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1. Introduction*

The *Res Gestae* of Ammianus Marcellinus is fertile ground for investigating the relationship between rhetoric and historiography in the later Roman empire. One might, perhaps, have doubts as to how representative of his place and period Ammianus actually is. While Arnaldo Momigliano's epithet for him, 'the lonely historian',¹ works on many levels, one of them is that his history is so different from most other historical works written in the fourth century in the detail and breadth of his coverage. The surviving 18 books, which focus on the years 353 to 378 and on the reigns of Constantius II, Julian, Jovian, Valentinian, and Valens, offer a density of coverage only paralleled in Latin historiography by Tacitus' *Histories*. Indeed, one pattern of thought, associated with Latin literary studies focused on a classical canon, would see Ammianus not only as the successor of Tacitus (his original starting point being where Tacitus ended, in A.D. 96), but as in some sense the only Latin historian of the Roman empire after Tacitus.² In fact, it seems clear that there were expansive Latin histories of the Roman empire written after Ammianus, and we cannot rule out that such histories were not written between Tacitus and Ammianus;³ in any case, a more intellectually generous and historically grounded approach would move away from seeing historiography purely in terms of the genre of classical, or classicizing, historiography. The Ghent-based Late Antique Historiography research group, under the auspices of which this chapter was written for this book, takes a fundamentally inclusive attitude with regard not only to language of composition but also to genre, cataloguing as historians all manner of writers who record the past, including biographers, chroniclers, church historians, and historically minded rhetoricians.⁴ While I have greater intellectual sympathy for the latter approach, there is much that is potentially valuable in viewing Ammianus within the narrower genre of classical historiography that stretches from Herodotus and Thucydides in the fifth century B.C. to Theophylact Simocatta in the seventh century A.D.⁵ Many of the ways in which Ammianus' history is a rhetorical work or reflects on the role of rhetoric are connected to his self-positioning within the genre of classical historiography. The aim of this chapter is to explore the tension between the genre of classicizing historiography and the reality of the place of rhetoric in the fourth-century Roman empire. I shall look first at the rhetorical successes or failures of emperors within the history,

* I am grateful to Fabio Guidetti, Alan Ross, and the editors for their thoughtful comments on earlier versions.

¹ Momigliano 1974.

² Let me exemplify this from an excellent work concerned with the narrow genre of classical historiography, Marincola's *Authority and Tradition in Ancient Historiography* (1997): the long list of major Greek and Latin historians in Appendix I (267-270) ends with Josephus, Tacitus, Appian, Arrian, Cassius Dio, Herodian, Dexippus, and Ammianus Marcellinus.

³ On Sulpicius Alexander and Renatus Profuturus Frigeridus, whose works covered the period following Ammianus', see Van Hoof and Van Nuffelen 2020, pp. 81-130, e.g. Paschoud 1998.

⁴ Van Nuffelen and Van Hoof's *Clavis historicorum antiquitatis posterioris* (2019) can be found at <http://www.late-antique-historiography.ugent.be/database/>.

⁵ See also Van Nuffelen in this book for a focus on this particular genre.

with a particular focus on formal speeches (Section 3), and then at the limited possibilities for eloquence in imperial subjects and the treatment of contemporary rhetoricians in the work (section 4). In the conclusion (section 5) there follow broad reflections on how Ammianus's attitude to rhetoric in the context of his times and how different rhetorical devices across the work serve consistent presentational aims. Before that, however, I offer a brief survey of the rhetorical nature of classical historiography and of Ammianus' historiographical practice.

2. *Opus oratorium maxime*

The tradition of classicizing historiography is fundamentally linked to rhetoric: the phrase from Cicero's *De legibus* used in the subtitle to this section describes history as 'work particularly suited to an orator'.⁶ Another classic work on writing history, Lucian's *De historia conscribenda*, judged that the perfect historian needed political insight and facility in expressing himself (34); a similarity can be inferred to the ideal image of the orator, 'a good man skilled at speaking', as Cato the Elder put it.⁷ Since Herodotus and Thucydides, historians had striven to represent themselves, like orators, as authoritative figures whose words were to be believed as truthful and whose first person statements were to be carefully weighed.⁸ Ammianus is clearly in this tradition. As a staff officer in an elite regiment he did not possess military or political distinction to match generals like Thucydides or Polybius or a consul like Tacitus; but he does his best to establish his involvement in the history of his time in the detailed passages of military memoir, and lays proud claim in his closing words to his experience as a soldier.⁹

Ammianus indicates his generic allegiance through reference and allusion: among the historical writers mentioned in the course of his extant work are Herodotus, Thucydides, Theopompus, Polybius, and Timagenes (all Greek), and Sallust in Latin;¹⁰ but all three of the most canonical Latin historical classics, Sallust, Livy and Tacitus, at times provide linguistic or structural models.¹¹ Prominently positioned statements of historiographical purpose echo historiographical models. The experience of watching the Persian army cross into Roman

⁶ One could cite the title of one of the most important theoretical works on the nature of the genre, A.J. Woodman's *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography* (1988).

⁷ Quoted at Quintilian *Inst.* 10.1.

⁸ For the historian's authority see above all Marincola 1997.

⁹ Above all, 15.5.22-31 (the Silvanus episode), many passages from 18.4.7 to 19.8.12 (the war of 359), and repeated appearances in 23.5.7-25.10.1 (the Persian campaign). For discussion of these memorable passages and their role in creating the historian's authority see Marincola 1997, 201-204, Mary 2003, Kelly 2008, ch. 2. On the sphragis (31.16.9) see further below.

