

THE NEW ROME AND THE OLD: AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS' SILENCES ON CONSTANTINOPLE

Nobody doubts that Ammianus Marcellinus wrote in Rome and for Rome.¹ Rome, in the larger sense, is the subject of his work, but in his ideology the boundary between the city and the empire is blurred. He returns to the eternal city for the most uneventful prefectures, and the most elaborate purple-patches. Although an occasional stage for events in the *Res gestae*, Constantinople receives no such treatment. Rather it is the victim of polemical silence, or at any rate polemical evasion.

The point has been considered less than it might have been.² To concentrate on what a historian does not say is both counter-intuitive and perilous. Silence might be attributed to ignorance, suppression, the perceived irrelevance of the subject matter. Indeed, silence may derive from the fact that what has gone unmentioned never existed. Some recent scholarship on Ammianus cannot spot the difference and displays the neurosis of conspiracy theory. The subject of this article will be three places where Ammianus is silent, in my view audibly silent, about Constantinople. In 25.10.5, Ammianus suggests that the emperor Julian should have been buried in Rome rather than Tarsus; in 16.10.15–16, Constantius II gazes in awe at the Market of Trajan and, confessing himself unable to match it, presents the city of Rome with an obelisk from Thebes; in 17.4.12–15 Constantius' gift arrives and is erected. Constantinople conspicuously haunts all of these passages though not dignified with mention by name. That all three describe and glorify the topography of Rome is of course highly significant. It is at the pretensions of Constantinople to the status of Rome that Ammianus targets his idiosyncratic technique of disdain.

Negative attitudes towards Constantinople can be found in many fourth- and fifth-century authors. Oriental and occidental alike, they disparage its novelty and its voracious appetite both for food and for other cities' religious and artistic treasures; sometimes, with more or less openness, they dislike its Christianity. It was natural that the other cities of the East should resent a rival, whose Senate snatched away their own eminent citizens: the sarcasm of Libanius of Antioch and Eunapius of Sardis is not surprising.³ The Western administrative class expressed its conservatism more subtly: Sextus Aurelius Victor is a notable example. For the author of a breviary, omission or, better, extreme curtness is a natural weapon. Victor mentions Constantine's foundation of his city periphrastically and as a virtual aside, and at the same time and with the same brevity includes Constantine's patronage of Christianity (*condenda urbe formandisque religionibus ingentem animum auocavit, simul nouando militiae ordine*, 41.12). Later he reports Constantine's burial 'in the city named after him' (*fumus relatum in urbem sui nominis*, 41.17), an event that caused public disorder in Rome.⁴

¹ The exception that proves the rule is 14.6.2, where Ammianus purports to address his satirical remarks on the city to *peregrini*. Note the use of the Roman technical term.

² Honourable exceptions include acute remarks by G. Sabbah, *La méthode d'Ammien Marcellin* (Paris, 1978), 349–50, and T. D. Barnes, *Ammianus Marcellinus and the Representation of Historical Reality* (Ithaca, 1998), 93.

³ For example, Libanius, *Or.* 30.6, 37; Eunapius, *VS* 462 (VI.2.8–9 Giangrande); see L. Cracco Ruggini, 'Simboli di battaglia ideologica nel tardo ellenismo', in *Studi storici in onore di Ottorino Bertolini* (Pisa, 1972), 177–300, 205 and n. 58, 206 and n. 60).

⁴ Cf. the ambiguity if not hostility of Eutropius 10.8.1 *primusque urbem nominis sui ad tantum fastigium euehere molitus est, ut Romae aemulam faceret*.

Ausonius of Bordeaux, by contrast, brings himself to mention the name in his *Ordo nobilium urbium* (2); nonetheless he undermines all claims of Constantinople to rival Rome, by making it compete against Carthage for second place.

Equal or greater hostility might be expected in authors with strong connections to the old Rome.⁵ The Augustan History pretended to date from before the establishment of Constantinople, which forced the *scriptor* to avoid the subject, but a typical private joke has been plausibly identified: the comment that there were no old families among the Byzantines (*Gallieni duo* 6.9).⁶ For Claudian of Alexandria, personal origins and political allegiance combined with the subject matter of his poetry to provide examples, for those who seek them, of hostility towards the New Rome: thus he mocks the *Graios Quirites* who applaud Eutropius' Consulate (*In Eutrop.* 2.136).⁷ Claudian is probably most analogous to Ammianus of the preceding selection. Both were residents of Rome; they originated respectively from Alexandria and from Antioch, the two greatest Eastern cities until Constantine's city was founded; both were required by their narratives to cover events in Constantinople.⁸ Ammianus does not call Constantinople *urbs . . . magnae quae ducitur aemula Romae* (Claudian, *In Rufin.* 2.54), or indeed anything that might suggest or mock any vaunted parity to Rome. But absence of openly hostile remarks does not mean absence of hostility, it will be seen. Nor is such a technique uncharacteristic of Ammianus. Although he claimed to have produced an *opus ueritatem professum*, corrupted by no lie or silence (31.9.16), the most revealing, satisfying and interesting readings have laid huge emphasis on his silences,⁹ in particular, those concerning Christianity. Rather than the 'pagan Monotheist', whose fair-mindedness stands out amidst the intolerance of his age,¹⁰ more recent scholarship sees a manipulative and persuasive author, who consistently minimizes the significance of Christianity in politics and whose polite remarks on the Christian religion are constantly juxtaposed with the low behaviour of its adherents.¹¹ Insinuation, after all, functions through careful use of silence, through implication and juxtaposition rather than statement.¹²

Ammianus' treatment of Christianity and his treatment of Constantinople could obviously be linked. It would be easy, and has in the past been too easy, to pile up the antitheses between the old Rome and the old religion, and the New Rome and the New Religion. Speculative religious history often sees the new city founded thanks to Constantine's troubled relationship with pagan Rome. But reaching an accommodation

⁵ Victor, a native of Africa, was Prefect of Rome in c. 389: any earlier links with Rome are conjectural (cf. H. W. Bird, *Sextus Aurelius Victor: A Historiographical Study* [Liverpool, 1984], 5).

⁶ M. A. Wes, *Das Ende des Kaisertums im Westen des römischen Reichs* (Gravenhage, 1967), 16, cited by Cracco Ruggini (n. 3), 210, n. 62.

⁷ Cracco Ruggini (n. 3), 210, n. 62.

⁸ C. W. Fornara, 'Studies in Ammianus Marcellinus I: the letter of Libanius and Ammianus' connection with Antioch', *Historia* 41 (1992), 328–44, rejected the traditional version of Ammianus' Antiochene origins, a move accepted by e.g. T. D. Barnes, 'Ammianus Marcellinus and his world', *CPh* 88 (1993), 55–70 (review article of J. F. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* [London, 1989]), but denied by J. F. Matthews, 'The origin of Ammianus', *CQ* 44 (1994), 252–69, and G. Sabbah, 'Ammien Marcellin, Libanius, Antioche et la date des derniers livres des *Res gestae*', *Cassiodorus* 3 (1997), 89–116. He was at any rate a resident of Antioch.

⁹ Cf. remarks of Barnes 1993 (n. 8), 68.

¹⁰ Monotheism demolished by R. L. Rike, *Apex Omnium: Religion in the Res Gestae of Ammianus* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1987), 1–7. Such a view is still found in standard works (e.g. M. von Albrecht, *A History of Roman Literature* [Leiden, 1997], 1428). For a modified claim on Ammianus' essential tolerance, see Matthews (n. 8, 1989), 435–51.

¹¹ Summary and further references in Barnes (n. 2) *passim*, esp. ch. VIII.

¹² Barnes (n. 2), 87–8 on the possible treachery of the Bishop of Bezabde (20.7.7–9).

with Rome was difficult for all emperors; pagan Constantinople is visible on closer inspection, and the prominence of Christianity in the Roman Aristocracy and urban landscape (as well as the prominence of Rome in Christian ideology) needs no closer inspection. The demolition of such an antithesis as a historical representation is justifiable, but it should perhaps not be so quickly dismissed as a model underlying ancient historiography, which was always keen to identify in Constantine a common cause of benefits or ills. The two antipathies are importantly distinct, but the techniques with which they are expressed are similar, and Ammianus' political hostility to Constantinople frequently has religious overtones.

