blurs the lines between reality and myth through his use of the phrase "Tarpeian Jove" for the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus. The phrase itself is an

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[42] See Platner (1929), 518-536. Ammianus' use of the slightly unusual term *lavacra* instead of the more typical *thermae* creates some ambiguity as to what "baths" he is referring to. However, the context it is used in conjunction with the other Imperial monuments leads me to conclude that the intended meaning is the grand Imperial bath complexes as opposed to the private *balenae* or even the earlier Republican-era bathing complexes. Additionally, the baths break the mold of early Imperial monuments because there were recent additions with the Baths of Diocletian, Constantine and other third century *thermae.*

[43] Platner (1929), 371, 386-388, 552-554, 495-496.

[44] Ibid. 297, 301.

[45] Amm. Marc. 16.10.15.

archaic term that evokes the earliest phases of Rome's development and this trope of archaic Rome recalls the Augustan poets. In particular, Constantius' *adventus* joins the literary depictions of an individual's first impression of Rome that are similarly framed in Rome's mythic past. Propertius invokes these mythological origins in his *Elegies*:

> Visitors, whatever you see here is where Mighty Rome is;
> before Phrygian Aeneas there was a hill and grass.
> And where the Palatine, sacred to Phoebus of the ships, stands,
> the cows of banished Evander lie with one another.
> These golden temples were erected for the clay gods,
> nor was there shame for the huts made without art.
> The Tarpeian father thundered from the naked rock
> and the alien Tiber was our wall.[46]

Virgil uses similar imagery in the *Aeneid*:

> He had scarcely spoken when advancing he pointed out
> the altar and what the Romans call the Carmental Gate,
> in ancient tribute to the Nymph Carmentis,
> the far-seeing prophetess, who first foretold
> the greatness of Aeneas' sons, the glory of Pallanteum.
> Next he pointed to a vast grove, which brave Romulus would restore
> as a sanctuary, and the Lupercal, the Wolf's Cave, under a cold cliff,
> named in the Arcadian way for the wolf-god, Lycaean Pan.

[46] Propertius *Elegies* 4.1.1-8 *hoc, quodcumque vides, qua maxima Roma est, / ante Phrygem Aenean collis et herba fuit; / atque ubi Nauali stant sacra Palatia Phoebo, / Evandri profugae concubuere boves, / fictilibus crevere deis haec aurea temple, / nec fuit opprobrio facta sine arte casa; / Tarpeiusque pater nuda de rube tonabat, / et Tiberis nostris advena murus erat?*

And he also pointed out the grove of sacred Argiletum

calling the place to witness, relating the death of Argus his guest.

He leads him from here to the Tarpeian Rock and the Capitol,

now all gold, once bristling with wild thorns.[47]

Roland Meyer explores these scenes as depictions of an individual's first impression of Rome alongside the *adventus* as Constantius' first impression as he mediates Rome's unique and early position of "world city."[48] Propertius' *Elegies* and Virgil's *Aeneid* both portray the first impression in a manner that Meyer describes as a "juxtaposition of opposites" of the mythological *olim* (then) with the Augustan *nunc* (now) as both marvel at the glory of the Augustan era against Rome's rustic beginnings.[49] He contrasts this with Ammianus who alters the formula and instead compares the Augustan *olim* with the *nunc* that fails to compare with (or ever hope to surpass) the past.[50] While it is unlikely that Ammianus deliberately invoked Propertius and Virgil in his similar construction of Constantius' *adventus,* it is impossible to deny the similarities in their effect as each highlight the splendor of Augustus' Imperial Rome in contrast to either the rustic past or the inferior present.

Ammianus returns to this imagery of Rome's *exemplary* Augustan period when he describes Julian's tomb at Tarsus. Julian the Apostate is the figure in the *Res Gestae* who most clearly embodies, in Ammianus' estimation, the archetype of a proper Roman and whose person

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[47] Virgil *Aeneid* 8.337-348. trans. A.S. Kline Vix ea dicta, dehinc progressus monstrat et aram / et Carmentalem Romani nomine portam / quam memorant, nymphae priscum Carmentis honorem, / vatis fatidicae, cecinit quae prima futuros / Aeneadas magnos et nobile Pallanteum. / hinc lucum ingentem, quem Romulus acer asylum / rettulit, et gelida monstrat sub rupe Lupercal / Parrhasio dictum Panos de more Lycaei. / nec non et sacri monstrat nemus Argileti / testaturque locum et letum docet hospitis Argi. / hinc ad Tarpeiam sedem et Capitolia ducit / aurea nunc, olim silvestribus horrida dumis.

[48] Mayer (2007), 177.

[49] Ibid 157-160 and 176.

[50] Mayer (2007), 173-174.

dominates the surviving text, which both support John Matthew's claim that he is Ammianus' historical inspiration for the work.[51] Consequently, Ammianus' description of Julian's tomb through a pointedly historicizing allusion to Rome, takes on an especial significance in formulating the worldview of a good emperor who should be buried in the Eternal City:

> Then rushing excessively to leave [Jovian] sets up a tomb of Julian to be adorned, situated at the city boundary of the road that leads to the passes of the Taurian Mountains. Of his remains and ashes, if anyone considered rightly, the Cydnus ought not to see them, although a most beautiful and clear river, but the Tiber flowing by (him) ought to perpetuate the glory of his deeds rightly, it divides the eternal city and passes the monuments of the ancient and deified men.[52]

Julian had been killed fighting Persia and was buried in Tarsus, rather than at Constantinople as his immediate predecessors had been or, as Ammianus advocates, at Rome alongside the emperors of the distant past.[53] Ammianus focuses intently on Rome in his description, decrying that the Cydnus is not the Tiber. Kelly notes the allusions to a scene in the Aeneid, which talks of the first imperial burial in Rome (at the Mausoleum of Augustus[54]), and the implication is that Julian should be the latest one.[55] Although he describes Julian as having only an *adequate*

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[51] Kelly (2008), 297-303, Matthews 2010, 202.
[52] Amm. Marc. *Res Gestae* 25.10.5 *exindeque egredi nimium properans, exornari sepulchrum statuit Iuliani, in pomerio situm itineris, quod ad Tauri montis angustias ducit, cuius suprema et cineres, siqui tunc iuste consuleret, non Cydnus videre deberet, quamvis gratissimus amnis et liquidus, sed ad perpetuandam gloriam recte factorum praeterlambere Tiberis intersecans urbem aeternam divorumque veterum monumenta praestringens.*
[53] Kelly (2003), 590.
[54] Platner (1929), 332-336.
[55] Kelly (2003), 592-3, Virgil *Aeneid* 8.873-4 "Tiber, and what funerals you will see when flowing past the recent tomb" *uel quae, Tiberine, videbis funera, cum tumulum praeterlabere recentem.*

command of Latin, Julian is also the only emperor depicted with any sort of classical learning.[56] Ammianus' emphasis on tradition and the past makes it unsurprising that he depicts the most overtly classicizing of the emperors in the surviving books as a tragic figure, who deserves to be buried by the Tiber. Through this image, he describes his vision of the empire, which harkens back the "golden age" of the second century. Ammianus is looking to these emperors in particular when he says, "Rome entrusted the right to command her patrimony to the Caesars."[57] This vision is most clearly personified in Julian whom he describes as "similar to Trajan" and the description of his tomb places Rome at the center.[58] It is this vision–shaped by authors like Virgil–that reveals Ammianus' classicizing worldview.