¹⁰ 22.15.28 (Herodotus), 19.4.4, 23.6.75 (Thucydides), 22.9.7 (Theopompus), 24.4.16 (Polybius), 15.9.7 (Timagenes), 15.12.6 (Sallust). Note, however, that all of these mentions except that of Polybius are in digressive passages (see Kelly 2008, 183). In Ammianus' engagement with earlier Latin literature one may observe another classicizing phenomenon characteristic of other prose genres: he only cites Latin authors by name up to the age of Augustus (in chronological terms Vergil and Sallust are the last named). The one partial exception, Ammianus' contemporary Sextus Aurelius Victor, seems to be mentioned primarily as a historical actor (21.10.6), though referring to him as *scriptor historicus* carries a surprisingly complimentary note: see Stover and Woudhuysen forthcoming for discussion of the implications.

¹¹ For examples see Kelly 2008, ch. 4; see Fornara 1992 for the argument that Ammianus' knowledge of Latin was markedly deeper than that of Greek.

territory prompted a comparison with the sometimes overly 'mythical' narrative of Herodotus (*Graecia fabulosa*, 18.6.22).¹² Starting the book in which his hero Julian would become emperor (15.1.1) he declared his dedication to the truth and promised to narrate with greater polish hereafter, but he also explained his methods as combining his own personal presence with rigorous questioning of those in the thick of things (*ea quae uidere licuit per aetatem¹ uel perplexe interrogando uersatos in medio scire¹ narrauimus...*).¹³ The ultimate model for this prominent statement is surely Thucydides (1.22.2), although the ideas are such a commonplace of so much classical historiography that it is not necessarily a direct allusion. And at the same time as placing himself in the genre of classical historiography, he implicitly rejects alternative forms of recording the past. In the passage just mentioned (15.1.1), the rejection of criticisms of his work for being too long serves to distinguish himself from the current trend for brevity, and he is also willing to take sideswipes at the genre of biography.¹⁴

Classical history as a genre almost invariably contains speeches, a phenomenon theorized from as early in the genre's history as Thucydides (1.22.1). Speeches are expected to occupy a point midway between the representation of what was actually said and what was appropriate to the circumstances: that is, speeches are a locus for expressing multiple perspectives and for the historian to analyse the situation. Ammianus' work has fourteen formal speeches or letter exchanges, which will be discussed in section 2 below. But the rhetorical nature of classical historiography goes well beyond the presence of speeches to include the whole apparatus with which historical narrative is built up, including type scenes such as battles, sieges, and plagues, and interruptions to the narrative in the form of learned digressions, especially on geography and ethnography. Ammianus follows unmistakably in this tradition: although his narratives of battles and sieges were the composition of a soldier with experience of war, they include many formulaic elements.¹⁵ The digressions, somewhat more numerous than the speeches, include geographical/ethnographical coverage of much of the known world (14.4; 14.8; 15.4.2-6; 15.59-12; 22.8, 22.15-16; 23.6; 27.4; 31.2), and topics ranging from eclipses and rainbows to siege engines (20.3; 20.11-26-30; 23.4); there is also a plague, with accompanying digression (18.4).

Many of the most distinctive features of Ammianus' composition can also be seen as fundamentally rhetorical. One example is the obituaries found at the death of each emperor, usually structured around an assessment of the emperor's positive and negative features followed by short descriptions of their physical appearance; details of ancestry are also sometimes discussed. Obviously enough, imperial biography is an influence here, especially in the description of physique, and there are textual similarities to some of the snap

¹² For discussion of this passage and its intertexts see Kelly 2008, pp. 79-87.

¹³ In my quotations from Ammianus I follow my usual practice of indicating the rhythmical clausulae, for which I employ a supralinear mark. On clausulation see n. 41 below

¹⁴ See for example 28.4.14, where he treats the gossipy imperial biographer Marius Maximus, as being the sort of thing that idle aristocrats read instead of proper literature (if Maximus was indeed a biographer: see Paschoud 1999 and Stover and Woudhyysen forthcoming). See also my remarks on the relationship to panegyric below.

¹⁵ See e.g. Ross 2015 on sieges.

assessments of the breviarists;¹⁶ but the unusual combination of positive and negative qualities and deeds (some of which are mentioned for the first time in the obituaries), separated out, is harder to find precedents for in historiography: two possibilities would be the Roman people's contrasting opinions of Augustus at his funeral, as shaped by Tacitus (*Ann.* 1.9-10), or the *synkriseis* (comparisons) at the end of each pair of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*.¹⁷ At any rate this unusual approach, arguing from both sides, is deeply redolent of traditional rhetorical training.

To give a second example: to a degree almost unparalleled in earlier historians, Ammianus is keen on using *exempla*, comparisons to earlier historical figures, in order to provide a yardstick by which his characters may be judged – which in antiquity was a characteristically rhetorical use of history.¹⁸ Authors like Tacitus are aware that their works may offer examples to others (see e.g. *Historiae* 1.3.1), and Menander Rhetor recommends historians as a source of inspiration for rhetoricians (373.29). But Tacitus was not prone to describe characters in the example-packed way that Ammianus did. We can pick a passage in his work, and find within a few sentences that Gallus Caesar is likened to Crispus Caesar and Adrastus, and contrasted with Alexander the Great (14.11.20-22); is said to be as unlike his brother Julian as Domitian was unlike Titus (14.11.28); and is finally compared in the reversals of his fortune to a sequence of ten or so figures from Graeco-Roman history (14.11.30-34). For Ammianus, looking for exemplary comparisons is part of the historian's job (16.7.8), even if to earlier historians it would have looked more reminiscent of epideictic oratory.