I. THE TOMB OF JULIAN (25.10.5)

The rioting in Rome that followed Constantine's burial in his new city is not an isolated indication of the significance of imperial remains, and only the first mark of the tension that surrounded the choice of imperial burial places in the fourth century. The emperor Constantius II obtained his greatest posthumous fame from Ammianus' narrative of his arrival in Rome on 28 April 357 (16.10). Less famous, but perhaps as grandiose a spectacle, was his posthumous *aduentus* into Constantinople. On 3 November 361, on the brink of civil war with his cousin Julian, Constantius died in Cilicia. He was said to have named Julian his heir (21.15.2, 5), which conveniently bestowed legitimacy on both Julian's reign and Constantius' memory. The rituals were observed. The emperor's body was washed and placed in a coffin, and an impressively tall, though stooping, young officer, Jovian, son of Varronianus, was given the duty of escorting Constantius' remains with regal pomp to his burial-place near his relatives in Constantinople. Jovian was presented with samples of the soldiers' rations, and the post-horses were paraded before him, as they might have been for an emperor, which Ammianus thought portended his futile and shadowy reign, as director of a funeral procession. Such is the sum of Ammianus' account (21.16.20–1): he plainly found an *aduentus* worthier of attention in Julian's dreamlike epiphany (22.2.4–5). By contrast, Gregory of Nazianzus reports that angelic music was heard as Constantius' body crossed the Taurus Mountains (*Or.* 5.16), and that at Constantinople the whole army paraded in full arms as though for a living emperor, and the entire city poured out to greet him (*Or.* 5.17). Julian, who had broken with Christianity, was without a diadem as he went to meet the corpse, and lead the funeral procession to the Church of the Apostles: there Constantius was buried next to his wife Eusebia, close to the tomb of his father Constantine.¹³

Eighteen months later Julian too was dead, at the hand of an unknown attacker in battle in Persia. Jovian, like Valentinian and Theodosius after him a young officer and son of a general, was proclaimed emperor in a desperate situation. He made an ignoble peace and rushed home to establish his regime. The task of accompanying the dead emperor's remains was given to Julian's kinsman Procopius (25.9.12–13), who was himself to attempt unsuccessfully to wear the purple. Thereafter differences appear. Gregory of Nazianzus tells us that the procession was accompanied by paid clowns who mocked his apostasy and his demise to the accompaniment of flutes (*Or.* 5.18). The details are curious and scarcely interpretable: the confident eccentricity of Julian's

¹³ A tomb that Constantine may have shared with his mother Helena and wife Fausta. See n. 17.

portrayal of the imperial office was preserved in death.¹⁴ Ammianus tones down the distinction: Constantius went to his burial *regia pompa* (21.16.20) and Julian *humili pompa* (mentioned in a forward reference at 23.2.5). Julian's remains were taken to Tarsus, and burnt before burial in a tomb outside the town,¹⁵ near the monument of Maximin Daia, as Leo Grammaticus remarks (93.23). Just as the pagan Julian had participated in Constantius' Christian burial, the pious Christian Jovian decorated his predecessor's tomb when passing through Tarsus (25.10.5).

Jovian's reign as funeral director had been portended by his part in burying Constantius: after Julian's funeral, there was but a short wait until his own. He died on his way to Constantinople, of a cause that did not inspire investigation, but inspired Ammianus to impressive insinuation (25.10.13).¹⁶ His corpse was taken to Constantinople and buried in the Church of the Apostles, where his wife Charito was later buried with him (Zonaras 13.14.23). Ammianus is again accurate but not entirely comprehensive: 'the body was sent to Constantinople to be buried among the remains of the Augusti' (26.1.3). Mention of the church is again evaded. At this stage Constantinople had the bodies of two Augusti and (perhaps) one Augusta¹⁷ only, but when Ammianus was writing in the late 380s, the tradition of imperial burials in Constantinople may have appeared established. So eleven years after Jovian, Valentinian's body had a long journey from Bregetio (near Sirmium) to be buried in Constantinople, said Ammianus, *inter diuorum reliquias* (30.10.1). The body of Theodosius was brought there from Milan in 395, and east Roman emperors were entombed there until the eleventh century.¹⁸

The most remarkable and ironic part of the story is that at some point Julian's remains were brought from Tarsus and reburied next to Jovian's, in a stoa on the north side of the Church of the Apostles. Leo Grammaticus describes the coffin as cylindrical and made of porphyry, and states that Julian's wife Helena (who had originally died at Vienne and been buried in Rome in 360, 21.1.5), was buried alongside him (94.1–2). Cedrenus (308A) and Zonaras (13.13.23–25) give a four-line epitaph in Homeric hexameters, alluding to his burial in Tarsus, which Cedrenus implies was still extant on the coffin.¹⁹

The delicately nuanced differences in pagan and Christian funeral practice that the

¹⁴ Typified by the *Misopogon*, and typically over-interpreted by Julian's biographers.

¹⁵ The burial outside the town limits is repeatedly mentioned, and is another important variation in pagan and Christian burial practices. Cf. e.g. Averil Cameron and S. G. Hall, *Eusebius Life of Constantine* (Oxford, 1999), 347–8.

¹⁶ Insinuation given proper recognition by J. Curran in *CAH* 13 (Cambridge, 1999), 80.

¹⁷ Helena was originally buried in Rome (Eusebius, *VC* 3.47.1; T. D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* [Cambridge, MA. and London, 1982], 221). Whether and when she was (re)buried in Constantinople is a difficult question: see P. Grierson, 'The tombs and obits of the Byzantine emperors (337–1042)', *DOP* 16 (1962), 1–63, at 39–40. Cedrenus 297A and Leo Grammaticus 88.6–7 have both Helena and Fausta buried alongside Constantine. But it is possible that the idea of Helena's burial in Constantinople derives from an error in Socrates (1.17): he misinterpreted Eusebius' reference to the βασιλεύουσα πόλις (Rome) as meaning Constantinople (1.17). See M. J. Johnson, 'Where were Constantius I and Helena buried?', *Latomus* 51 (1992), 145–50 at 149–50, and J. W. Drijvers, *Helena Augusta: The Mother of Constantine the Great and the Legend of the Finding of the True Cross* (Leiden, 1992), 74–5.

¹⁸ Grierson (n. 17), *passim*.

¹⁹ A two-line epigram sharing the last line is found in Zosimus 3.34.4 and *AP* 7.7.47 (attributed to Libanius). Credence has usually been given to the version of Cedrenus and Zonaras (Grierson [n. 17], 41; J. Arce Martínez, 'La tumba del emperador Juliano', *Lucentum* 3 [1984], 181–91 at 185–6). One cannot invariably give credence to the claims of Byzantine sources which claim that something still exists: they may merely repeat the claims of a source.

ceremonial of the court could accommodate in the mid and late fourth century are fascinating. One might equally light upon the *consecratio* which was granted alike to Constantius, Julian, and Jovian,²⁰ or the creation of an exemplary sequence of imperial tombs to glorify Constantinople.²¹ My interest in this study, however, is in Ammianus' presentation, in the contrasting ways in which he treats Julian's burial in Tarsus and other imperial burials in Constantinople. The interment of Constantius *prope necessitudines eius* has been noted as one of Ammianus' 'most oblique references to Christianity',²² and the same might be said of the other imperial burials in the Church of the Apostles (particularly Valentinian's burial *inter diuorum reliquias*). Julian, the exceptional case of the period, is given far greater attention.

The Sophist of Antioch, Libanius, had held that Julian should not have been buried at Tarsus, but in Athens, beside Plato in the garden of the Academy, to be celebrated by an eternal succession of teachers and youths.²³ Ammianus (who had mentioned the funeral separately) used Jovian's decoration of the tomb to make a forceful and vigorous intervention, which corrected Libanius and brought Julian powerfully into the imagination of his Roman audience (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, si qui tunc iuste consuleret, non Cydnus uidere deberet, quamuis gratissimus amnis et liquidus, sed ad perpetuandam gloriā recte factorum praeterlambere Tiberis, intersecans urbem aeternam diuorumque ueterum monumenta praestringens.

Though in excessive haste to leave [Tarsus], [Jovian] decided to decorate the tomb of Julian, situated at the city boundary on the road which leads to the passes of Mt. Taurus. But as for his remains and ashes, if anyone then showed sound judgement, the Cydnus ought not look on them, although it is a beautiful and clear stream, but to perpetuate the glory of his noble deeds the Tiber should wash past them, which cuts through the eternal city and flows by the memorials of the deified emperors of old.²⁴

The Neoplatonic golden chain of teachers and pupils in which Libanius located his imaginary Julian was replaced in Ammianus' conception by a different exemplary succession, the tombs beside the Tiber of the ancient deified emperors. Julian was worthy of the eternal glory that the eternal city could bestow on him: through allusion his imagined tomb both evokes the first burial in Rome's imperial monuments and the last figure in another timeless succession, Vergil's parade of Roman heroes (*Aen.* 6.873–4):²⁵

²⁰ On which see e.g. S.G. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1981), Section II.

²¹ Grierson (n. 17), and much prior and subsequent bibliography.

²² Matthews (n. 8, 1989), 549, n. 48.