The effect of these *exempla* requires that the hypothetical situation of Cicero in fourth century Rome be reexamined. While Cicero certainly embodied the classical, his Rome was not the Rome that Ammianus describes–neither in the physical space nor, implicitly, in the inhabitants. Although Ammianus rightfully positions himself as a "classical historian," he is still a product of his age and his work, and the ideas within, in part reflects that. Consequently, some–significant–facets of Ammianus' thought (e.g. his positive opinion on the office of emperor[59]) would be have been incompatible with Cicero (or Tacitus[60]). However, this incongruence does not belie his substantial education and, more significantly, the effect that this education had on his thought.[61] Further it still allows for substantial influence in other areas (i.e. the status of

[56] Amm. Marc. 16.5.5-8 (trans. J.C. Rolfe), See Kelly (2003), 593.
[57] Amm. Marc. 14.6.5.
[58] Ibid. 16.1.4.
[59] Amm. Marc. 14.6.5.
[60] See Wilshire (1973), which responds to and argues against this very supposition even as it and Blockley (1973) both concede to Tacitean influences on the work.
[61] For Ammianus' education see Barnes (1990), Blockley (1998), Kelly (2008).

Rome). He may not have been Cicero's peer in Republicanism, but Ammianus' learning influenced him and is likely the foundation of his emphasis on Rome itself.

Constantinople became, in an incredibly short period of time, one of the most important cities in the empire. However, if our only source for this period was Ammianus, we would be forgiven if we forgot Constantinople even existed. It would have been one thing if Ammianus explicitly commented on the superiority of Rome on the basis of its antiquity or mythos, but he instead excised Constantinople from the text in a manner that Kelly describes as "polemical silence."[62] In fact, the most substantial mention of Constantinople occurs during a section on the geography of Thrace:

> After the furthest point of this it shrinks back into a straight flowing between Europe and Bithynia, passes by Chalecedon and Chrysopolis and obscure stations. For the ports of Athyras and Selymbria and Constantinople, the ancient Byzantium, colony of the Athenians, and the Ceras spur holding a town built high giving light to ships look down on the left bank of this (Bosphorus), for what the very cold wind is called Ceratas and is accustomed to originate from there.[63]

He reduces Constantinople to a passing mention in a digression on the geography of Thrace and puts the emphasis on the city's past as a Greek colony. This is perhaps a slight directed at the un-Romanness of Constantinople as a capital and fits Ammianus' persona as a classicizing historian who finds the idea of a Second Rome scandalous like late Republican Romans were scandalized

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[62] Kelly. "The New Rome and the Old" 588.

[63] Amm. Marc. *Res Gestae* 22.8.7-8. *Post cuius summitatem in angustias rursus extenuatum Europam et Bithyniam intercurrens, per Chalcedona et Chrysopolim et stationes transit obscuras. Nam supercilia eius sinistra Athyras portus despectat et Selymbria et Constantinopolis, vetus Byzantium, Atticorum colonia, et promuntorium Ceras praelucentem navibus vehens constructam celsius turrim, quapropter Ceratas adpellatur ventus inde suetus oriri praegelidus.*

by the rumors of Caesar moving the capital to Troy.[64] Gavin Kelly summarizes Ammianus' ahistorical authorial choice in an article that he titled "Ammianus Marcelinus' Silences on Constantinople." By the time Ammianus was composing his history in the 380s, Constantinople was the principal eastern imperial seat–and Ravenna, Trier, Arles, or Milan were preferred over Rome in the west–so only a very deliberate narrative choice to ignore the city despite visiting Rome could explain its absence.[65]

A good indicator of Constantinople's rising status is to look at its honors in relation to Rome: the events of the fourth century see Rome's unique standing falter in the face of political realities that overwhelm tradition. Antiquity had provided Rome a substantial head start in monuments and honors. Rome was the ancient home of the Senate; it had a grain dole that fed tens of thousands. And as it relates to the physical landscape of the cities, Bryan Ward-Perkins phrases the situation as futile for Constantinople to hope to match Rome in the number and variety of monuments.[66] Nonetheless, Rome's position was beginning to be undermined by Constantinople's rising prominence and the emperors continued to adorn this city with monuments. Cameron elaborates on how Constantinople was immediately endowed with the monuments typical of the other administrative centers: palace, basilica, forum, and hippodrome.[67] Constantine, however, exceeded those models in adorning his eponymous city in honors. Of these honors, the one with the most immediate practical implications was the grain dole offered as an incentive to encourage potential residents to relocate in order to populate the city–and the newly formed Senate there.[68] The grain dole combined with Constantine's decision

[64] Suetonius *Julius Caesar* 79.
[65] Potter (2014), 375-380, 520-538, McEvoy 2010, 151-153.
[66] Ward-Perkins (2012), 57.
[67] Cameron (1993), 43.
[68] Grig and Kelly (2012), 10-11. See also pp. 8 and pp. 8 n. 32.

to immediately build a set of defensive walls far outside the limits of Byzantium indicate that from its inception, Constantinople was intended for greatness and prominence (and this is to say nothing of the even greater Theodosian Walls built towards the end of the century, which is an impressive construction even today).[69] This concluded with the emperor's decision to glorify his city by being buried there–instead of at Rome as was customary.[70] However, these monuments and honors still do not capture the one quality that Rome has in abundance: age.

Age and antiquity cannot be made, but it can be–and in Constantinople's case, it was–acquired. One method Constantine and his successors employed to enhance Constantinople was to do what Eunapius referred to as "emptying other cities."[71] Though Eunapius is referring principally to men whom Constantine had brought to Constantinople to populate the city and its Senate, the same concept applies to the importation of famous artifacts like Athena Promachos from the Athenian Acropolis, the Serpent Column from Delphi, and Phidias' Statue of Zeus at Olympia.[72] The imperial authorities also began to emulate the structures that populated Rome with examples of victory columns and obelisks. The two most famous victory columns in Rome are the still-extant Columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius. Ward-Perkins sets these in contrast to two similar, though unfortunately no longer extant, columns in Constantinople, which he says were at once very similar, but different to those at Rome because the columns in Constantinople had far more commanding positions in the city.[73] Obelisks offer another point of comparison where Rome completely overwhelms Constantinople, which has 14 to Constantinople's 4 or 5.[74]

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[69] Grig and Kelly (2012), 9.
[70] Kelly (2003), 588, see Sextus Aurelius Victor *De Caesaribus* 41.17.
[71] Eunapius 6.2.9, see also *Origo Constantini* 30. Grig and Kelly (2012), 9-10.
[72] Cameron (1993), 63.
[73] Ward-Perkins (2012), 59.
[74] Ibid. "14" only refers to the number still extant in Rome and Ward-Perkins notes that Rome once had many more.

However, the most interesting case is the Obelisk at St. John Lateran in Rome as Constantine originally designated for it to go to Constantinople, but many years later when it was finally moved Constantius sent it to Rome.[75] While not motivated by his *adventus* itself, as its shipment must have been ordered months before his visit, Ammianus deliberately frames it as the emperor "deliberating for a long time on what to do" and *then* he "decided to add to the ornamentation of the city."[76] Ammianus wants his reader to reach the very reasonable conclusion that Constantius was being deferential to Rome even as Constantinople continued to supplant it politically. In spite of this, it seems to be the exception that proves the rule as Constantinople still held honors that had previously been uniquely for Rome and was glorified in monuments–both new and plundered.