What I have suggested so far is that, Ammianus offers a form of historiography heavily inflected with rhetorical approaches. Confirmation of this may come from the most interesting single theoretical passage in the work, the closing sphragis:

Haec ut miles quondam et Graecus¹ a principatu Caesaris Neruae exorsus¹ ad usque Valentis interitum¹ pro uirium explicauimus mensura: ¹ opus ueritatem professum¹ numquam, ut arbitror, sciens¹ silentio ausus corrumpere uel mendacio. ¹ scribant reliqua potiores aetate, ¹ doctrinis florentes. ¹ quos id, si libuerit, adgressuros, ¹ procudere linguas ad maiores moneo stilos.¹

These events, beginning from the principate of Nerva Caesar up to the death of Valens, I, a soldier once and a Greek, have unrolled to the best of my strength: it is a work which claims truthfulness and which, so I think, I have never knowingly dared to warp with silence or falsehood. Let the rest be written by men with youth on their side, in the bloom of learning. To those who would embark on this, if it please them, I give the advice to forge their tongues to grander styles. (Ammianus 31.16.9).

A huge amount has been written about this passage but for the moment I would just like to point out two aspects. The first is that in this allusive passage the most important single intertext is not a historian, but a rhetorician and master of Latin style, Cicero, an author whom

¹⁶ Cf. e.g. 21.16.7 with Aurelius Victor *Caes.* 42.23 and *Epit.* 42.18, and many other examples.

¹⁷ See Pomeroy 1991, p. 246 for the comparison of the two parts of the obituaries respectively to panegyric and invective.

¹⁸ For a catalogue (not wholly comprehensive) of *exempla* see Blockley 1975, App. F and G; and see further on *exempla* Blockley 1994, Wittchow 2001 (focusing on creation of *exempla* within the text), Kelly 2008, ch. 6-7.

Ammianus quotes by name as many as sixteen times in the extant books. Cicero thought often about history, as in the passage quoted at the head of the section: the idea of truthfulness as the essential claim of a historical work and the further gloss on this as neither omitting the truth nor lying seems pretty much a gloss on Cicero's definition of the laws of history in another treatise, *De oratore* 2.62: *nam quis nescit primam esse historiae legem ne quid falso dicere audeat? deinde ne quid ueri non audeat?*¹⁹ To confirm the connection, the closest parallel in Latin for the metaphor of hammering a tongue into shape on a forge can be found in the same work: *non enim solum acuenda nobis neque procudenda lingua est* (3.121), and there is a verbal similarity to the idea of the measure of one's strength, *uirium mensura*, in *aurium mensura* (3.183).²⁰ Indeed it has been asserted that Ammianus' whole conception of history is fundamentally Ciceronian.²¹

This passage also highlights the relationship of the work to rhetoric in another way: it alludes unmistakably to a commonplace in the abbreviated histories of the previous generation, which like Ammianus closed their narrative on reaching the reign of the present emperor. His contemporary Eutropius (10.18.3) closes his breviary by arguing that what follows needs to be narrated *maiore stilo* – that is to say, with the grandeur of panegyric – and similar commonplaces can be found in another fourth-century abbreviated historian, Festus, and in the *Historia Augusta*.²² While there has been debate as to whether it is Ammianus' sole or predominant meaning in this passage – some have argued the primary reference is to the stylistic weight required for proper historical writing – the allusion is nonetheless unquestionably present.²³ In general, Ammianus' work bears a difficult relationship to panegyric. In praising Julian at the start of book 16, he acknowledges that what he is about to write will almost attain to being material for panegyric (*ad laudatiuam paene materiem pertinebit*); in the obituary for Julian, he will organize his materials according to the cardinal and secondary virtues, a typically panegyric move. And yet for all these features, the resemblance to panegyric of his Julian narrative is heavily qualified (*paene, pertinebit, materiam*);²⁴ the passage of praise in Julian's obituary (25.4.1-15) is followed by criticism (16-21), as in all such obituaries.

Ammianus, then, undoubtedly felt both the historiographical tradition and its rhetorical elements strongly, and adapted to it to an imperial system.²⁵ In some ways, it might be argued

¹⁹ 'Who after all doesn't know that the first law of history is that it should not dare say anything falsely? Next that it should not dare omit anything true?'

²⁰ 'For we need not only to sharpen our tongue and hammer it into shape...' 'the measure of the ears' ~ 'the measure of my strength'.

²¹ Blockley 1998, 2001.

²² Festus 30.1: *quam magno deinceps ore tua, princeps inuicte, facta sunt personanda!* ('With how mighty a voice henceforth, unconquered emperor, should your deeds resound'). Cf. also *HA Quadr. Tyr.* 15.10. On Ammianus' knowledge of Eutropius and Festus see respectively Kelly 2008, pp. 240-253, and Kelly 2010.

²³ Kelly 2007. Among other recent discussions of the passage see esp. Paschoud 2004.

²⁴ This interpretative point is attributed to me in Fournier 2010, p. 27 and n.36 (p. 34), but I owe it to discussion with Jan den Boeft.

²⁵ On the central place of the emperor in structuring late antique historiography, see Van Nuffelen in this book.

(*exempla*, obituaries, theoretical statements about historiography, incorporation of panegyric elements), he might be seen as innovating under the influence of rhetorical theory and practice.