²³ Τοῦτον ἐδέξατο μὲν τὸ πρὸ Ταρσῶν τῆς Κιλικίας χωρίον, εἶχε δ' ἂν δικαιότερον τὸ τῆς Ἀκαδημίας πλησίον τοῦ Πλάτωνος, ὥστ' αὐτῷ παρὰ τῶν αἰεὶ νέων τε καὶ διδασκάλων ἃ καὶ τῷ Πλάτῳ τελεῖσθαι ('A grave just outside Tarsus in Cilicia received his body. It ought more properly have been in the Academy next to Plato's tomb, so that he too might receive the honours paid to Plato by endless generations of youths and teachers') (*Or.* 18.306, trans. Norman).

²⁴ Translations (occasionally adapted) from J. C. Rolfe, *Ammianus Marcellinus*, 3 vols (Cambridge, MA, 1935, 1939, 1940).

²⁵ The Mausoleums of Augustus and Hadrian were the most famous of the tombs by the Tiber, and contained the remains of many other emperors. The Mausoleum of Augustus was begun in 28 B.C.; Marcellus was buried there five years later.

uel quae, Tiberine, uidebis
funera, cum tumulum praeterlabere recentem!

What obsequies will you see, Tiberinus, as you flow past the new-raised tomb!

So Julian is imprinted on to the last hero of Vergil's procession, and becomes Ammianus' Marcellus: *si qua fata aspera rumpas, tu Marcellus eris*.²⁶ Although the traditional limpidity of the Cydnus is duly acknowledged,²⁷ its claims must yield to the Tiber's: a further allusion to Vergil, to the speech of the prophetic river-god Tiberinus, mirrors the open argument of the text, by lending the Cydnus some of the Tiber's qualities (*Aen.* 8.62–64):

. . . ego sum, pleno quem flumine cernis
stringentem ripas et pingua culta *secantem*,
caeruleus Thybris, caelo *gratissimus amnis*.

I am he whom you see laving my banks with full flood, and cleaving the rich fields, the blue Tiber, river best beloved of heaven.

The imagined tomb in Rome (as opposed to Tarsus or Athens) represents Ammianus' forceful appropriation of the emperor, and mirrors his practice throughout the work, in which Julian is central and definitively Roman. Indeed, in a sense, this exemplary monument, facing both future and past, reflects the structure of the *Res gestae* as a whole. Julian is one of the few characters to have any historical learning, and he consciously looks back to those examples, both Roman and Greek, that are thrust at other characters by the narrator.²⁸ His place as an heir, even in his faults, to exemplary earlier emperors (especially those of the second century) is particularly strongly marked.²⁹ And Ammianus' last books show the beginnings of how to understand Julian himself as *exemplum* by invoking his memory indirectly and directly to the detriment and envy of the reigning emperors.³⁰ The complex of allusions to Libanius and Vergil at least acknowledges the claims of Tarsus, and alludes to those of Athens. The allusion that is missing—and striking for its absence—is that to Constantinople. Beyond the literary statement, there is a clear political statement, about the respect due to Rome, and the lack of significance to be attached to its rival.

An emperor's burial in Rome was imaginable, albeit a possibility that had receded. The bodies of Julian's sister-in-law Constantina and wife Helena had both been sent there. But in all probability, Julian was buried in Tarsus because the alternative was burial in Constantinople, and therefore in a Christian church, an option that would have been insufferable both to Christians and to polytheists. (At some later point, it is evident, the objections of both had softened or could be ignored.) All other emperors since Constantine who had died in normal circumstances had been taken to

²⁶ Cf. Eutropius 10.16.3 on Julian: *uir egregius et rempublicam insigniter moderaturus, si per fata licuisset*.

²⁷ Cf. Curtius 3.4; J. Fontaine, *Ammien Marcellin* 4 (vol. 2) (Paris, 1987), 279, n.709.

²⁸ Julian's historical learning praised: 16.5.7. Historical learning in Julian's speeches: e.g. 23.5.16–23. *Exempla* consciously followed: Cyrus 21.9.2, Marcus 22.5.4 (corrected by Ammianus), Scipio Aemilianus 24.2.16, Alexander and Scipio Africanus 24.4.27, Alexander 25.4.15. Ignorance of other characters: e.g. Gallus 14.11.22, Constantius 16.10.3, Barbatio 18.3.7, Valentinian 30.8.4.

²⁹ Second-century emperors as *exempla*: e.g. 16.1.4, 22.5.4, 24.3.9, 25.4.17.

³⁰ Cf. e.g. 26.5.11, 29.4.2. I hope to write on this process elsewhere.

Constantinople for burial: if the tradition was not fully established at Julian's death, it certainly was by the time Ammianus wrote, as is suggested by his formulaic descriptions of the burials of Jovian and Valentinian *inter Augustorum/ diuorum reliquias*.

Imagining Julian's tomb in Rome is not contrary to possibility, then, but is plainly forced. Not merely because other emperors were buried in Constantinople: imagining Julian buried in Rome was in no way linked to that emperor's own allegiances or preoccupations. Julian had been born in Constantinople and had never visited Rome; his eloquence and learning in Greek far exceeded his Latin, the adequacy of which won Ammianus' praise (16.5.7). His letter to the Senate of Rome pleading for support against Constantius had been rejected with the acclamation *auctori tuo reuerentiam rogamus* (21.10.7).³¹ His accession was followed by building works in Constantinople, and conciliation of and participation in that city's Senate, which Constantius had raised to parity with that of Rome.

Indeed there may be a further way in which Ammianus suppresses the significance of Constantinople. Ammianus does not record Julian's reburial in a stoa attached to the Church of the Apostles. The most likely reason for that silence is that the body had not yet been moved when Ammianus published; indeed an understandable conclusion is to make Ammianus's publication in c. 390 a *terminus post quem* for the reburial.³² But an early date (by 395, or not much after) for the removal of Julian's remains seems likely, for various reasons;³³ I do not think that Ammianus' thoughts on Julian's burial can be cited with complete certainty as excluding the possibility that he knew of the reburial. The following examples of Ammianus' willingness to suppress mention of Constantinople will make a plausible case for as extreme an omission as this.

II. THE MARKET OF TRAJAN (16.10.15–16)

Julian's imaginary tomb exemplifies the possibility for buildings or monuments to have memorializing, and thus exemplary, force. The use in texts of buildings as exemplars does not need to be argued, particularly within the Latin historiographical

³¹ The irregular clausula supports the authenticity of the acclamation.

³² Grierson (n. 17), 40, Arce (n. 19), 184. Grierson even suggests that Ammianus' publication may have prompted Theodosius to rebury the remains of his predecessor. Other potential *termini* (Eunapius, Philostorgius) can be ignored because of their fragmentary survival.

³³ The most general argument is that the ideological value of Julian's remains and interest in where they should be placed is likely to have been greatest in the period comparatively shortly after his death. In the words of Grierson (n. 17), 'it is difficult to imagine any emperor later than Theodosius I interesting himself in the matter' (40) and 'it was Theodosius who was most active in turning the church of the Holy Apostles into an imperial mausoleum' (40–1). Particular details in Grierson's reconstruction of the evidence of the tombs support such a view. Firstly, the monument's location adjacent to Jovian's, Constantine, Constantius, and Theodosius were laid on three sides of the Mausoleum of Constantine. A sane reconstruction of events will have Jovian originally buried alongside Constantine and Constantius and then moved to make way for Theodosius (Grierson [n. 17], 25–6). Other scenarios are plainly possible, but the relocation of Julian's tomb to that particular position will make sense in the period c. 395. Secondly, if the claim that Julian was buried with his wife, Helena, is accepted, we have to postulate the removal of her remains from Rome. Political circumstances make this more likely in the Theodosian age. The body of Helena Augusta may also have been brought from Rome in this period (see n. 17). See M. DiMaio, 'The transfer of the remains of the Emperor Julian from Tarsus to Constantinople', *Byzantion* 48 (1978), 43–50, for an argument for a late date (sixth–tenth centuries); B. Bleckmann, *Die Reichskrise des III. Jahrhunderts und der spätantiken Geschichtsschreibung: Untersuchungen zu den nachdionischen Quellen des Johannes Zonaras* (Munich, 1992), 386, n. 235, argues well against a later date, and less well for removal at the beginning of Valens' reign, failing to confront the apparent *terminus post quem* of Ammianus' publication.

tradition.³⁴ The collected buildings of the city of Rome, for Ammianus as for, say, Livy, offer a particularly powerful exemplary focus. Rome inspires Ammianus to a number of his finest set-pieces, and it is to one of these—the one most concerned with the topography of the Eternal City—that I propose to turn next, the visit of Constantius II in 357 (16.10), in particular, Constantius' response to the market of Trajan (15–16). But it will be necessary briefly to digress both on the respective characterizations that Ammianus bestows upon Rome and Constantinople and the external evidence for the balance of power and of esteem between the two cities at the time of Constantius' visit.