Constantinople's consecration in 330 CE reflected a culminating event that can be traced back to the "Rome is where the emperor is" ethos that developed as a natural byproduct of the autocratic Principate and was further driven by the Third Century Crisis and unstable frontiers. The Tetrarchy entrenched this with the administrative capitals like Nicomedia, though Grig and Kelly caution against attributing their prominence as a consequence of the system as they were often important cities before and after the Tetrarchy.[77] Constantinople quickly proved to be a concrete threat to Rome's now mostly symbolic status when it was given the unprecedented title of *Altera Roma*, or Second Rome. This title can be attested as early as 326 CE (i.e., before Constantine consecrated the city) in a poem by Pubilius Optatianus Porphyrius and was later echoed by Themistius while he was in Rome for Constantius' *adventus*.[78] These circumstances

[75] Ward-Perkins (2012), 59.
[76] Amm. Marc. 16.10.17.
[77] Grig and Kelly (2012), 7.
[78] Ibid. 11. Porphyrius uses the phrase "*altera Roma"* at *Carmina* 4.6. Themistius' speech conveyed the same idea, though in Greek (*Or.* 3.42a, 42c).

would make it plausible for anxieties surrounding the Rome-Constantinople relationship to be used as justification for the omission of Constantinople in a narrative written for Rome, but Ammianus is fifty years removed from the first attestation of *Altera Roma.* While Constantinople was still a young city compared to Rome at the time, its position was firmly established and the empire was unlikely to reverse course. Although Ammianus was writing *for* Rome, his choice to almost entirely excise Constantinople was an expression of his traditional outlook, which dictates that Rome must be singular and paramount. Ammianus' had a certain vision and worldview that was anachronistic for the time in which he lived that he presented to his audience. A part of this vision is an emphasis on Rome that is disproportionate to its prominence at that time. Rome holds a position of renown for Ammianus as demonstrated in how he typically refers to the city: *Urbs Aeterna*.[79]

II: *Populus Romanus Urbis*

Ammianus' *Urbs*-centric vision for the Roman state is also expressed–though in a rather different manner–through his digressions on Rome's inhabitants. Two in particular–14.6 and 28.4–take the form of long moralizing critiques of the residents of the city. Ammianus uses these digressions to contrast past *exempla* against current behavior:

> But this magnificence and splendor of the assemblies is hurt by the rude fickleness of a few men not considering where they were born [i.e. Rome]… These men, [so that they can be committed to eternity], strive ardently for [statues]… But how noble it is to spurn these inadequate and insignificant things, for he aims far and high, ascending to true glory, as the prophet from Ascra (i.e. Hesiod) relates and Cato the Censor (i.e. the Elder) taught. He was asked why he,

[79] There are 15 instances of *urbs aeterna* in the text: 14.6.1; 15.7.1; 15.7.10; 16.10.14; 19.10.1; 21.12.24; 22.9.3; 23.1.4; 23.3.3; 25.10.5; 26.3.1; 28.1.1; 28.1.36; 28.1.56; 29.6.17.

> among men, did not have a statue. He said in reply, "I prefer that good men wonder why I did not deserve [a statue] than to murmur why I have obtained it, which is worse.[80]

These two digressions illuminate aspects of the social and cultural history of Rome. Like his historically minded description of Rome's monuments, he invokes the past and past Romans in his societal critique. This is made explicit in his reference to Cato the Censor (i.e. the Elder) as a moral authority because of Cato's legacy as firm traditionalist, who opposed any perceived debasement of Roman culture (i.e. the influence of Hellenization).[81] Ammianus uses the past and past Romans as *exempla* for right behavior to critique the base and ostentatious behavior of the citizens. When viewed next to the emphasis Ammianus places on the physical landscape of the city and its history, the critique of current behavior through past *exempla* further describes Rome and reinforces the city itself as a central character in this history.[82]

These digressions present this character of Rome through the use of stock, indefinite types and generalized ahistorical scenes. Ross convincingly demonstrates on account of these and other features that Ammianus adopted a satirical persona in these sequences and is perhaps riding on renewed interest in satire in the fourth century that is indicated by the reemergence of Juvenal from two centuries of obscurity.[83] He shows how Ammianus adopts these features and

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[80] Amm. Marc. 14.6.7. *Sed laeditur hic coetuum magnificus splendor levitate paucorum incondita. ubi nati sunt non reputantium… Ex his quidam aeternitati se commendari posse per statuas aestimantes eas ardenter … Quam autem sit pulchrum exigua haec spernentem et minima ad ascensus verae gloriae tendere longos et arduos, ut memorat vates Ascraeus, Censorius Cato monstravit. Qui interrogatus quam ob rem inter multos ipse statuam non haberet, "Malo" inquit "ambigere bonos quam ob rem id non meruerim, quam quod est gravius cur impetraverim mussitare*.

[81] See Gruen (1992).

[82] Kelly (2003), 588.

[83] Ross (2015), 367-369 and Highet (1954), 180-190.

how he frames his criticisms by comparing the degraded present against the exemplary past.[84] Ammianus used digressions to provide diversions from the more usual war and politics, which has the effect limiting any sense of repetition or staleness: Ammianus' narrative frequently moves around, visiting the far reaches of the Roman Empire in geographic or ethnographic excursuses.[85] These sequences give more definition to his world by illuminating parts of the Empire that would otherwise remain opaque because of their peripheral impact on the main political and military narratives. Ammianus' Rome is similarly viewed primarily through these long digressions, and it achieves similar results.[86] That Rome is relegated almost exclusively to digressions reflects the political situation of the fourth century, during which the Emperors have ceased to reside at Rome. However, these intermittent visits to Rome conform to Ammianus' traditionalist vision and through moralizing digressions, he is pointed in criticizing the Romans for not living up to the legacy of the city they inhabit. That they are satire impacts how we should interpret them: we cannot simply accept these digressions as historical and reflective of Ammianus' own experiences.[87] Nonetheless, they do inform us on Ammianus' character of Rome–especially in providing further definition to that character's relationship with its past.

Ammianus' inclusion of satire within his history demonstrates his dual desires to appeal to his audience while also reinforcing his authority as a classical author. Gavin Kelly has convincingly shown that Ammianus was a very literate historian who imbued his work with

[84] Ross (2015), 359.
[85] Setting ranges from Britain with the Barbarian Conspiracy in 367 CE to the Eastern Provinces and Persia for Julian's campaign in 363 CE. See Tomlin (1974) and Sundwall (1996).
[86] Blockley (1973), 78 and n. 79 and 80. Blockley shows that Rome is rarely the setting for the narrative because the narrative follows the emperors who are rarely in Rome. For an example of the narrative being set in Rome, we have Constantius' *adventus*, which I have extensively covered. The others scenes, however, are digressions: 14.6, 15.7, 19.10, 26.3, 27.3, 28.4.
[87] See Ross (2015) for satire in Ammianus. For the issues with an autobiographical reading see Ibid. 357-358.

countless allusions to other, earlier classical works.[88] As a stylistic choice, the use of satire is similar to Ammianus' use of digressions as a general format in that the use of satire adds variety to the work. However, it adds variety in a way that does not detract from the project by being out of place. As Ross pointed out, satire in historiography was not unprecedented as Tacitus used satire in his works and that, in many ways, Juvenal and Tacitus had broadly similar worldviews.[89] Keane gives as an example of similarity between the *Annals* and *Satire 8* that both highlight "degenerate young aristocrat[s]" such as Nero, whose theatrics, which were relayed in the *Annals* (14.14), were treated with contempt by Juvenal.[90] Gavin Kelly specifically showed that Ammianus was familiar with and also alluded to both authors' works.[91] This point is magnified when combined with the fact that satire had begun flourishing again in Ammianus' lifetime. So while it may be an atypical choice, satire is an established tool in the historian's repertoire and, notably, very popular with fourth century literate society. As such it presents another way for Ammianus to demonstrate his eruditeness–and in this case, in a very fashionable manner.

How should we interpret the satirical elements of the digressions? A traditional interpretation of these scenes, as Gavin Kelly points out, is to describe Ammianus as a "bourgeois" looking down on the base actions of the urban populace from the vantage point of a condemning observer.[92] Alan Ross sharply criticizes this autobiographical reading, which argues

[88] See Kelly (2012).
[89] Ross (2015), 367-368. For an overview of satire in Tacitus see Keane (2012). Ibid. 404, which gives the following as examples of Tacitus using satire in his historiography: *Hist.* 1.49.2, *Ann.* 13.45.2, *Ann.* 2.33.5, *Ann.* 14.56.4.
[90] Keane (2012), 406. The specific comparison Keane is making is that Tacitus' works influenced Juvenal as they were published.
[91] Kelly (2012). See 166-167 for Juvenal and 175-178 for Tacitus.
[92] Kelly (2012), 118-119.

that the events in these digressions reflect Ammianus' actual experiences.[93] Ross notes the dramatic differences in tone between Ammianus' over-the-top criticism within the digression at 28.4 and a more sincere evaluation of misconduct shortly before, at 28.1.[94] While I agree that an autobiographical reading would be a mistake and that it would be similarly problematic to receive the satiric persona as an accurate history, the anger of the satire should be accepted as reflecting Ammianus' true feelings. Satire's use of historical *exempla* is an ideal way for Ammianus to express his historical viewpoint. It criticizes society for what the satirist perceives to be failing: Ammianus refers to exemplary historical figures as examples of proper moral behavior to highlight how much better the past was.[95] Though the satirist may do this in a manner that is over-the-top and divorced from reality, the underlying criticism is based in sincerity. Ammianus' choice to frame these digressions as satire–it was in vogue at the time and would helpfully show off his writing ability[96]–does not prevent them from containing truthful criticism directed at the behavior and morals of the current inhabitants of Rome, which he viewed as degenerate.