3. Speeches and the eloquence of emperors

The speeches in Ammianus are remarkably little discussed in the scholarship, especially when compared to the digressions, a similarly traditional generic feature which occurs only a little more frequently.²⁶ I would identify fourteen particularly relevant items on the basis of length and style.²⁷

1. **Constantius** asks the army to approve his peace deal with the Alamanni (14.10.11-15).
2. **Constantius** promotes Julian to Caesar (15.8.5-8, 10, 12-14).
3. **Julian** urges the soldiers to rest before the battle of Strasbourg (16.10.9-12).
4. An exchange of letters between **Sapor II** and **Constantius II** (17.5.3-8, 17.5.10-14).
5. **Constantius** addresses his troops after defeating the Sarmatians (17.13.26-33).
6. **Julian** accepts acclamation as Augustus (20.5.3-7).
7. **Julian's** letter to Constantius requesting recognition (20.8.5-17).
8. **Julian** prepares to lead troops against Constantius (21.5.5-8).
9. **Constantius** prepares to lead his troops against Julian (21.13.10-15).
10. **Julian** stirs up the soldiers before entering Persia (23.5.16-23).
11. **Julian's** speech to the soldiers on the Persian campaign (24.3.4-7).
12. **Julian's** deathbed speech in his tent (25.3.15-20).
13. **Valentinian's** speech on accession (26.2.6-10).
14. **Valentinian** promotes Gratian to Augustus (27.6.6-9, 12-13).

I distinguish speeches from shorter spoken interventions of a sentence or so, such as for example, the brief bursts of encouragement from Julian to his men on the battlefield of Strasbourg or the enthusiastic response of one of his soldiers (these will be discussed further below).²⁸ Speeches are in general found in formal contexts, addressing and attempting to

²⁶ Before O'Brien's two articles of 2013, partially derived from his 2002 doctorate, I am aware of little explicit coverage since Pighi's short book of 1936 (Cichocka 1975 has had a limited impact, being in Polish). O'Brien himself can only point to a few short discussions in other works (2013b), n. 4. Since O'Brien, we may add Ross 2016, esp. ch. 3. The digressions, on the other hand, have repeatedly attracted many dedicated articles, and in the case of the geographical digressions, complete commentaries by Feraco 2004 and 2011.

²⁷ My list coincides with O'Brien's (2013b, n.7) but for the addition of the letters of Sapor, Constantius, and Julian (O'Brien also deems Julian's deathbed speech fundamentally different in genre, but as he counts 12, it must presumably be one of his list).

²⁸ My list of speeches is the same as that of Pighi 1936, p. 29-30; Pighi additionally has a second class of 11 *discorsi storiografici minori* (14.7.14 (Gallus); 16.12.18 (a standard bearer); 16.12.30, 31, 32, 33, 40 (Julian at Strasbourg);

convince a specific audience: in most cases, the army on campaign or in formal ceremonies of imperial promotion. One might therefore count as outliers or marginal cases the speech of Julian on his deathbed, addressing his friends present (12), the letters exchanged by Constantius and the Persian King Sapor in 358 (4), and Julian's letter requesting for Constantius to recognize his promotion by the army in 360 (7). Nonetheless, these should be included in discussion of speeches, as they represent extended attempts to give voice to the thoughts and feelings of leading characters in words which fit the gist of what was said but express the historian's perspective as well. Moreover, in earlier historiography, letters are a rhetorical feature on a par with speeches (for example, Sallust's letters of Pompeius and Mithridates in the *Histories*); the deathbed speech picks up on a number of Julian's themes in earlier speeches in Ammianus.²⁹ However, in what follows, I shall take most of my examples from the imperial elevation speeches.

The first observation that I would make is that a majority of these speeches were demonstrably delivered. In some cases we know that they simply must have happened (the speeches from imperial promotion ceremonies, for example), and in some of these and in other cases we have external evidence from other sources: Libanius' biography of Julian informs us that his speech at Strasbourg was included in Julian's own lost memoir of the battle (*Oration* 18.53);³⁰ the exchange of letters of Sapor and Constantius is also reported in Zonaras 13.9;³¹ Julian's letter to Constantius (and the presence of a much harsher private letter) is also attested in Libanius (*Oration* 18.106) and Zonaras (13.10); it is again Libanius who offers a parallel for Julian's speech inviting his men to swear an oath to him before marching against Constantius (*Oration* 18.108). Julian's second speech in Persia also finds confirmation in Zosimus (3.18.6). Julian's address to his friends in his tent, the most private of all the events described (and the most obvious candidate for being invented from piety or as too good an opportunity to miss), is unexpectedly as well attested as any of the other speeches. According to the *Breviarium* of Festus (28.3) he addressed his friends at length; Libanius attests to the content of the speech in (admittedly encomiastic) passages in *Oration* 18.272-3 and later in *Oration* 24.7.

The fact that many of the speeches are attested in other sources does not of course mean that all the extant speeches must represent speeches actually given, nor does it mean that the contents are the same as what was actually delivered.³² In some cases the parallel tradition offers support on matters of content: for example, the accounts of church historians show

17.9.4-5 (discontented soldiers); 18.6.18 (letter of Procopius); 19.10.3 (Tertullus, prefect of Rome); 20.2.4 (Ursicinus); 20.4.15-16 (Julian appeases soldiers); 20.5.10 (the Genius); 25.5.3 (anonymous soldier); 26.7.16 (Procopius); 29.1.29-32 (Hilarius in court).

²⁹ The very opening *advenit, o socii, ... tempus* is strikingly reprised from Julian's encouragement of his men at Strasbourg (16.12.30). In the two previous speeches on the Persian campaign, he also anticipates his death (23.5.19, 24.3.7).

³⁰ For that reason, Libanius stated that tradition forbade him from including a version of it (*Oration* 18.53).

³¹ Cf. also Petrus Patricius fr. 17, and the evidence of *Descriptio consulum* s.a. 358 that the Persian ambassadors arrived in Constantinople on 23 February 358.

³² For example, Julian certainly delivered a speech on launching the Persian Campaign (perhaps at a slightly different juncture) as confirmed by Zosimus 3.13.3 and Magnus of Carrhae (in Malalas *Chron.* 13.21); but the focus on earlier Roman invasions is rather fulfilling authorial aims, as is Julian's hint at his own forthcoming death (23.5.16-17, 21).