Ammianus treats Rome in tones that vary from the grandiose to the satirical, but there is an important constant, which may be called exemplary timelessness. Roman time is slower than other time. When Constantius intrudes his extraordinary procession, it is on a people living quietly and not expecting or wanting anything of the sort (16.10.2): the emperor has to step back his behaviour by centuries when he arrives. In Rome, the temporal jars with the eternal. Examples of the past come to life more readily, so that in the second of the satirical Roman digressions, latter-day Romans, serious about frivolity, are parodied through comparison to the Castores and Cato, Duilius, and Marcellus (28.4.11, 18, 21, 23). A similar conclusion can be derived from a famous and rich metaphor, derived but distinct from Florus (1 *Praef.* 4–8),³⁵ which precedes the first Roman digression (14.6.3–6): the existence of Rome is compared to the life of a man. Rome's youth had seen great victories, but approaching old age, its people handed the management of its inheritance to the Caesars as if to its children. The troubling question of what follows after old age is left untreated.³⁶ One may note that as well as the chronological contraction, and the blurring between the Roman people and the city, there is spatial ambiguity, between Rome as city and Rome as world-empire, as *urbs* and as *orbis*.

In expressing the relationship of Rome and the provinces, many comparisons play with this ambiguity. Constantius' visit has baths built up to the measure of provinces (16.10.14). Nicomedia, Diocletian's capital, might have been esteemed like a *regio* of the eternal city (22.9.3). Alexandria is seen as an extraordinary seat of learning, and its great temple of Serapis second only to that of Capitoline Jove (22.16.12).

Praise of the great cities of the empire is often found in the *Res gestae*: both those already named, and Antioch,³⁷ where Ammianus had lived and probably also been born.³⁸ In the geographical digressions, words like *nobilitas* or *eminet* distinguish the leading cities of each region.³⁹ There is an interest in the founders, and a premium on antiquity. Given these other descriptions, the surprisingly brief coverage of Constantinople in the long digression on the Black Sea is worth quoting in full (22.8.8):

³⁴ Characterized by the way that *monumentum* can represent both physical objects and written records: see e.g. Kraus on Livy 6.1.2.

³⁵ The *Lebensaltervergleich* was also in Seneca's History (quoted in Lactant. *Div. Inst.* 7.15, 14–16 = Peter, *HRR* 2, Annaeus Seneca fr. 1). On its context in Ammianus, see e.g. H. P. Kohns, 'Zeitkritik in die Romexkursen des Ammianus Marcellinus', *Chiron* 5 (1975), 485–491.

³⁶ Barnes (n. 2), 173–5, a polemic against J. F. Matthews, 'Ammianus and the eternity of Rome', in C. Holdsworth and T. P. Wiseman (edd.), *The Inheritance of Historiography, 350–900* (Exeter, 1986), 22; similar sentiments conclude Matthews's *magnum opus* (Matthews [n. 8, 1989], 472).

³⁷ See e.g. 14.1.9, 14.8.8, 22.9.14 *orientis apicem pulchrum*.

³⁸ See n. 8.

³⁹ 14.8.3, 8 *nobilitas* used of Tarsus and Antioch, 23.6.23, 26 *eminet* of Apamia and Susa.

nam supercilia eius sinistra Athyras portus despectat et Selymbria et Constantinopolis, uetus Byzantium, Atticorum colonia, et promuntorium Ceras praelucentem nauibus uehens constructam celsius turrim, quapropter Ceratas appellatur uentus inde suetus oriri praegelidus.

The left bank [of the Bosporos] is looked down on by the port of Athyras and Selymbria and Constantinople, the ancient Byzantium, an Attic colony, and the promontory Ceras, which bears a tower built high and giving lights to ships: therefore a very cold wind which often blows from that quarter is called Ceratas.

The error on the founders of Constantinople apart, this is a remarkable description. The digressions may be based on 300- or 400-year-old geographical sources, the circuit of the Black Sea may be a geographical and historiographical topos (one thinks of Sallust or Arrian). It is true that Constantinople did not belong in either the sources or the traditional Herodotean perspective Ammianus was affecting; nonetheless the limitations of written sources are surely an excuse rather than the reason for such a cursory treatment.⁴⁰

A look at the political status of Constantinople a mere thirty years after its dedication on 11 May 330 shows how unrepresentative and how damning Ammianus' treatment is. Its founder gave it the title of the New Rome, *Néa 'Ρώμη* (CTh. 13.5.7, Soc. 1.16). Unlike the old Rome in the fourth century, it served at times, though not perennially, as a residence of emperors. Its institutions were founded to mirror those of the old Rome. As early as 332 a corn dole was introduced, taking the Egyptian corn that had previously gone to Rome.⁴¹ A Senate was established, and though for a while its members were known only as *uiri clari*, rather than *clarissimi*, by the mid-350s Constantius had granted them parallel status with those of Rome. The pagan orator Themistius, adlected in 355, was given the power to recruit throughout the cities of the East, and Senators were diverted from Rome to Constantinople. Thirty years on, he described the numbers as having increased from 300 to 2000 (Or. 34.13).⁴² 357 appears to be the turning point, the year when the Senate of Constantinople became simply the Senate in the East.⁴³ In 359 a Prefect of the City of Constantinople was appointed, mimicking the Roman arrangement.⁴⁴ But whereas a law was passed in Rome restricting the right of the Prefect to hear appeals from the various Italian provinces, the Prefect of Constantinople was given the right to hear appeals from all over Thrace and the various provinces of north-west Asia Minor.⁴⁵ This particular imbalance of power was probably not long term. Rome's sympathies for various usurpations and the impending civil war between Constantius and Julian may have played a part. But the trend was inexorable. As I have mentioned, Julian as much as Constantine or Constantius enhanced the status of the Constantinopolitan Senate with his presence

⁴⁰ Barnes (n. 2), 93, has pertinent remarks on this and similar passages. For the variety of sources, see J. den Boeft, J. W. Drijvers, D. den Hengst and H. C. Teitler, *Philological and Historical Commentary on Ammianus Marcellinus XXII* (Groningen, 1995), 88–147.

⁴¹ A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284–602* (Oxford, 1964), 697 and n. 20.

⁴² The speed of the change is a matter for debate. The conventional view is that this change took place over thirty years from the 350s (Jones [n. 41], 527). G. Dagron, *Naissance d'une capitale: Constantinople et ses institutions de 330 à 451* (Paris, 1974), 130, has the change taking place between 357 and the end of Constantius' reign. J. Vanderspoel, *Themistius and the Imperial Court* (Ann Arbor, 1995), 62, 108, points out the greater urgency of the recruitment in 357–360, and suggests simply that 'the task . . . occupied Themistius for some time after 357'.

⁴³ Vanderspoel (n. 42), 55, 57–60.

⁴⁴ Jones (n. 41), 132; Socrates 2.41; *Chron. Min.* 1.239.

⁴⁵ CTh. 11.30.27 (357) and 1.6.1 (3 May 361).

and participation, needing both as semi-usurper and as civic reformer to find a constituency among the leading men of the Eastern cities.

Just as Ammianus would never call Constantinople New Rome, so he mentions little or nothing of the changes in political status.⁴⁶ Certainly not institutional changes like the growth of the Senate or establishment of the Prefecture of Constantinople. A present and a future Prefect of Constantinople are mentioned in passing (26.7.2,4), whereas Prefects of Rome are lavishly chronicled, and their future or past status is constantly adverted to when they appear. The Senate of Constantinople is necessarily mentioned when Julian bestows his presence on it, and when Procopius in his usurpation found the Curia empty of *clarissimi* to acclaim him (22.7.1,3, 26.6.18).

Constantinople was as a new city, in need of buildings, and Julian as much as his predecessors gave architectural benefactions to Constantinople. One such example is the obelisk that Constantius had left on the shore at Alexandria. Julian asked for it to be sent on to Constantinople according to his predecessor's intentions. His explanation to the Alexandrians is worth quoting (*Ep.* 48 [Wright], 58 [Hertlein], 59 [Bidez] probably written in 362):

ἡ πόλις ἀπαιτεῖ παρ' ἐμοῦ τὸ ἀνάθημα, πάτρις οὐσά μου καὶ προσήκουσα πλέον ἥπερ ἐκείνω. ὁ μὲν γὰρ αὐτὴν ὡς ἀδελφὴν, ἐγὼ δὲ ὡς μητέρα φιλῶ· καὶ γὰρ ἐγενόμην παρ' αὐτῇ, καὶ ἐτράφην ἐκείσε, καὶ οὐ δύναμαι περὶ αὐτὴν ἀγνωμονῆσαι.