Let us now return to the section of the digression at 14.6 that I quoted above, which describes a stark contrast between the behaviors of current Romans against the backdrop of their eminent ancestors. By naming Cato the Elder, who was virtually synonymous with traditional Roman virtue, Ammianus positions his critique as a defense of the *mos maiorum.* His invocation of Cato is particularly relevant as the passage concerns ostentatious behavior, which would be

[93] For autobiographical readings see Matthews (1989), Thompson (1947). Cf. Ross (2015) and Kelly (2008), which are examples of works to have pushed back against this sort of interpretation.
[94] Ross (2015), 367.
[95] See Hooley (2007), 1-12 for an introduction to satire, both ancient and modern, and the complications with taking truth from satire.
[96] Highet (1954), 180-190.

associated with the Greek east.[97] This ostentatious behavior both flies in the face of Roman values, which emphasizes moderation and simplicity, and Hellenism was a favorite target of Cato the Elder. It is in this section that Ammianus first betrays the satirical nature of these digressions by trafficking in the stereotype of the flamboyant East. This Hellenistic connection is made more explicit in a portion of that passage where Ammianus adds "they undertook to overlay [the statues] with gold which was introduced by Acilius Glabrio when he had overcome the king Antiochus with arms and skill."[98] By naming the Greco-Macedonian Antiochus (III) in a *cum*-clause, Ammianus temporally links the events and implies that Acilius Glabrio learned this practice in the east. Although we must also be careful with regard to how literally we take what he says, we have no reason to doubt the underlying contrast he is drawing between the past and present.

Ammianus' statements on these individuals are archetypal because they are props: *exempla* to measure contemporary behavior against. Hesiod was an old arbiter of morality and, as a consequence, he could be invoked to appeal to the past and to tradition.[99] However, Ammianus uses Hesiod here less as a character and more as a trope; he "name-drops" Hesiod to establish a standard of morality. Cato functions in a similar, though more involved, sense: as the archetypal traditional Senator, Cato refuses a statue in contrast to Ammianus' contemporaries who all clamor for them. However, it is irrelevant whether or not senators in the 380s sought to have gilded statues made of their image to ensure that their memory would survive in perpetuity.

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[97] Gruen (1992), 54.

[98] Amm. Marc. 14.6.8. *Ex his quidam aeternitati se commendari posse per statuas aestimantes eas ardenter adfectant quasi plus praemii de figmentis aereis sensu carentibus adepturi, quam ex conscientia honeste recteque factorum, easque auro curant inbracteari, quod Acilio Glabrioni delatum est primo, cum consiliis armisque regem superasset Antiochum*.

[99] A relevant example of Hesiod's old-fashioned morality is the "Myth of the Five Ages of Man from *Works and Days* at 106-201.

In fact, the believability of this scenario reminds us why the autobiographical interpretation of these digressions was the mainstay for as long as it was.[100] Nevertheless, the discussion concerning the sincerity of the critique or the reality of the situation distracts us from considering the effect of Cato on this scene. He, like Hesiod, appears here to illustrate a morality that the satirical scene around him–regardless of its truth–responds to. Consequently, Ammianus paints the present as morally degenerate not so much through the specific actions described, but through the contrast with Cato.

Ammianus, as a *quondam miles,* pointedly invokes historical "great men" to sharply contrast their martial successes with the corresponding lack of continuation of that tradition in the fourth century Senatorial elites:

> If some of them (i.e. the Senators) have advanced very far away to see their fields–or for the purpose hunting through others labors–they would think themselves to have equaled the great journeys of Alexander or Caesar. Or if they are carried by painted yacht from the Lake of Avernus to Puteoli, it is the very much the hunt for the (golden) fleece when they should dare this during the summer.[101]

This, like the example above, is believable so it is understandable why many scholars have wanted to see these scenes as sincere. It is entirely plausible that senators in Rome in the fourth century were dramatic about the difficulty of their journey to their country estates, but their statements are not what are being criticized. Ammianus is not criticizing their pomposity *per se,* but rather their implied lack of martial virtue. The army and war play an immense role in the

[100] See Kelly (2012), 166-167.
[101] Amm. Marc. 28.4.18. *Pars eorum, si agros visuri processerunt longius, aut alienis laboribus venaturi, Alexandri Magni itinera se putant aequiperasse vel Caesaris: aut si a lacu Averni lembis invecti sunt pictis Puteolos, velleris certamen, maxime cum id vaporato audeant tempore*.

text: war, alongside politics, is the principal concern of ancient historiography and the army was also personally significant to Ammianus, who participated in several campaigns.[102] The *exempla* in this scene, Julius Caesar and Alexander the Great, were two of the greatest military commanders of the ancient world whose significance cannot be overstated: Alexander's conquests were mythic and begat several large kingdoms, Caesar helped bring down the Republic and his adopted son was the first emperor. "Caesar" has an additional contemporary ring because the name immediately recalls the current Caesar, Valens (co-ruling with Valentinian), who in a couple books will suffer an ignoble defeat and death at Adrianople.[103] Ammianus' personal experiences in the military underscores the venom in his critique of Senators, who overstate their accomplishments by comparing their hunting trip to Caesar's conquest of Gaul.

Ammianus continues his criticism by describing in detail the ostentatious and ridiculous behavior of Rome's inhabitants. It is here that the satirical nature of the narrative becomes truly apparent as the scene becomes more-and-more ridiculous and farcical:

> Placing the highest honor in taller coaches and the splendid adornment of clothing, some men sweat under the heavy cloaks that they put around their necks and bound their throats. It is excessively airy because of the thinness of the wool. And with each hand, holding and repeatedly shaking them (to show off signet rings[104]), especially with the left hand, in order that the longer fringes and tunics

[102] Most notably, Ammianus participated in Julian's failed Persian invasion. See Amm. Marc. 23-25 for Julian's Persian campaign. See above at n. 19 for more on Ammianus' military background.
[103] Amm. Marc. 31.12-14.
[104] Rolfe (1935), 41 n. 1.

made with a variety of threads into a diverse image of animals may be readily seen.[105]

Ammianus relishes in the satire of this sequence as he holds back from overt criticism here–though it is certainly implied–to let the actions speak for themselves. This passage rebukes showiness by describing these men as caring only for appearances–to the point of discomfort. The scene catalogues items that signal wealth: riding in coaches, signet rings, clothes decorated and made from several types of material. However, the scene seems self-contradictory as the clothing causes the men to sweat, while at the same time the breeze permeates it. This combination creates the image of an impractical presentation that emphasizes form over function. This construction deploys the common trope in Roman literature to describe Romans, or at least ideal Roman behavior, as simple and manly in contrast to the flowery and effeminate east.[106] Ammianus is deploying a typical moralizing response to ostentatious wealth. He caps this image by additionally revealing that the image they present is a fraudulent one as they "exaggerate the immensity of their patrimony, multiplying the yearly yield."[107] Even if we were to accept the first example of the behavior of Ammianus' contemporaries as factual, it breaks down here as this example's ridiculousness defies credulity. Nonetheless, Ammianus' frustration at the behavior is brought out in the juxtaposed exemplary scene.