Valentinian at his proclamation reminding the troops that now that they had made him emperor, whether he chose a co-emperor was his prerogative not theirs.³³ If the portrayal of Ammianus is more subtle, it is nonetheless on the same lines. It is probably unknowable whether Libanius is correct to say that Julian delivered a speech at Strasbourg to encourage his soldiers to enter battle (*Oration* 18.53), or Ammianus is right to give him a speech suggesting that they rest and fight the next day, only for them to protest their enthusiasm.³⁴ Whereas it is not impossible, nor intrinsically implausible, that Valentinian spoke of the soldiers' love for Gratian, brought up among their children, and closed by committing him to their trust (27.5.7, 12), the emphasis on the point is surely meant as a poignant allusion to the fact that fifteen years later the Gallic army would rebel against Gratian and kill him. Convergences and divergences with other sources can be found, then, but there is no case of an obvious fiction designed to perform the analysis of the historian: nothing like the constitutional debates of Herodotus and Dio or the Melian dialogue of Thucydides; no conversations like those of Xerxes and Demaratus or Augustus and Livia; no harangues of barbarian chiefs like Boudicca or Calgacus.³⁵ And while discussing dissimilarities to speeches in other historians, we may observe that Ammianus nowhere used the device of extended passages of indirect speech to represent formal speeches, a favourite device of Livy and Tacitus.³⁶

The second and inevitable observation is that all of the substantial speeches are given by emperors to military audiences (with the additional presence of three letters written to each other by emperors and a Persian Great King).³⁷ This is a direction in which historiography

³³ Sozomen 6.6.8, Philostorgius 8.8, Theodoretus 4.6.2. For a defence of the fundamental authenticity of the contents of Valentinian's speech promoting Gratian see Colombo 2007.

³⁴ One might use the comparison with Libanius to support the theory that Julian was testing his men's keenness to fight ('reverse psychology', opposed by O'Brien 2013b, n. 29). One aspect of Ammianus' account that should be taken into consideration is the possibility of a deliberate contrast to the battle of Adrianople, where the Roman troops were similarly engaged in battle after a long march on a hot day but Valens showed no salutary caution: see Blockley 1977, Kelly 2008, p. 313-316, and Ross 2016, pp. 134-135 and 139-140.

³⁵ Herodotus 3.80-82, Dio 52.2-40; Thucydides 5.85-114; Herodotus 7.101-104; Dio 61.2-6 and Tacitus, *Annals* 14.35, Tacitus, *Agricola* 30-32. Barnes 1998, pp. 72-74, remarks on the absence of paired speeches by both commanders before battle – something that Ammianus, as a soldier, knew did not reflect reality. Julian's bursts of encouragement of Julian to different parts of the army at the battle of Strasbourg (16.12.30, 31, 32, 33, 40) would therefore reflect not only Julian's status as a Caesar but would also be an intentionally realistic version of the *topos*.

³⁶ Here, one might follow Den Boeft and see an accomplished bilingual whose leading language was probably nevertheless Greek avoiding a particular construction (Den Boeft 1991, pp. 16-17, uses not this precise example, but the historic infinitive). Such a conclusion need not entail any contempt for Ammianus' Latinity, or a denial that his knowledge of Latin literature was superior to that of Greek (see n. 10 above).

³⁷ I should confront one potential objection: I have omitted from my count of speeches one extended piece of direct speech, namely the account by Hilarius at his trial in 372 of the fatal act of divination in which by which he and his co-conspirators identified Valens' successor (29.1.29-32). The function of this passage is obviously different: it is on the one hand included for vividness' sake, and on the other to justify and give authority to an exceptionally detailed account of an event around which rumours had swirled (parallel sources are rather vague about the means of prophesy, e.g. Zos. 4.13.4, Philostorgius *HE* 9.15, Socr. *HE* 4.19.2, Soz. *HE* 6.35.3-4, or indeed describe a different form of divination, e.g. *alektromanteia* in Zonaras 13.16 and Cedrenus 1.548 Bekker). It does not have the formality of speeches (as is indicated not least by the use of *inquit*). But if it seems special pleading to

moved in the imperial age, to be sure. Tacitus is perhaps an exception in the large number of speeches he lends to senators, but Dio's history, which covered both republic and empire, slides towards giving emperors a near monopoly on speeches as the monarchy approaches. Indeed, after the assumption of the principate, only one pair of speeches is given to non-imperial actors (Boudicca and Suetonius Paulinus).³⁸ Herodian, if one excludes short items of direct speech, is similarly dominated by imperial participants (thirteen out of seventeen substantial speeches).³⁹ But Ammianus' speeches are much more decisively the prerogative of the emperor, and in narrow circumstances. Indeed, as has been well pointed out by Peter O'Brien, they match formal elements of imperial ceremonial behaviour of late antiquity; they are preceded and rounded off by formulaic narrative details.⁴⁰

Thus, in the descriptions of the elevation of Julian to Caesar and of Gratian to Augustus, the scene is carefully set, of a lofty tribunal surrounded by standards. In each speech there is a pause: in Julian's case, this is for Constantius to dress him in the purple and declare him Caesar (15.8.11); in Gratian's, the interruption comes from the army, competing with each other to declare him Augustus, after which Valentinian dresses him in the purple and additionally with the diadem. Thereafter, the senior emperors address the junior, and the troops close the ceremony with appropriate noises of approval. In the case of Gratian, the acclamation of a courtier, Eupraxius, is taken up by the troops (27.5.14): *'familia Gratiani hoc meretur'*, 'Gratianus' house merits this [honour]'. The acclamation pays homage to Valentinian's late father after whom his eldest son was named, and is likely to be verbatim: the accentual rhythm goes against Ammianus' regular pattern.⁴¹ Both scenes also enact the expected responses of the soldiers to the new emperor, how they probed Julian's 'eyes that combined intimidation with charm and his pleasingly animated face' (*oculos cum venustate terribiles vultumque excitatus*

exclude it from the list of speeches, then I would argue that its complete lack of resemblance to other speeches highlights the uniformity of the rest.