The city claims the monument from me because she is the place of my birth and closer to me than to Constantius. For he loved her as a sister, but I love her as a mother; and I was in fact born and brought up in the place and cannot lack feeling for her.⁴⁷

Ammianus had no cause to mention this benefaction, which did not in the end arrive until the reign of Theodosius (though it is interesting to contrast the detail lavished on the obelisk Constantius gave to Rome: see below pp. 603–6). In fact he mentions none of Julian's benefactions specifically, in contrast to Zosimus, who was later to provide an erratic list (3.11.4). Instead, Ammianus makes a general statement, probably modelled on the above letter, that looks more like an excuse than anything else (22.9.2):

Reliquit Constantinopolim incrementis maximis fultam: natus enim illic, diligebat eam ut genitalem patriam et colebat.

He left Constantinople supported by a great increase of strength; for it was there that he was born, and he loved and cherished the city as his birthplace.

If there is an allusion to Julian's letter, it makes even more noticeable the way the explanation is stripped from the context of any specific buildings, almost as if an excuse had to be provided. Equally telling and piquant is the way in which Ammianus' praise of Nicomedia (which might be esteemed a *regio* of the eternal city) follows so swiftly from Julian's departure from Constantinople (22.9.3).

Julian's reign, then, would prove no exception to the maintenance and growth of Constantinople's prestige throughout the fourth century. Naturally, minor or major

⁴⁶ There might be value in a close examination of those passages set in Constantinople. Julian was in Constantinople when he dismissed large numbers of his predecessors' courtiers (22.4). It is perhaps no coincidence that Ammianus digresses about the promotion of temple-robbers (3) and the undisciplined military (6–8). For a persuasive identification of coded anti-Christian polemic, see D. Woods, 'Ammianus 22.4.6: an unnoticed anti-Christian jibe', *JTS* 49 (1998), 145–148.

⁴⁷ Translation adapted from W. C. Wright, *Julian* 3 (Cambridge, MA., 1923).

reversals can be identified: Valens' residence in Antioch for much of his reign after Constantinople's support for Procopius may be an example. The sheer plurality and gradations of ruling cities in the fourth century, and the uncertainties with which they regarded their status, make the term 'capital' misleading. As Vanderspoel has it, 'the view . . . that Constantine founded his city as the capital of the East joins two separate facts (i.e. that Constantine founded the city and that it became the capital of the East) into a single one of dubious merit'.⁴⁸

It is in such a context that one must view Constantius' visit to Rome from 28 April to 29 May 357, made famous by Ammianus (16.10). The tensions over the relative status of the two cities must obviously have been a major factor, and conciliation a central aim.

Often cited are the dazzle of the spectacle, the way that Constantius' wanted grandeur and self-control are held up for admiration (or possibly amusement), and the impressionistic ecphrasis with which Ammianus captures the scene. The emperor's stillness and frontal stance and his soldiers in polished armour are redolent of statues; the formal arrangement, and the decoration of purple and jewels all recall contemporary art. It is typical of Ammianus' construction of a picture (and of a late antique aesthetic more generally) by piling up short discrete descriptive phrases.⁴⁹

The memorable depiction of the *aduentus* may distract us from the movement of the passage. The arrival is preceded by and interspersed with comments that cast doubt both on the appropriateness and on the reception of Constantius' behaviour. Ammianus criticizes his triumph over Magnentius, as celebrating a victory over Roman citizens (16.10.1). Certainly the official line cast Magnentius as a barbarian supported by barbarians, but Ammianus skims over other genuine external military successes that seem likely to have been celebrated at the same time.⁵⁰ The Roman people are said neither to have expected nor wished to see this excessively lengthy parade (2). At the acclamations of the crowd the emperor retained the same immovability that he was wont to adopt in the provinces (9). It is made clear that his forward gaze, his unresponsiveness to the movement of the carriage, his impressive restraint from spitting or wiping his face or moving his arms—all this was his customary bearing throughout his life. This digressive treatment of his lifelong behaviour separates Constantius' *aduentus* from his residence in Rome, and that his *aduentus* jarred is implied by the contrast to his altered behaviour after arrival. He addressed the Senate in the Curia and the people from the Tribunal, while at the equestrian games he enjoyed the polite free speech of the plebs. He permitted the games to last their natural course, as custom dictated, rather than completing them early at his own discretion as was practised in other cities. In short, after initially unfitting behaviour, he amended his behaviour to that appropriate for the eternal city.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Vanderspoel (n. 42), 54.

⁴⁹ M. Roberts, 'The treatment of narrative in late antique literature: Ammianus Marcellinus 16.10, Rutilius Namatianus and Paulinus of Pella', *Philologus* 132 (1988), 181–95 at 182–5.

⁵⁰ Ammianus skims over Constantius' campaigns of 356, and the celebratory inscription on the obelisk erected to celebrate the visit (*ILS* 726, on which see below pp. 604–6) refers twice to triumphs in the plural: nonetheless, the defeat of Magnentius was clearly prominent in the celebrations, as is evident from Themistius, *Or.* 3.5. For the branding of Magnentius as a barbarian, see e.g. Julian, *Or.* 1.33d–34a.

⁵¹ It is therefore unnecessary to wonder whether Ammianus is hamfistedly combining favourable and unfavourable sources, as suggested by e.g. Y.-M. Duval, 'La venue à Rome de l'empereur Constance II en 357, d'après Ammien Marcellin', *Caesariodunum* 5 (1970), 299–304 at 304. Not to say that Ammianus does not allude to a variety of source-texts, among them perhaps Symmachus, *Rel.* 3.7–8 and Pacatus, *PL* 2.47.3 (Sabbah [n. 2], 328, n. 25).

Ammianus' narrative has an ecphrasis of Constantius' triumph as it was seen by the city. Overlapping with this and eventually replacing it, there is also the reverse process, an ecphrasis of Rome from the perspective of Constantius. Both are impressive sights, but the real triumph is Rome's over Constantius. In the procession Ammianus places us inside Constantius' mind and gives us his thoughts: he considered the Senate the sanctuary of the whole world, and was amazed at the crowds of every type of men (*stupebat*, 6). But the big change in his behaviour comes after he has passed the welcoming populace and enters the city. Again (13) '... when he had come to the Rostra, the most renowned forum of ancient dominion, he stood amazed (*obstupuit*); and on every side on which his eyes rested he was dazzled by the array of marvellous sights'.

It is these moments in which Constantine's gaze is halted that capture the moment ecphrastically, like a series of still photographs. The same experience strikes him again as he looks around the city (14): 'he thought that whatever met his gaze seemed to tower among all the rest'.

Viewing the city almost from within Constantius' head, Ammianus notably includes three pagan temples (the shrine of Tarpeian Jupiter, the Pantheon, the *templum urbis*) in the catalogue of the features that dazzle him (14).⁵² As so often the historian controls his character's thoughts.⁵³ We know from Symmachus (*Rel.* 3.6) that Constantius had the altar which stood before the Statue of Victory in the Senate House removed for his appearance there: whether it was returned straight after his departure or under Julian is uncertain. What is certain is that the presence or absence of the altar was, if less all-important than the literature might suggest, still a significant issue at the date when Ammianus was writing, and one on which he chose silence.

Constantius' greatest astonishment comes with the Forum of Trajan (15).

uerum cum ad Traiani forum uenisset, 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. omni itaque spe huius modi quicquam conandi depulsa Traiani equum solum locatum in atriis medio, qui ipsum principem uehit, imitari se uelle dicebat et posse.

But when he came to the Forum of Trajan, a construction unique under the heavens, as we believe, and admirable even in the unanimous opinion of the Gods, he stood fast in amazement, turning his attention to the gigantic complex about him, begging description and never again to be attempted by mortal men. Therefore abandoning all hope of attempting anything like it, he said that he would and could copy Trajan's steed alone, which stands in the middle of the vestibule carrying the emperor himself.

Here comes not only the climax of his astonishment but also the climax of Rome's triumph over Constantius. The enormous buildings offering examples of ancestral piety and valour finally make Constantius aware that, whatever his presentational

⁵² On the religious and other tensions of Constantius' visit, see e.g. J. Straub, *Vom Herrscherideal in der Spätantike* (Stuttgart, 1964), ch. 4, esp. 175–81; Duval (n. 51); R. O. Edbrooke, Jr, 'The visit of Constantius II to Rome in 357 and its effect on the pagan Roman senatorial aristocracy', *AJP* 97 (1976), 40–61; R. Klein, 'Der Rombesuch des Kaisers Konstantius II im Jahre 357', *Athenaeum* 57 (1979), 98–115; D. Woods, 'A Persian at Rome: Ammianus and Eunapius *Frg.* 68', in J. W. Drijvers and D. Hunt (edd.), *The Late Roman World and its Historian: Interpreting Ammianus Marcellinus* (London, 1999), 156–65 at 162–4. Sabbah (n. 2), 329–32 considers the possible impact of Theodosius' visit of 389 on the narrative.