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[105] Amm. Marc. 14.6.9. *Alii summum decus in carruchis solito altioribus et ambitioso vestium cultu ponentes sudant sub ponderibus lacernarum, quas in collis insertas iugulis[43] ipsis adnectunt, nimia subtegminum tenuitate perflabilis, expandentes eas manu utraque et vexantes crebris agitationibus maximeque sinistra, ut longiores fimbriae tunicaeque perspicue luceant varietate liciorum effigiatae in species animalium multiformes.*

[106] Cato the Elder is a good example of one with this viewpoint. See Plutarch *Life of Cato the Elder* 12, 20, 22.

[107] Amm. Marc. 14.6.10.

The exemplary scene is similarly formulaic–and concerning in part figures from a mythic period of Roman history–in a depiction of proper and right behavior by past Romans:

> Truly ignorant of their ancestors on account of whom, Rome's greatness was so extended. This was manifested not by riches, but through the most savage wars…and surpassed all opposition by virtue. For this reason, that Valerius Publicola was buried through contributions and the helpless wife of Regulus and their children were both aided by her husband's friends. And the treasury provided for the daughter of Scipio, when the nobles were ashamed by the beauty of the grown woman who was long unwedded because of the absence of her poor father.[108]

This historical comparison responds immediately to Ammianus' statement that contemporary Romans exaggerate their property by contrasting it with their ancestors who acquired that property through war. However, this generalized statement on past virtue is then contextualized by specific examples from Republican history as he names Valerius Publicola, who helped overthrow the monarchy and establish the Republic,[109] Regulus, who was a general in the first Punic War who put his duty to Rome before his own life,[110] and Scipio Africanus, the general who won the Second Punic War. This contextualization further reinforces Ammianus' critique of the contemporary Roman's

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[108] Amm. Marc. 14.6.10-11. *ignorantes profecto maiores suos, per quos ita magnitudo Romana porrigitur, non divitiis eluxisse sed per bella saevissima, nec opibus nec victu nec indumentorum vilitate gregariis militibus discrepantes opposita cuncta superasse virtute. Hac ex causa conlaticia stipe Valerius humatur ille Publicola et subsidiis amicorum mariti inops cum liberis uxor alitur Reguli, et dotatur ex aerario filia Scipionis, cum nobilitas florem adultae virginis diuturnum absentia pauperis erubesceret patris.*

[109] Livy 2.1-16.

[110] Livy *Periochae* 18.

lack of martial virtue. However, the juxtaposition goes beyond one facet of life as the behavior described in the *exempla* additionally highlights the Roman virtue of *humanitas.* Roman virtues are hard to ascribe to a corresponding modern virtue and *humanitas* is no different with a range of meanings from "elegance" to "philanthropy" and "kindness."[111] Here, it is closely associated with the latter sense as it depicts the public caring for virtuous people who are in need.[112] It is because of their virtue, or more accurately the virtue of their exemplary male relative, that they are worthy of this philanthropy; the Romans who undertook this philanthropy are, in turn, demonstrating themselves to be more virtuous because of their actions. Ammianus is highlighting this proper behavior in contrast to the degenerate contemporary behavior with the result that he is portraying his contemporaries, in effect, as un-Roman.

As an amusing example of irony Ammianus includes among his criticisms in this satirical digression a criticism of those who love *only* this very genre. Ammianus ironically calls out specifically satire for criticism, but the deeper, though veiled, critique is not that they read and enjoy satire in their leisure–this would be very hypocritical of Ammianus–but rather it is their lack of interest in more serious endeavors:

> Some men detest learning as a poison. They read with a more attentive zeal Juvenal and Marius Maximus, handling no books except these during their copious leisure. On account of what cause is not for my humble mind to judge. They ought to read extensively many and varied things because of the greatness

[111] Nybacken (1939).
[112] Dowling (2006), 181-182. Ibid 182 n. 22, which gives a list of *exempla* from Valerius Maximus in *Facta et dicta* that describe instance of Romans providing *humanitas* or *clementia* at 1.1 – 1.11. Two representative examples that Valerius gives are the Senate and Aemilius Paulus, who cared for the son of Masinissa (1.1d) and Mark Antony, who buried Brutus (1.11).

> of their glory and their ancestors. To hear of Socrates, marked for death and placed in prison, who asked a certain man skilled at playing the songs of the lyric poet Stesichorus so that he might learn to do it while he could. When the musician asked what this could offer him, Socrates, who was going to die on the next day, replied 'so that I might depart life knowing something more.'[113]

This passage had troubled scholars in the past with the apparent incongruity of criticizing satirists within a digression that is clearly satirical, but Ross instead posits that Ammianus' readers would not feel targeted because it is written in the style of Juvenal, who satirized first and second century Romans, and that Ammianus was only motivated by a desire to obtain their approval of his work.[114] While the use of satire itself within this work in such a blatant and lengthy form and the recent resurgence of interest in satire both lend significant credence to the proposition that Ammianus was at least partially motivated by a desire for fame and recognition, anger is a central feature of satire and cannot be removed from the equation.[115] Nor, too, is it possible to ignore the irony of Ammianus satirizing his readers for reading and enjoying satire. The irony of the choice also indicates that it was done so very deliberately, which brings further doubt to the proposition that Ammianus used satire purely in an attempt to achieve fame. The criticism of contemporary spurning of serious authors and works could also very well be

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[113] Amm. Marc. 28.4.14-15 (trans. John Rolfe, somewhat adapted). *Quidam detestantes ut venena doctrinas, Iuvenalem et Marium Maximum curatiore studio legunt, nulla volumina praeter haec in profundo otio contrectantes, quam ob causam non iudicioli est nostri. Cum multa et varia pro amplitudine gloriarum et generum lectitare deberent, audientes destinatum poenae Socratem, coniectumque in carcerem, rogasse quendam scite lyrici carmen Stesichori modulantem, ut doceretur id agere, dum liceret: interroganteque musico quid ei poterit hoc prodesse morituro postridie, respondisse ut aliquid sciens amplius e vita discedam.*

[114] Ross (2015), 362-363.

[115] For the renewed interest in satire see Ross (2015), 367-369 and Highet (1954), 180-190. See Hooley (2007), 1-12 for an introduction to satire and its purpose.

a comment on the *Res Gestae's* reception in early readings, but it would be unwise to cling to a biographical interpretation. Even a more traditional selection of authors like Virgil or Livy are omitted in favor of a vague lament by Ammianus that they ought to be reading *multa et varia.*

The *exemplum* brings into sharper focus that the target of Ammianus' anger is not directed at a specific refusal to read a certain work, but a general incuriosity. This no doubt would be particularly frustrating to an individual such as Ammianus who had traveled extensively on military campaigns and included in his work descriptions of odd events like the Tsunami of 365 CE.[116] Ammianus contrasts his contemporaries, who "detest learning as a poison," with Socrates whom he portrays a curious up to the point of death. The criticism is apparent and fittingly delivered by the most curious of characters– as depicted by Plato, at least.[117] This is especially pronounced in Ammianus' phrasing of "learning as a poison," given that Socrates manner of death was drinking hemlock. Ammianus' rebuke of incurious Romans is brought out and made to be especially pointed through the contrast with Socrates.

Ammianus had definite external reasons to include satire in his history, but how he did it and the ways he utilized it deserve praise. He used two aspects of satire–anger and historical *exemplum*–to full effect in order to further his backward facing vision for Rome. He displays these exemplary figures in stereotyped (and sometimes incorrect) manners to draw out what is being critiqued: to separate the fluff from the point, to

[116] Amm. Marc. 26.10.15-19, which is Ammianus' account of the tsunami.
[117] Rolfe (1935), 145 n. 5. Rolfe points out that Ammianus may be mixing his references as this quote and a similar story had been previously ascribed to Solon. Cf. Val. Max. 8.7, Ext. 8 and Cic. *De Senec.* 8.26. Regardless of whether or not Ammianus confused the figures, and the criticism inherent within the contrasting worldviews of Socrates and Ammianus' contemporaries remains valid.

clarify, or just to reinforce what was made obvious in the contemporary critique itself. While it may be unwise to attempt to extrapolate details of Ammianus' life or of events that he witnessed in Rome from these digressions, his attitude and feelings towards the behavior of the Romans in the city–which could match in some respects to what has been depicted and vary wildly in others–is likely genuine. Satire may not require an accurate depiction of events or behaviors, but it does require anger and here Ammianus directs his anger at Romans for no longer being, or acting like, the Romans who had built the *Urbs Aeterna* and the empire.