³⁸ After Agrippa and Maecenas' discussion of monarchy in book 52, Dio's speeches are given to Augustus (53.3-10), a conversation of Augustus and Livia (55.145-21), Augustus (56.2-9, on marriage laws), and Tiberius (a funeral oration for Augustus (56.35-41). Thereafter Dio survives in *Epitome* so it may be risky to assume that all speeches survived; however, those that follow are: Boudicca and Suetonius Paulinus (61.2-6, 8-10), Vindex (63.22), Otho before his death (64.13), and Marcus on Cassius' rebellion (71.24-26). Prior to that, as one might expect, speeches were given to much greater variety of actors: Pompeius, Catulus, Gabinius (36.25-36), Cicero and Philiskos (38.8-29), Caesar (38.36-46, 41.27-35, 43.15.18), Cicero (44.23-33, Antonius (44.36-39), Cicero (45.18-47), Calenus (46.1-28); Antonius and Octavian (50.16-22, 24-30). As well as in their diversity of these speeches, one might contrast these speeches to Ammianus' in their length. For a list of Dio's speeches see Schwartz 1899, pp. 1718-19, supplemented by Millar 1961, p. 11.

³⁹ Marcus (1.4); Commodus (1.5); Pompeianus (Commodus' brother-in-law) (1.6); Fadilla (Commodus' sister) (1.13); Laetus (praetorian prefect) (2.2); Pertinax (2.3 and 2.5); Niger (2.8), Severus (2.10, 2.13, 3.6), Caracalla (4.5), Macrinus (4.14 and 5.1), Severus Alexander (6.3), a young man acclaiming Gordian I (7.5), Maximinus (7.8), Maximus (8.7). Shorter cases of direct speech can be found at 1.4, 1.6, 1.9, 1.17, 2.1, 2.2, 3.11, 3.12, 4.3, 8.3.

⁴⁰ O'Brien 2013a, pp. 223-234, O'Brien 2013b, §3-7.

⁴¹ On Ammianus' clausulation, which is found with astonishing regularity, see e.g. Harmon 1910, Kelly 2015. The normal pattern would be to have an even number of syllables (two or four) between the last two stressed syllables, but this must be taken as having one (*hóc merétur*) or three (*Gratiáni hoc merétur*). Other acclamations that break the regular cursus of the text can be found in the Roman senate's response to a letter of Julian criticizing Constantius, *'auctori tuo reueréntiam rogámus'* ('we demand respect for your patron', 21.10.7), and in the comic acclamation quoted in the second Roman digression: *'per te illi díscant'* ('you should give these people lessons', 28.4.33).

gratum, 15.6.16), or praised Gratian for ‘the bright light in his eyes, the joyful radiance of his face and the rest of his body, and his excellent character’ (*oculorum flagrantior lux... vultusque et reliqui corporis iucundissimus nitor¹ et egregia pectoris indoles¹*, 27.5.15). Ammianus does not merely describe but demonstrates the intended effects of imperial ceremonial in the reaction to the speeches. The fear inspired by Julian’s eyes finds its parallel in the way that Valentinian returns to the palace having established his authority, *iamque terribilem* (26.2.11), ‘already an object of fear’ – an appropriate reaction to an emperor in this period in a way that it would not have been in the early empire.

The embedding of the speeches into ceremonial suggests that they can be interpreted in the same symbolic way as readers of Ammianus have become accustomed to doing with other ceremonials such as the *adventus* of Constantius or Julian. In these the bearing of the emperor is meant to be judged by the readers, and with a fair degree of subtlety (Constantius on his entry to Rome was superficially impressive, but on a subtle reading overly arrogant; once he was actually in the city his behaviour was exemplary⁴²). When the smooth running of Valentinian’s promotion was threatened by soldiers clamouring for a second emperor, he raised his arm in an authoritative gesture, reproved a small number of the troops (26.2.5), and gave a speech that yielded on the fact of a second emperor while still leaving no doubt about his authority (6-10): by overcoming the possibility that the ceremonial might be derailed, Valentinian established his authority far more effectively than if it had not been threatened. And turning the same approach round, it is surely no coincidence that usurpers like Silvanus and Procopius do not have speeches recorded,⁴³ and the symbolism of their elevation to emperor is askew in other ways: the purple torn down from the standards in the case of Silvanus (15.5.16), and the unforgettable and contemptible sight of Procopius, who has also had trouble getting the requisite purple, looking like a ghost in a play (26.6.15), and reportedly ‘addressing his promotors with the sycophancy of a maidservant’ (*ancillari adulatione beneficii allocutus auctores*, 26.6.16).⁴⁴ That said, there are also legitimate emperors in the work who are not given speeches: Jovian (whom Ammianus treats as a shadow-emperor) and Valens (whom he treats as an inarticulate bumpkin).⁴⁵

A more subtle connection between speech-giving and the legitimacy of emperors is also to be found in the case of Julian. O’Brien argues that *adlocutiones* to the assembled troops are a prerogative of the Augustus, so Julian’s address to his troops before Strasbourg – where he is still Caesar but about to win a victory worthy of an emperor – takes on an informal air.⁴⁶ Similarly when troops surround the palace and acclaim him Augustus in Paris, ostensibly against his will, he first briefly calms them and then in the morning, on a parade ground, on a

⁴² Flower 2015; Kelly 2003, pp. 594-603. See now Ross 2021, pp. 109-112.