⁵³ Constantius on Julian (e.g. 20.4.1), Julian on Christians as wild beasts (22.5.4, an Ammianean simile), Sapor on the Romans (25.7.2), Valentinian on Julian (26.5.11).

skills, he cannot match the success of Trajan's markets and, the sequel makes clear, his conquests.

Constantius' remark (that he could only imitate Trajan's horse) is perhaps not particularly striking, but the jokes of princes are not supposed to be other than feeble. Doubtless he was alluding to his own well-known excellence at horsemanship, for which he was praised in the panegyrics of Julian (11B-C) and Libanius (*Or.* 59.122), and by Ammianus in his obituary (21.16.7). What in precise literal terms he had in mind is less clear: at any rate, he desired an equestrian statue (whether in the Market of Trajan or not).

The Persian Prince Hormisdas, who had defected to Constantine and had served as a cavalry officer,⁵⁴ and whom Julian wished to install in Ctesiphon as King of Persia, made a cynical reply. He spoke *astu gentili*, with the cunning of his race (16.12.16):

Ante . . . imperator, stabulum tale condi iubeto, si uales; equus quem fabricare disponis, ita late succedat ut iste quem uidemus.

The joke is often referred to, and less often interpreted. Nor is there any unanimity in its interpretation. A double meaning is so obvious that the literal and localized meaning is passed over. Alan Cameron has summarized it well.⁵⁵ The horse needs to be able to spread his feet. 'However wittily expressed, he is making the straightforward point that Trajan's statue derives much of its effectiveness from its location in the most magnificent forum in Rome, its "stable".' Therefore since Constantius has already conceded his inability to duplicate the forum, Hormisdas advises against merely duplicating the horse.' Cameron cites (a marginally amended version of) Hamilton's Penguin translation: 'First, your majesty, you should have a similar stable built, if you can; the horse you propose to fashion should have as much space to range in as the one we see.'⁵⁶ Cameron concludes: 'Finally (and decisively), Constantius himself evidently took the advice this way.' And he quotes the emperor's final decision (16.12.17) 'after much deliberation, he determined to add to the beauties of the city by setting up an obelisk in the Circus Maximus'.

This is not objectionable. What is objectionable is Cameron's rejection of all additional interpretations of the witticism. His rejection of other explanations is based largely on perceived inexactitude on the part of their proponents. Edbrooke and Blockley both see importance in the fact that the speaker Hormisdas was a Persian prince, a brother of Sapor, who had fought for the Romans for many years, and was to be deployed as a potential pretender by Julian six years later.⁵⁷ They rightly consider important the political context of many years of war with Persia and the growing

⁵⁴ *PLRE* 1, Hormisdas 2.

⁵⁵ A. D. E. Cameron, 'Biondo's Ammianus: Constantius and Hormisdas at Rome', *HSCP* 93 (1989), 423-36 at 430-1.

⁵⁶ W. Hamilton (trans.), with introduction and notes by A. Wallace-Hadrill, *Ammianus Marcellinus, The Later Roman Empire 354-378* (Harmondsworth, 1986), 102.

⁵⁷ R. O. Edbrooke, Jr, 'Constantius II and Hormisdas in the Forum of Trajan', *Mnemos.* 28 (1975), 412-17. Admittedly Edbrooke appears imprecise when Cameron (n. 55), 430 quotes him (415): "'Hormisdas may have been advising Constantius to direct his attention to the East and Constantinople" and implying that "he should act like Trajan and expand Roman frontiers".' Cameron has misrepresented Edbrooke by taking a few inelegant words from different paragraphs, and ignoring the detailed argument for the relevance of Constantinople. R. C. Blockley, *Ammianus Marcellinus, A Selection, with Introduction, Notes and Commentary* (Bristol, 1980), 36-7, puts it differently: 'The point of Hormisdas's words, as is clear from *late succedat*, is that before Constantius creates a horse to match that of Trajan, he should create, not a comparable forum (as Gibbon) but a comparable empire. Hormisdas is therefore suggesting that Constantius

significance of Constantinople. Cameron wishes to overlook both this and the comparison to Trajan, the *optimus princeps*, famous alike for military glory in Dacia and Persia and for domestic success. He holds that for Hormisdas to compare Constantius to Trajan would be insulting, as implying criticism of Constantius' relatively restrained foreign policy towards Persia. But when an emperor has denied the possibility of equalling Trajan, for a courtier to suggest that he may yet do so is adulation not insult. It is true that Constantius had been dogged rather than successful in his Persian wars, but he had entered Rome in triumph, and Hormisdas is hinting at future victories. Under the cloak of this adulation, he presses for his own ends: the promotion of Constantinople and aggression in Roman policy towards Persia.

There are competing interpretations here, but I think that as well as referring to the square in the middle of which the statue stands, the *stabulum* represents not, as Blockley would have it, the empire, but the city. As Rome is the *lar* of empire, so it should also be the *stabulum* from which Trajan's horse ranged. The word *tale* ('a stable like this') will then imply Constantinople. To paraphrase. First have a stable like this founded (the word *condi* is surely significant). If you can achieve that you will ride to success in war as wide-ranging as Trajan's.⁵⁸

Cameron's belief that Hormisdas' remark might have insulted the emperor is unfounded, but it is true that Ammianus undermines the courtier's sycophancy.⁵⁹ He compares Julian to Trajan at the beginning of the book (16.1.4), he juxtaposes Constantius' false triumph in Rome with an even greater set-piece: Julian's glorious success at the battle of Strasbourg. At the start of Book 17 Julian goes into Alamann territory and rebuilds and mans a fort founded by and named after Trajan (17.1.11). The implicit contrast with Constantius is devastating.

Cameron supports his argument that the comment is merely architectural with the observations of Rita Cappelletto. She has pursued a marginal comment on a manuscript of Ammianus by the humanist Blondus, claiming that there was a lacuna of a page at 16.10.4 from what he remembered reading in an ancient manuscript. Blondus refers to his own *Italia illustrata* (c. 1453–5).⁶⁰ From this, Cappelletto concludes that the lacuna mentioned the presence of Hormisdas with the court as *Persarum gentis architecturae peritissimum*, and described more of the journey between Oriculum and Rome. There are various weaknesses, some pointed out by Cameron.⁶¹ One may dispute the exactness of Blondus' memory, and indeed one may worry about his honesty.⁶² Hormisdas' architectural expertise, otherwise unattested, does look like an attempt to explain his sudden appearance here. Other better-attested traits of Hormisdas, on which I would sooner hang an argument, include his service as a cavalry officer, and the fact that he owned property in Constantinople, and that other

should imitate Trajan in invading Persia.' There are obviously dangers of over-interpretation, or of carelessly ruling out the literal meaning of this phrase.

⁵⁸ Similar interpretation at Sabbah (n. 2), 552, n. 38. For the link between internal and foreign successes, compare the oaths of Trajan which Julian imitated on the Persian campaign (24.3.9). Trajan had sworn by his bridging the Aufidus and the Danube. On this see (exhaustively) W. Hartke, 'Eidesleistungen der römischen Kaiser Trajan und Julian auf die Erfüllung grosser Planziele. Zu einer Episode bei Ammianus Marcellinus', *Philologus* 119 (1975), 179–214.

⁵⁹ Barnes (n. 2), 215, n. 8, refers insightfully to 'what Ammianus makes [Hormisdas] say to Constantius'. It is the possibility that Ammianus is controlling Hormisdas' words which Cameron ignores.

⁶⁰ R. Cappelletto, *Recuperi Ammianei di Flavio Biondo* (Roma, 1983).

⁶¹ Cameron (n. 55), esp. 426, 433–4.

⁶² Cf. the comment of Valesius ad loc. (*sed ego Blondo non credo*).

probable members of his family owned property in Constantinople or held office in the *pars orientis*.⁶³

The passages before and after support a covert reference to Constantinople. Hormisdas' remark typifies the way that Rome, in Ammianus' work, is both a particular physical space and one that seems to embrace rather more than lies within the *Pomerium*. The massive buildings that have dazzled Constantius in the preceding passages are massively exaggerated: the baths like provinces, the Pantheon like a *regio*, the summit of the Colosseum barely visible. The spatial ambiguity prepares readers for the idea of Rome as the stable from which the emperor's horse ranges far and wide. And the other anecdote about Hormisdas, which immediately follows the first, is also about Rome as a whole (16):

is ipse interrogatus quid de Roma sentiret, id tantum sibi placuisse aiebat, quod didicisset ibi quoque homines mori.

When Hormisdas was asked directly what he thought of Rome, he said this fact alone pleased him, that he had learned that there too men were mortal.