III: *Religio Romana*

One of the most significant cultural development of the Later Roman Empire–and certainly the one with the longest lasting effect–was the rise and ultimate triumph of Christianity in the fourth century.[118] However, Christianity's success could not have been assumed from the outset of the fourth century, because when the Edict of Milan legalized Christianity in 313 CE, it still constituted a minority population.[119] The vast majority of Romans at that time were non-Christians and, in all likelihood, polytheists, who were dubbed "pagans" by Christians in the fourth and fifth centuries as a generalizing term for a heterogeneous group.[120] Nevertheless,

[118] Attempting to pick a date for Christianity's "triumph" is doomed to be flawed and also misrepresent the situation and the forces involved, but for simplicities sake, I will use the period from the Edict of Milan in 313 CE to Theodosius' outlawing of the public performance of the ancestral rites in 391 CE as the crucial period. See Beard et al. (1998), 369-375, which outlines the varied and uneven imperial responses to both Christian and traditional rites and also further complicates my own delineation of a final date with Theodosius' outlawing of the public performance as it was difficult to enforce in the west after he lost control. Nevertheless, it is a good date for tracing the progression of Imperial policy, which encouraged the societal trends.
[119] Lactanius *de Mortibus Persecutorum* 48.
[120] Pagans in the fourth century would not have considered themselves pagans. However, despite the baggage acquired via the Christian apologists of the time or the moral guardians of today, the term has does convey the appropriate meaning that I need: an individual who is neither Jewish

paganism visibly declined–and finally ceased to exist–as a public institution in this period as its presence in dedications and inscriptions decreased and the priestly colleges became defunct. [121] In the fifth century, paganism was a vestige of what it formerly was and it that continued to exist principally in private practice.[122] Despite the trend, both in Rome and throughout the Empire, there were exceptions who maintained the old ways during the fourth century. The *religio* of these individuals, which was directed by and adhered to the *mos maiorum,* their traditional way of life, informed them on the necessity of maintaining the *pax deorum.*[123] It is impossible to disconnect Roman religious belief from that belief's history due to the importance of tradition in Roman cultural practices. The interconnected nature of belief and tradition can be clearly seen in how Symmachus frames *Relatio* 3 to Valentinian II, which focuses on the importance of tradition in his defense of the *Religio Romana.*

Symmachus is a very visible example of the type of individual in the fourth century who still maintained the traditional Roman rites. He was a member of a Senatorial family that became exceedingly prominent in Late Antiquity. His 40-year career was undoubtedly a distinguished one; it was notably marked by a provincial governorship of Africa and, especially, by his possession of the Urban Prefecture of Rome in 384, which was the culmination of a Senatorial

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nor Christian living in the Roman Empire. See Brown (2012), 101-102 and Cameron (2011), 25-30.

[121] Cameron (2011), 132-172 illustrates the textual evidence and inscriptions that support this claim. Also see Boin (2013), 255-263 especially (table 1) that lists the findings from relatively undisturbed sanctuary to Magna Mater in Ostia that shows that the dedication of statuary there ceases in the fourth century.

[122] Beard et al. (1998), 387-388, which shows this, while noting the odd exceptions like Macrobius' *Saturnalia,* which was written in 430 CE but conspicuously ignores Christianity, and the exceedingly odd continuation of the Lupercalia at the end of the fifth century. However, they are careful to note that this does not imply so much the continued survival of the pagan cults as it does emphasize just how fluid and resistant to orthodoxy religion can be.

[123] Beard et al. (1998), 216-217 discusses the connection between *religio,* tradition, and the proper maintenance of the state. Ibid 381, which discusses the continuation of *religio* in the fourth century.

career.[124] He is known to us by and through his extant corpus of writings. Symmachus wrote an enormous number of letters to a wide circle of friends and a set of official dispatches to the emperor, the *Relationes,* which Symmachus sent when he was the Urban Prefect in 384. While serving in that role, he sent 49 dispatches to the Emperor of the West, Valentinian II, on a variety of matters such as expenditures on games (8) and concerns about the grain supply (18).[125] What he is most famous for is his involvement in the debate over the removal of the Altar of Victory from the Curia Julia and funding from the priestly colleges in 384 by Gratian with *Relatio 3*. By arguing in favor of the restoration of the funding of the priestly colleges against such a giant as St. (at the time Bishop) Ambrose, Symmachus cemented his reputation as an ardent defender of paganism.[126] While the proposition of a "Pagan Revival" in the late fourth century has largely been discredited by recent work, Symmachus' self-presentation epitomized the idealized image of Late Roman Paganism that inspired it.[127]

Through his surviving writings, Symmachus reveals both his sincere religious beliefs in writings with numerous references to religious observances and phrases that invoke the divine and the importance he placed on tradition.[128] It must be remembered that Symmachus' wealth and education mean that his views cannot be taken as typical or representative for all Romans who still practiced the traditional religion. Nevertheless, Symmachus' education did lead him to express a worldview that was driven by a conservative, traditional perspective of Roman society,

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[124] Ebbeler (2007), 232-235.
[125] Barrow (1973), 11-15.
[126] Ibid 32-33.
[127] Boin (2010). Though a re-examination of the archaeological evidence used by Boch (1945) that argued for a "Pagan Revival" in conjunction with more recent discoveries, Boin argued against a neat narrative of Revival.
[128] *Epistolae* 1.46, 47, 49, and 51 are examples of letters concerned with religious matters and Robinson (1915), 92-93 discusses some of the phraseology Symmachus used further indicating his polytheism.

and therefore religion.[129] A number of his letters are explicitly religious in character as he chastises his friends for their neglect of ancestral rites or the general societal neglect of the same, but Symmachus most fully outlines his beliefs in *Relatio* 3.[130] In this dispatch, he asks Valentinian II to rescind an order made two years previously by Gratian, his predecessor and brother, which removed the Altar of Victory from the Senate House (Curia Julia) and withheld funding from a number of cults, most prominently the Vestal Virgins.[131] Symmachus frames his arguments to Valentinian by fully developing his conception of tradition and history and their importance to Roman society.

The importance he placed on tradition in *Relatio 3* was not expressed purely for argument's sake, but rather only one manifestation of his worldview that was also exhibited by his focus on senatorial goals like *amicitia.* His letters reveal an individual who was a traditionalist not a dogmatic ideologue. Although Symmachus was a pious pagan, he maintained traditional *amicitia* with individuals irrespective of their religion.[132] Symmachus' over 900 extant letters, addressed to *amici* as different as his father[133] and St. Ambrose,[134] reflect his commitment to the traditional senatorial practice of friendship and the exchange of favors. Peter Brown reminds us to consider, "the atmospheric weight of reverence that pressed down upon the late Romans as they [approached the inherited institutions]" such as *amicitia* and he notes that there remained "a massive middle ground" where Pagans and Christians could cooperate.[135] It is this middle ground that allowed for Symmachus to write to his brother:

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[129] See Salzman (1989).
[130] See Cameron (2011), 163-164.
[131] Sheridan (1966), 187-188.
[132] Brown (2012), 100-101.
[133] Symmachus *Epistulae* 1.1-12 of which one is a letter from his father to Symmachus.
[134] Symmachus wrote several letters to him: *Epistulae* 3.30-37.
[135] Brown (2012), 103.