⁴³ O’Brien, 2013a, 2013b, pp. 2-7. There is a contrast here to Dio and Herodian, where Vindex and Niger do get to speak.

⁴⁴ There were opportunities elsewhere to depict Procopius as eloquent: on one occasion he managed to persuade troops sent against him to defect (26.7.15-16). But it is probably an inevitable result of his usurpation that he should not be seen giving a successful speech on his acclamation.

⁴⁵ On Jovian see e.g. Barnes 1998, pp. 138-142; on Valens see e.g. Kelly 2018.

⁴⁶ O’Brien 2013a, p. 223, O’Brien 2013b, §11-17.

tribunal surrounded by standards, gives the formal *allocutio* accepting their nomination. The rhetorical effect favours Ammianus' essential attitude to Julian, conveying the impression of his legitimacy and reasonableness.⁴⁷ But, as O'Brien also points out, Julian's appearances in these formal circumstances display his growth as a leader, rather than simply exhibiting his brilliance from the start.⁴⁸

If one expands the discussion from speeches to shorter interventions in direct speech, the role of Julian is even more distinct among emperors. Of course shorter examples of direct speech can arise in very varied contexts, and not always for the purpose of demonstrating eloquence. But it is striking indeed that Julian makes short interventions a full twenty-four times in the narrative, beginning with the very moment of his acclamation when he mutters a line from Homer under his breath (15.8.17).

Julian's direct speech paints an impressive picture of him. He displays his learning with references to Plato (16.5.10) and allusions to Roman history (22.5.4-5, 24.3.9); he encourages his men as he rides up and down the line at Strasbourg (16.12.30, 31, 32, 33, 40), and on the Persian campaign pointing to the slender and feeble frames of captured Persians. He shows his quick thinking in responding to potentially negative omens (21.2.2, 22.1.2; the latter case is indirect speech). Frequently he brings confrontations or conversations with subjects to a memorable close. There are several encounters with courtiers of Constantius, who are shown mercy and simultaneously put in their place: thus he saves the prefect Nebridius from the anger of the soldiers but dismisses his request to kiss the imperial hand: 'Will any mark of distinction be preserved for my friends if you touch my hand? But go wherever you want and you will not be harmed' (21.5.12)⁴⁹; a similarly memorable anecdote, ending in an exemplary display of mercy, is also found a few chapters later with the captured Count Lucillianus (21.9.7-8). Another typical locus for Julian's memorable sayings is the courtroom, where he once capped the rhetorical expostulation of the frustrated advocate Delphidius – 'Can anybody ever be guilty, if it's enough for them to deny it?' – with a firm reminder of the principles of justice: 'And can anybody be innocent, if it is enough to have made an accusation?' (18.1.4).⁵⁰ Elsewhere, he scathingly dismisses a frivolous charge of treason (22.9.10-11), assures a woman that her rival's civil service uniform will not affect the case (22.10.5) and ostentatiously refuses to sit in judgment over a personal enemy until they have reconciled (22.9.16); he restrains flattery (22.10.4), pardons an enemy (22.14.5), and displays his hatred of extravagance on seeing an overdressed court hairdresser: 'I asked them to call a barber, not a tax official' (22.4.9).⁵¹

Julian's short interventions show his ability to cap a conversation and to express himself with eloquence. Memorable sayings or *sententiae* are of course a form of *exemplum* alongside

⁴⁷ 20.4.15, 20.5.3-7. See also O'Brien 2013a, pp. 236-239, on Julian's visible and fitting reluctance at his promotion.

⁴⁸ O'Brien 2013b.

⁴⁹ 'ecquid' ait 'praecipuum amicis seruabitur, si tu manum tetigeris meam? Sed tu quolibet abi securus.'

⁵⁰ 'Ecquis, florentissime Caesar, nocens esse poterit usquam, si negare sufficet?' ... 'ecquis' ait 'innocens esse poterit si accusasse sufficet?'

⁵¹ 'ego' inquit 'non rationalem iussi sed tonsorem acciri.'

memorable deeds. Julian consciously imitates *exempla* of the past, as we have seen, but also sets up examples to be imitated by future generations.⁵² It is striking how the cardinal virtues of courage, justice, temperance, and prudence are exemplified and also how often this is explicit in Ammianus' narrative or even in Julian's own words.⁵³ This was to some extent a feature of the historiography of Julian – who was undoubtedly a highly articulate ruler – and some of these anecdotes have parallel traditions in Greek, which almost certainly derive from independent transmission rather than from Ammianus himself (the story of the barber, and the riposte to the irked prosecutor Delphidius).⁵⁴ But it is also something brought out to a remarkable degree by Ammianus.

By contrast, Gallus Caesar, Constantius, and Valentinian are quoted verbatim once each (in the case of the latter two this is in addition to their formal speeches, of course). Nor are the words of these emperors inspiring (Gallus egging on his troops to lynch his own praetorian prefect and quaestor, 14.7.14; Valentinian brutally ordering an extra-judicial execution, 29.3.6⁵⁵). There is an even greater contrast with Jovian and Valens, who, as said above, are not given speeches, and in fact are never heard to speak at all in the course of the work – Jovian not even when a mere subject is quoted berating him for the surrender of Nisibis (25.9.4). Valens' inarticulacy and general lack of command is frequently brought out in the course of the narrative: his despairing reaction to Procopius' usurpation (26.7.13), the flattery of the praetorian prefect Modestus who praised the ignoramus Valens' bristling and ill-formed expressions as 'Ciceronian blooms' (29.1.11), the careful coaching for the courtroom by a prosecution witness (29.2.9), the eventual withdrawal from the courtroom at the urging of Modestus and the eunuchs (30.4.2). Appropriately, Valens' obituary (31.14.2-7) is completely without *exempla*.