At least the people of the immortal city were mortal. Cameron suggests boldly that Valesius' emendation *displacuisse* should be accepted, turning Hormisdas from misanthrope to flatterer.⁶⁴ It is not an impossible solution, but the received text is consonant with the view of Hormisdas as unwillingly admiring outsider. Constantius is next quoted as calling rumour spiteful because it always exaggerates, but fails to describe things in Rome.

In the immediate political context which I have described, that of the growing dignity of the city of Constantinople, which mimicked the old Rome's name, senate, and institutions, as well as being an imperial residence, it seems hard to avoid Constantinople as Ammianus' subtext. For an exactly contemporary view of the situation, one can turn to an oration pronounced by Themistius, spokesman of the Senate of Constantinople, on an embassy to offer Constantius the Crown-gold during his stay in Rome (*Or.* 3). The worries evinced in the New Rome by Constantius' visit to the old can be dimly seen beneath the glittering opacity of Themistius' prose. The politeness to the old Rome has been observed—calling Constantinople the second capital, and admitting admiration for Rome's antiquity—but there is also an insistent repetition of Constantius' benefits to the New Rome above all other cities, and a reminder of Constantinople's loyalty during the revolt of Magnentius, as opposed to Rome's acquiescence with the tyrant. Play is made with the similarity of the names Maxentius and Magnentius. After Constantine's victory over Maxentius at the Milvian bridge, Rome, once freed, had given Constantinople a founder. Later, in Magnentius' revolt, Constantine's foundation had given Rome its saviour, in the person of Constantius. The ostentatious balance of the rhetoric, the acknowledgement of second place, cannot disguise the implication that Constantinople's loyalty and achievement have been rather greater (*Or.* 3.5, 44b). Ammianus had certainly read various other orations of Themistius:⁶⁵ whether or not he had read this one I cannot say, but one phraseological similarity deserves to be mentioned. When Constantius entered Rome, Ammianus called it *imperii uirtutumque omniumque larem*. The idea of the *lar* of empire was thought by Valesius to be taken from a speech of Severus in Herodian 2.10.9 τὴν 'Ρώμην προκαταλαμβάνοντες, ἐνθα ἡ Βασιλείος ἐστὶν ἐστία.

⁶³ See *PLRE* 1; Hormisdas 2 and 3; *PLRE* 2; Hormisdas, Varanes 1–3.

⁶⁴ Cameron (n. 55), 432.

⁶⁵ Sabbah (n. 2), 348–66.

Ammianus alludes elsewhere to that speech (21.13.15, cf. Herodian 2.10.6), so that allusion is certainly possible. However a closer parallel is to be found in Themistius, *Or.* 3.4, 42c (a speech delivered in Rome during Constantius' visit). He calls Rome *τὴν ἐστίαν τῆς βασιλείας*.⁶⁶

III. THE OBELISK (17.4)

After Julian's tomb, and Trajan's forum, there is a third Roman monument that seems to have a significance beyond the literal, and where my theme of Ammianus' knowing silence about Constantinople can be detected. This is the great obelisk from Thebes, the ornament that Constantius decided to give to Rome, which Ammianus had reserved for later in his history (16.10.17). It is in the next book that the arrival of the obelisk is described, and Ammianus begins his account in Thebes (17.4.2), describing the various vicissitudes undergone by the city in antiquity. After destruction by Carthaginians (3) comes the ransacking of the city by Cambyses and the extortion imposed by the first Prefect of Egypt, the poet Cornelius Gallus. He does not need to mention what happened to Carthage, but Ammianus describes how Cambyses tripped on his loose garments and fell on to his sword and was almost lethally wounded (4), and how Gallus was forced to suicide by the jealousy of the nobles (5). After these cautionary *exempla*, Ammianus describes the obelisks *in situ* as religious monuments in Thebes (6–7), and explains the secrets of hieroglyphics (8–11). Then he records that Constantius had been told by his flatterers that Augustus had brought other obelisks to Rome but left this one in awe at its size. Ammianus forcefully corrects this (12):

Let me inform those who do not know it that the ancient emperor, after bringing over several obelisks, passed by this one and left it untouched because it was consecrated as a special gift to the Sun God, and because being placed in the sacred part of his sumptuous temple, which might not be touched, it towered aloft like the peak of the world (*tamquam apex omnium eminebat*).

Then, slightly surprisingly, the focus changes to Constantine (13), who had taken little account of such restraints, and uprooted the obelisk 'since he rightly thought that he was committing no sacrilege if he took this marvel from one temple and consecrated it at Rome, that is to say, in the temple of the whole world' (*nihilque committere in religionem recte existimans, si ablatum uno templo miraculum Romae sacret, id est in templo mundi totius*). The holiness of Rome is a remarkable sentiment to place in the mind of Constantine, and the passage has given its interpreters grief. Some have seen the emperor's death and the decline of the Constantinian dynasty as linked to the sacrilege of moving the obelisk.⁶⁷ This is eccentric, as it goes against the explicit statement that Constantine was right to think he was committing no sacrilege in moving it to Rome. The description of the obelisk as raising itself to the sun and towering like the peak of the world gave Rike the title of his book on religion in Ammianus, *Apex Omnium*.⁶⁸ I agree with the implicit assumption, of the fundamental importance of this passage for understanding religion in Ammianus, and I hope I will be forgiven for passing over its many complexities, especially the irony of the

⁶⁶ Cf. Themistius 82c4, *ἐστίαν τῶν βασιλείων*, used of Constantinople. Similar phraseology is also found in Diodorus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and Josephus, so too much stress should not be laid on this parallel.

⁶⁷ N. Baglivi, *Ammianea* (Catania, 1995), 55–67, 87–8.

⁶⁸ Rike (n. 10), 29–30. The metaphor of the title is little referred to in Rike's work.

preservation and even sanctification of holy objects despite those who dedicate them.⁶⁹ The narrative continues with a polished and poetic account of the difficulties of installing the obelisk; first (before Constantine's death), it was taken down the Nile to Alexandria where a special ship was built, then much later was carried across the sea, up the Tiber, and with difficulty erected in Rome. Finally, with all the appearance of digression (17–23), Ammianus concludes his account with a Greek translation by Hermapion of hieroglyphics from another of the obelisks of Rome, one which was brought over by Augustus and placed in the Circus. Other extended portions of Greek text in the *Res gestae* are oracular verses (21.2.2, 31.1.4): certainly this rather repetitive text portrays an ideal relationship between the Sun God and the monarch.

The obelisk whose arrival Ammianus celebrates had in addition to its hieroglyphs a Latin inscription on its base (*ILS* 726), a hexameter poem celebrating Constantius. It was recorded in 1589, when the obelisk was moved from where it had fallen in the Circus to a position outside S. John Lateran. The inscription was fragmentary even then and is no longer extant.⁷⁰ It tells the story of the obelisk, and its account differs notably from that of Ammianus.

Constantius is praised both in comparison to his deified father and the despised tyrant Magnentius for having been able to raise the huge mass back into position. Constantine had intended it for Constantinople and had uprooted it, but been warned off by the impossibility of moving it (5–9).⁷¹ The contradiction with Ammianus, who has Constantine intending to send it to Rome and defends him from the charge of sacrilege on that account, is very striking. A contemporary historian, especially one who had been to Thebes, to Alexandria and to Rome, the places in question, is not necessarily lying if he differs from a laudatory official inscription.⁷² Constantius would have wished both to exalt his own gift and to ensure that it was not merely seen as fulfilling his father's intentions. One can suspect further cynicism beyond the falsehood, as Constantius was later to designate another obelisk as a gift for Constantinople.⁷³

⁶⁹ The plan of giving the obelisk to Rome can be linked with the possibly embarrassing and certainly confusing fact of Constantine's conciliation of Roman paganism at a date comparatively late in his reign. So G. Fowden, 'Nicagoras of Athens and the Lateran Obelisk', *JHS* 107 (1987), 51–7 at 56, who points out that a contemporary Latin version of Hermes Trismegistus (*Ascl.* 24) had Egypt described as the *mundi totius templum*, words that Ammianus uses for Rome (17.4.13). He suggests that *recte existimans* may suggest documentary evidence. But see n. 53 for Ammianus' tendency to lend his characters his own thoughts.

⁷⁰ Fragmentary in that portions had become detached from the obelisk and that some of them were lost. See M. Mercati, *De gli obelischii di Roma* (Rome, 1589), 290–311.