> "Perhaps you marvel that I am recommending a bishop. His cause, not his sect, persuaded me [to do] this thing. For Clemens discharged the duty of a good man at Caesarea, which is his home."[136]

Recently a rebellion had occurred in Mauretania that resulted in significant destruction in Caesarea, especially to the city's treasury, and apparently the city was attempting to recover this loss from its leading citizens.[137] At this time Symmachus' brother was a government official (*vicarius Africae),* and Symmachus is writing to him on behalf of these leading citizens, who were represented by Clemens, whom Symmachus likely knew from his time as proconsul in Africa.[138] Despite their religious differences, Symmachus recognized above all Clemens' fulfillment of his duty to his *patria*. In this scenario, tradition is the guiding principal directing the action of both parties–Christian and pagan. Each understands and respects the custom of *amicitia,* which informs this exchange*;* so while Symmachus notes the irony of the situation, he is largely unfazed by it as he comments on it as an oddity rather than as a difficult decision. Peter Brown additionally notes that Symmachus responds positively because the appeal was for Caesarea and not for the Church–civic, not religious.[139] Through this framework, Symmachus is attempting to "bridge the many fissures that divided the upper class" and in doing so, he reveals his primary focus is not religion–though he is certainly concerned about maintaining the traditional rites–but rather the larger concept of the *mos maiorum*.[140]

He also used the position as a platform from which he could make an appeal for something he considered important: maintaining the ancestral cults. Although *Relatio 3* can be

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[136] Symmachus *Epistulae* 1.64 *Commendari a me episcopum forte mireris. Causa istud, non secta persuasit. Nam Clemens boni viri functus officium, Caesareum, quae illi patria est.*
[137] Ibid 1.64.1-2.
[138] Salzman (2011), 132-133.
[139] Brown (2012), 102.
[140] Brown (2012), 100-101.

viewed as an example of religious conflict–and it certainly is in part–the text reinforces Symmachus' reverence for tradition and the importance of the *mos maiorum.* The Vestal Virgins and the Altar of Victory were old institutions that played an important role in the civic religion. The Vestal Virgins were tasked with tending the hearth of the city and the college was an ancient institution dating to the mythological origins of the city.[141] In contrast, Augustus established the comparatively young Altar of Victory in the Senate House in 31 BCE, but it nonetheless became an important part of the Roman civic religion since it was where the Senate took oaths and made offerings to the state.[142] Consequently, Gratian's removal of the altar and defunding the priestly colleges marked a major shift in policy from Jovian and Valentinian I's ambivalence and was a prelude to Theodosius' order, which outlawed public sacrifices in 394.[143] However, Gratian's order in 382 CE wasn't itself an unprecedented move as Constantius had ordered something similar when he was in Rome in 357, though it was quickly restored either after he left or at the latest by Julian.[144] That the outcomes of that removal in 357 CE and the near-permanent removal under Gratian were diametrically opposed despite their closeness in time reflects the growing position of Christianity and the corresponding diminishing influence or reverence for the traditional cults.[145] Yet it is precisely a respect for these cults that Symmachus pleading for:

> In fact what does it serve more than the glory of the times that we defend our ancestral institutions and that we defend the laws and the fate of our country?

[141] Livy *Ab Urbe Condita* 1.20.3.
[142] Sheridan (1966), 187.
[143] Pohlsander (1969), 596.
[144] Sheridan (1966), 187.
[145] The removal in 382 CE was permanent except for a brief restoration under the usurper Eugenius who ruled from 392 to 394. Barrow (1973), 33.

> Accordingly, that [glory] is greater, when you know that you are allowed [to do] nothing against the way of your ancestors.[146]

In this dispatch to Valentinian II, Symmachus appeals to the emperor's Romanness and sense of tradition by invoking the *mos maiorum.* The framing and focus on tradition permeates the text as he invokes tradition and the past in different ways as he goes through the reasons to justify maintaining the ancestral cults.

His first argument is that the proper performance of the rites ensures the safety of the state characterizing the Senate in their religious capacity as "sentries" watching over the empire "on behalf of [the emperor]."[147] This is an expression of the Roman belief that their piety had protected them and enabled their success.[148] He reinforces this with a personified Rome who begs, "Revere my age, which your piety for the rites won for me."[149] This appeal is reminiscent of Valerius Maximus who wrote, "Our state must be known to never have its eyes turned from the most exact performance of religious rites."[150] *Facta et Dicta,* Valerius' work that he wrote during the reign of Tiberius, is by no means of the same genre or written in the same context as Symmachus' appeal for toleration, but it was written for the purpose of maintaining tradition with respect to religion.[151] Symmachus also recognized that because Valentinian II is a Christian, he may not be receptive to a claim grounded in religion and attempts to reframe it as an appeal to past precedent: "Certainly emperors can be counted among both sects and both opinions; the

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[146] Symmachus *Relationes* 3.2. *Cui enim magis commodat, quod instituta maiorum, quod patriae iura et fata defendimus quam temporum gloriae? Quae tum maior est, cum vobis contra morem parentum intellegitis nil licere.*
[147] Symmachus *Relationes* 3.2.
[148] See Scheid (2007) for an overview of pagan sacrifice, Scheid (2016), 113-124, which discusses the role of belief in religious practice, and King (2003), 301-309 for the role of *Pietas* in Roman religion.
[149] Symmachus *Relationes* 3.9.
[150] Valerius Maximus 1.1.8.
[151] Beard et al. (1998), 181.

earlier ones cultivated our ancestral rites, the recent ones did not remove them."[152] Here Symmachus demonstrates a certain amount of understanding for why Valentinian II–or Gratian more accurately–would want to defund the ancestral cults and sought to counter it by giving both an example grounded in tradition (the earlier emperors), but also an example that would resonate more with Valentinian (the recent Christian emperors).

He finishes this argument with a warning by asking "who is so familiar with the barbarians that he does not need an Altar of Victory?"[153] He is invoking the implied outcome of ruin if Valerius Maximus' reminder to properly maintain the ancestral rites is ignored. Valerius' sayings and anecdotes demonstrate the dichotomous nature of Roman religion that allows for either pious maintenance of the rites, which ensures the health of the state, or neglect, which will incur their wrath.[154] Although Symmachus leaves it to readers to supply the consequences of neglecting the rites, the subtext of ruin is present as he references Constantius' earlier order to remove the Altar of Victory. Symmachus notes that it was fortuitously repealed and, in doing so, he is not so subtlety pointing to what Valentinian must do to safeguard his legacy.[155] Although the argumentation seems a bit unfocused, it is clear that Symmachus is attempting to press this issue from all sides in hopes of finding the argument that will appeal to the Emperor. Though he is arguing about religion and uses religious reasons, he still grounds the argument in traditional virtues and motivations like *Romanitas* and the desire to protect ones legacy rather than religious piety.

Symmachus' worldview also presupposes that the history and the antiquity of the ancestral cults entitle them to respect. Respect and admiration of the past and past

[152] Symmachus *Relationes* 3.3.
[153] Symmachus *Relationes* 3.3.
[154] Beard et al. (1998), 216-217.
[155] Symmachus *Relationes* 3.4.

accomplishments figure prominently in Roman culture as exemplified by the Latin phrase for Roman values, *mos maiorum,* translates as the "the way of [our] ancestors." Symmachus argues from this principle by saying that the ancestral rites must be respected on account of their age and the proof of their success (as seen in the success of the empire). He frames this as an argument for toleration saying that "everyone has their own ways and their own rites; the divine mind distributed to cities various cults as guardians."[156] However, this notionally progressive view is diminished by the context in which it is invoked, as Symmachus represents the side that would benefit from such toleration. Additionally, it is only the set up for his true argument based in history–specifically the history of the "benefits conferred" by the ancestral cults:

> "If a large amount of time should bring authority to religious rites, faith must be preserved with so many centuries and we must follow our parents who auspiciously followed theirs."[157]

To support this claim, he invokes "repelling Hannibal from the walls and the Senones from the Capitoline" as specific instances of when honoring the traditional rites served Rome in the past.[158] He even places an appeal in the mouth of a personified Rome who begs "Revere my age, which the your piety for the rites won for me."[159] Symmachus uses historical *exempla* here to positively reinforce the role that Roman religious piety played in creating Rome. The inclusion of personified Roma recalls the cult of the city, but more prominently it uses the traditional position and prominences of the *Urbs* in Roman consciousness. Symmachus again uses his combination of positive and negative reinforcement here by citing historical examples of what

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[156] Symmachus *Relationes* 3.8.
[157] Symmachus *Relationes* 3.8. *Iam si longa aetas auctoritatem religionibus faciat, servanda est tot saeculis fides et sequendi sunt nobis parentes, qui secuti sunt feliciter suos.*
[158] Ibid 3.9.
[159] Ibid.

happened when Rome neglected the cults. He cites a removal of the endowment to the Vestal Virgins–which is especially pertinent to this appeal–that caused "a public famine and the hopes of all the provinces were stolen by a miserable harvest."[160] This *exemplum* is both relevant and powerful. The food supply to any major city in the ancient world was a major concern for the rulers; its failure would cause famine and death, which resulted in riots and the possibility of being deposed. This warning is made stronger by being the result of the same action as Symmachus is attempting to reverse. Symmachus again argues that the way to prevent this is to follow precedent and maintain the cults because "entrusting the priests produces nourishment from the earth and it was a remedy far more than a largess."[161]

Symmachus closes his dispatch with an appeal not directly addressing religion, but rather filial piety. By placing this particular argument in the prominent position at the end, Symmachus demonstrates the importance of filial piety in Roman morals:

> "Let [the gods] defend you, let them be worshiped by us. We ask that our religion be reestablished. [The religion] preserved the empire for your deified father. [The religion] furnished legitimate heirs to a fortunate emperor. That older deity [emperor] looks from his starry citadel on the tears of the priests and he thinks himself to blame for the violated custom, which he gladly preserved."[162]

The crux of this line of argument isn't religion–that is the goal–but rather it is on honoring one's family. Symmachus asserts that Valentinian I, who allowed the traditional cults to continue

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[160] Symmachus *Relationes* 3.15.
[161] Symmachus *Relationes* 3.15.
[162] Ibid 3.19-20, *Vos defendant, a nobis colantur. Eum religionum statum petimus, qui divo parenti numinis vestri servavit imperium, qui fortunato principi legitimos suffecit heredes. Spectat senior ille divus ex arce siderea lacrimas sacerdotum et se culpatum putat more violato, quem libenter ipse servavit.*

despite being Christian, should be Valentinian II's model for behavior; and if Valentinian II does not do this, he will dishonor his father. Symmachus manages to dislodge the reasoning almost entirely from religion, instead focusing on the virtue of filial piety that operates independently of religion and is an integral part of Roman society.[163] He further pushes this filial piety by saying that in reversing the order, "[Valentinian II is presenting his] *divus* brother (Gratian) a correction to the foreign plan."[164] However, Symmachus does something odd here by referring to Gratian as *divus* to the Christian Valentinian II. While it is a religious term, its use here is as a title; it may perhaps be a title that both Gratian and Valentinian would reject, but it is still a title that the Senate had conferred on Gratian in death.[165] Bowerstock argues that Symmachus used this epithet not as a provocation, but to reinforce the compatibility between the old and new system.[166] Whether Symmachus was making a statement or using a fossilized term, he still attempts to remove himself and his motives from consideration by placing the request in the context of filial duty and to put the focus on Valentinian saying that he must reverse the order in order to preserve his legacy and the legacies of his father and brother.

Symmachus framed his defense not on theological minutiae in the way we might understand religious disputes (e.g. the Great Schism of 1054 or the Arianism controversy), but instead his arguments were framed by tradition and history. This was a perfectly suitable line of argumentation both in its deference to his audience's (i.e. Valentinian II's) religious beliefs, but it was also entirely in line with Roman religion's emphasis on ritual and upholding the tradition that had been carried on "for so many centuries."[167] Therefore, it is unsurprising that his most

[163] Hewitt (1931), 30-32, which discusses filial piety in Greco-Roman society.
[164] Symmachus *Relationes* 3.20.
[165] Bowerstock (1986), 299-300..
[166] Ibid 304.
[167] Scheid (2016), 118-124, Symmachus *Relationes* 3.8.

overtly religious appeal was that religious piety–principally the proper performance of rites–ensured the protection of the state, which was central to the Roman religious self-conception.[168] Instead, the majority of his appeal emphasized civic virtues appealing to tradition and filial duty–the cults are old and these rites were handed down over generations. Symmachus framed this argument with respect to the common civic tradition in an attempt to appeal to that "middle ground" between Christians and pagans of high social standing, but Salzman shows that Symmachus–and his likeminded contemporaries–was defending these traditional practices as a means to defend Roman religion.[169] Consequently although Symmachus' appeal was highly regarded–his opponent, Ambrose, conceded it was eloquent–its religious nature guaranteed it would be unsuccessful as religious orthodoxy won out over Symmachus' appeal to tradition.[170] Despite Symmachus' failure to restore the Altar of Victory or funding for the cults, *Relatio* 3 remains a testament to the importance of tradition and the past in Roman elite society in the closing decades of the fourth century.

Conclusions

Rome in the fourth century was in a state of flux. The empire was still there, and strong at that. While the end was on the horizon, the most stark evidence of that looming end–the Gothic sack in 410 CE–was still decades in the future when Ammianus was writing. The world he and Symmachus lived in was, for all its changes and incongruities with the Augustan Age, still recognizably–though just barely–antique. This late antique world no longer belonged to the high Classical, but it was not yet Medieval. In the setting of the *Urbs Aeterna*–a testament to the glories of Rome–I have looked at this society through the eyes of men who simultaneously

[168] See Valerius Maximus 1.1.8 as an example.
[169] Salzman (1989), 362-364.
[170] Barrow (1973), 32-33.

recognized (and resisted) the changes in the society around them, but also failed to appreciate the magnitude of the changes they were living through.

Symmachus and Ammianus each demonstrate a certain level of faithfulness to the *mos maiorum* in their writings, which often opposes the prevailing attitude of the times, or at least the direction of change. Ammianus contradicts reality in his writings to reassert Rome's traditional, paramount position as he utilizes digressions to create reasons for the narrative to shift to Rome. Simultaneously and in service of the same goal, Ammianus excises Constantinople, which denies the city's importance as a center of political power–a status that Rome can no longer claim. Then in two of his lengthy digressions at Rome, he adopts a satiric persona to forcefully attack the morals and behavior of his contemporaries by pairing them with exemplary figures from Rome's past who symbolize who the Romans were when Rome was at the center. Symmachus is reacting similarly to the Christianization of the Roman World. His *Relatio* 3 argues that the Emperor should restore funding to the pagan cults, especially the Vestal Virgins. He frames his arguments primarily in terms of tradition and secular Roman values.

A common thread in the writings of these men is an overwhelming sense of nostalgia: Symmachus and Ammianus each explicitly elevate Augustan or Trajanic Rome in their writings. Or rather they exalt what they perceived Rome to be when it was filtered through rose-tinted lenses. What they knew of the past had been curated to present a certain image of Rome that they would understandably long for: they saw the Forum of Trajan, read Virgil and Livy, and they could make offerings to Jupiter Capitolinus or at the Altar of Victory in the Curia Julia. This sort of longing for and idealization of the past is exceedingly common in societies. The rhetoric of nostalgia can be very compelling as has recently been seen in contemporary American society during the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election. Although Ammianus' and Symmachus' self-

presentations were undoubtedly influenced by nostalgia, this does not discount their authentic claim of being Classical individuals. While different in a myriad of ways from Virgil, Livy, or Cicero, Ammianus and Symmachus saw those men are their peers and by emulating these authors they attempted to embody the Classical. To this end, they largely succeeded in this attempt and, consequently, they worthily represent that perspective and worldview at the end of Antiquity.

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