⁷¹ Line 6, *caesa Thebis de rupe reuellit*, might be interpreted as claiming that Constantine had made the obelisk. Such is the interpretation of J. Češka, 'En marge de la visite de Constance a Rome en 357', *SPFB* E10 (1965), 107–15 at 110–11 and 'De obelisco Lateranensi atque Constantini Magni Christianitate', *SPFB* E18 (1969), 95–116 (in Czech, Latin res. 115–16) at 115, who attributes this to embarrassed silence on the law of 357 (*CTh.* 15.1.1), which forbade the transportation from towns of their *propria ornamenta*). The claim would have been absurd to every viewer with the hieroglyphs in full view; better to assume bad writing, not inconsonant with the rest of the poem. This view already in Mercati (n. 70), 300.

⁷² Trust in the inscription above Ammianus can be seen in the new inscription placed on the obelisk by Sixtus V (cited e.g. by Češka [n. 71, 1965], 99). This despite the Pope's low opinion of the poem: 'versi scritti con poco genio, & con manco artificio del Poeta, & non degni dell' età di Constantio. Oltre le molte adulazioni, che contengono lontane della verità, come di passo, in passo si è veduto' (quoted by Mercati [n. 70], 310–11). Others who trust the inscription above Ammianus include e.g. S. Mazzarino, *Aspetti sociali del quarto secolo* (Rome, 1951), 125–6; Češka (n. 71, 1965), 110–11 and (n. 71, 1969), 115. Fowden (n. 69), 54–5 argues persuasively in the other direction.

⁷³ Julian, *Ep.* 48 Wright, 58 Hertlein, 59 Bidez (above p. 597).

There is another significant difference between the inscription and Ammianus' version, where plausibility and what appears to be the deliberate vagueness of the inscription support Ammianus. Following a description of the sea voyage, the poem makes the suggestion that the gift of the obelisk was sent to Rome when Magnentius was laying the city waste, but that 'the emperor's gift and enthusiasm for erecting it was grounded, not spurned through pride but since none believed a work of such mass might rise into the upper air'.⁷⁴ Before Magnentius' usurpation, Constans had responsibility for Rome. It seems most unlikely that Constantius would have sent an obelisk to Italy when he did not control it.⁷⁵ It is much more likely that the delays were mostly at the Egyptian end. This is where, Ammianus claimed, *diu iacere perpessus est* (13), contrasting with the poem (*Augusti iacuit donum*, 16). The poem's fiction would be motivated by the wish to suggest that nobody other than Constantius could erect the thing.

It may well also be a fiction, therefore, that Constantine intended the obelisk for Constantinople. Fowden suggests that Ammianus was correcting the inscription, which he *had* read, from his own knowledge.⁷⁶ It is a sound apriorism that Ammianus, writing in Rome about a Roman monument, should have read its inscription, and in my view is justified by the textual evidence. The poem begins by lauding Constantius for the uniqueness of his gift, and Ammianus' narrative of the history of the obelisk begins with the sycophants puffing up Constantius with the grandeur of the task (12), as if signalling that the engagement with the official version has begun. Then, as in the poem, comes the sudden mention of Constantine (13).

uerum Constantinus id parui ducens, *auulsam* hanc *molem* sedibus suis nihilque committere in religionem recte existimans, si ablatum uno templo miraculum Romae sacraret, id est in templo mundi totius, *iacere* diu perpessus est, dum translationi pararentur utilia. Quo coniecto per alueum Nili proiectoque Alexandriae, naus amplitudinis antehac inusitatae aedificata est sub trecentis remigibus agitanda. 14. Quibus ita prouisis digressoque uita principe memorato urgens effectus intepuit, tandemque sero impositus naui, per maria fluentaque *Tibridis*, *uelut paentis* ne quod paene ignotus miserat Nilus, ipse parum sub meatu sui discrimine moenibus alumnis inferret.

The action of tearing the obelisk up from its position (*auulsam* . . . *molem*), echoes language found in the poem (*caesa Thebis de rube reuellit*, 6, and *Caucaseam molem*, 9, referring to Constantine's actions, and closer, the description found in 18–19 *tantae molis opus* . . . *ueluti rursus rufis auulsa metallis*). The long period when it lay grounded is emphasized in both texts, as mentioned above, though Ammianus corrects the poem's timing. Both inscription and poem have a general focus on the difficulty of the erection, though this is unsurprising and could be coincidence. Most important as evidence for a textual link is the personification of the Tiber. The poem describes the ship borne across calm seas to Italy, to the Tiber's wonder. Ammianus has developed the *Tiberi mirante* (14)⁷⁷ of the poem into a full scale contrast of Tiber and Nile ('across the seas and the waters of the Tiber, which almost feared that it

⁷⁴ *interea Romam ta<etr>o uastante tyranno
Augusti iacuit donum studiumque locandi
non fastu spreti, sed quod non crederet ullus
tantae molis opus superas consurgere in auras* (*ILS* 726, 15–19).

⁷⁵ I am anticipated by Mercati (n. 70), 305–7.

⁷⁶ Fowden (n. 69), 54–5.

⁷⁷ *Tiberi* is admittedly conjectural here, and Mercati (n. 70), 304, cites Ammianus in justification. But it is rightly preferred to the obvious alternative *populo*.

could barely bring against the perils of its flow to its foster-child's walls what the nearly unknown Nile had sent'). Just as Vergilian allusions are found in the debate over Julian's tomb, where Tiber and Cydnus are compared, here too is Vergilian vocabulary and imagery in a comparison of Tiber and Nile (Verg. *Aen.* 12.35).

If Ammianus' allusions to the poem on the obelisk are accepted, for which I think there is good reason, it is evident that the general tenor of his alterations is to denigrate Constantius' achievement. This is done by attributing the original plan and a (probably ironic) noble motivation to Constantine instead, and by separating the execution of this plan to set up an obelisk from Constantius' decision to implement it in the previous book. Its erection is not portrayed as Constantius' doing at all: rather (15) the obelisk is the subject of the sentence and those erecting it are hidden away in an ablative absolute. A further aim is to restore the obelisk's religious role, which the inscription (in contrast to the inscriptions on obelisks brought over by previous emperors) had occluded.⁷⁸

Finally, Ammianus' allusions ignore the poem's reference to Constantinople. It may be, as Fowden thinks, that we are dealing with a correction of a false claim (one of several) on the obelisk's inscription, or it may be that Ammianus is erroneously or deliberately falsifying. This last is not to be ruled out: his treatment of Constantinople elsewhere would offer some support to such a view. I leave the question open.

However, even if Ammianus had been lax in his research and had not read the inscription on the obelisk, and had no idea that it had ever been planned to move it to that other city, there would still be a silence about Constantinople here. Constantine was notorious for having stolen many other religious objects and moved them to Constantinople, and that *was* widely viewed as sacrilege.⁷⁹ To say Constantine was right to move this holy object to Rome, because Rome was the temple of the whole world, is an implicit condemnation of other holy objects being transported to that unnamed elsewhere: Constantine could only be justified in removing the obelisk because he had intended it for Rome.

This silence in turn makes Ammianus' awareness of the claims of the inscription more likely. Ammianus' account of the erection of the obelisk, then, has two main corrections to make to the poem, or to a way of thinking represented by it. He proclaims the religious significance of the obelisk, and he suppresses Constantinople.

CONCLUSION

Three Roman monuments, then, one imaginary and two real, all wielding exemplary and symbolic power; in all three narratives there is a refusal to mention by name, though not altogether a refusal to engage obliquely with the other city that bore the name of Rome. Some have argued that the existence of the other city increased the need to devote political attention to Rome,⁸⁰ and Ammianus likewise can be seen to feed off the existence and status of Constantinople in passages devoted to the greater glory of Rome.

What are the causes of this approach? Ammianus was writing in Rome, whose spatial ambiguity as name both of city and empire is constantly a theme in which both

⁷⁸ See also Julian, *Ep.* 48 for the sanctity of the obelisk's tip.

⁷⁹ Libanius, *Or.* 30.6, 37; *Amm.* 22.4.3. For contemporary Christian justification, cf. Eusebius, *VC* 3.54.1–3, or (evading the religious aspect) Jerome, *Olympiad* 277. A remnant of such an attitude may be detected in Zosimus, 2.31.2–3.

⁸⁰ MacCormack (n. 20), 39–40.

are panegyricized; there is no room for another. Nor should it be forgotten that he was probably a native and certainly a resident of Antioch, the great city of the East which, with Alexandria, most regretted Constantinople's ascendancy and its own displacement. His whole history is written from a conservative viewpoint, and he certainly saw the Roman Empire as fundamentally the same organism as it had been under Trajan: hence the validity and constant deployment of *exempla*, hence the timelessness of the digressions. Latter-day unexampled interpolations into that history neither appealed nor fitted. However much we may re-emphasize the existence of pagan Constantinople, however much we may perceive the *Res gestae* as fundamentally tolerant, for Ammianus both Constantinople and Christianity were interpolations into the history of Rome.

Peterhouse, Cambridge

GAVIN KELLY
gajk100@cam.ac.uk