If Jovian and Valens stand as examples of emperors who have an almost negative eloquence, and Julian is exemplary for his eloquence, Constantius and Valentinian stand in the middle position, those who can use speeches to achieve their wishes with the army, but are not masters of rhetoric. To exemplify a little with Constantius:⁵⁶ his formal speeches and letters, like his command of ceremonial, impress their audience enough to have the effects that they are intended to have. But in general Ammianus makes this emperor's speeches reflect his limitations, and they are undermined by contradictions with the narrative or by subtle authorial commentary. In book 14 Constantius' first speech in the work as extant, calling off the campaign against the Alamanni, is accepted by the troops in part because they know that he is not as successful in foreign as in civil wars (14.10.16).⁵⁷ The final speech urging his men

⁵² For this phenomenon see e.g. Kelly 2008, ch. 8.

⁵³ For Ammianus' narratorial association of Julian with the cardinal virtues of *temperantia*, *prudentia*, *iustitia* and *fortitudo*, see above all 16.1.4 and 25.4.1; for Julian's self definition with justice see esp. 22.10.6 and with *clementia*, 16.8.12, 22.13.5.

⁵⁴ For the barber see Zonaras 13.12.12; for Delphidius' prosecution of Numerius (listed as Numerianus in Greek), Joh. Ant. fr. 178 Müller (= 269 Roberto, omitted by Mariev) and Zonaras 13.12.

⁵⁵ This is another case where a false clausula (*muta ei caput*) seems to imply that we are to understand these as the brutal emperor's *ipsissima verba* (cf. n. 41 above)

⁵⁶ On Constantius' speeches in general, see the detailed analysis of O'Brien 2013a.

⁵⁷ For more detailed exploration of the subtleties of the speech see O'Brien 2013a, pp. 226-231 and Maier 2019.

to march against Julian fulfils its purpose, but also reveals his malice. Constantius had once successfully delivered a speech that resulted in the abdication of the usurper Vetranio (this event, on 25 December 350, would have been covered in a lost book), but it is hard to recognize Constantius' rhetorical prowess from Ammianus' account. Indeed, in the obituary, Ammianus remarks that Constantius gave attention to learning but gave up on rhetoric through lack of talent (21.16.4).

4. The eloquence of imperial subjects

Education, including rhetorical education, was highly prized for advancement in the governing classes. The importance of *paideia* or *doctrina* is taken for granted in Ammianus' work, and officials who are learned are admired for that reason, while those who are not are looked down on.⁵⁸ But though rhetoric is clearly central to *paideia*, as we have already observed, private citizens do not get to deliver formal speeches in Ammianus' history. When it comes to shorter contributions the picture is mixed. The fact is that, for subjects, rhetorical skill is can be dangerous, rather than helpful, under the wrong regime. One of the accused in the treason trials of the year 372, Pergamius, is described as *impendio eloquentior*, very much prone to eloquence (29.1.25), but as a result he hurls himself into an unceasing tirade of accusations and is sentenced to death.⁵⁹ There are many other points at which Ammianus records verbatim the words that lead people to their death: at 14.7.9 the prefect Domitianus fatally riles Gallus Caesar; at 16.8.9 the toast *uincamus* is misinterpreted; at 20.11.5 Ursulus criticizes the army for the loss of Amida and later pays for his criticisms with his life (22.3.7-9); at 30.5.11 a pleasantry ('make me emperor if you want to achieve that') proves to be Nigrinus' death sentence. In other cases, the results are negative but not fatal: it is unbridled expression of his opinion that costs Ammianus' commanding officer Ursicinus his post as Master of the Soldiers (20.2.4).

On the other hand, free-spoken frankness (*libertas* or *parrhesia*) in the face of emperors can be admirable and even effective. At 25.9.4 a decurion of Nisibis, Silvanus, reproaches Jovian for the city's surrender; at 26.4.1 the general Dagalaifus memorably advises Valentinian not to promote his brother;⁶⁰ at 27.7.6 Valentinian's quaestor Eupraxius, earlier said to have had as his legacy many examples of self-confidence that sensible men should try to match (*multa et prudentibus aemulanda bonae fiduciae reliquit exempla*, 27.6.14), is quoted dissuading the emperor from cruel punishments with arguments at once irenic and ironic. Finally, the words of the philosopher Iphicles to Valentinian about the plight of the people of Illyricum under Probus profoundly affect the emperor (30.5.9).

Mostly, however, we do not see rhetorical skill being advantageous to the Emperor's subjects – and, as we have seen, *parrhesia* is potentially fatal. Nor do we see the famous orators of the day, though the late fourth century was a period in which a number of famous orators

⁵⁸ E.g. 14.6.1 Orfitus, 15.13.1 Musonianus, 18.3.6 Barbatio, 27.3.3 Symmachus, 28.1.6 Maximinus.

⁵⁹ Note, however, the tempting emendation *loquentior* in Holford-Strevens 2020, 10.

⁶⁰ 'If you love your family, excellent emperor, you have a brother; if you love the state, look around for somebody to invest [in the purple].' This is another case of an exemplary anecdote that has made its way into more than one source: it is also attested at Leo Gramm. *Chron.* p.97 Bonn, and Cedrenus 1.541.

flourished in both Greek and Latin. Libanius is not named, despite his significance in Antioch during the reign of Julian; nor is Themistius, the counsellor of successive emperors and promotor of the senate of Constantinople.⁶¹ Quintus Aurelius Symmachus, panegyrist of Valentinian and Gratian, is nowhere named, nor, perhaps unsurprisingly given Ammianus' lack of interest in Christians, are Gregory of Nazianzus and the other Cappadocians. Other than Julian himself, the only named character of whom we possess an extant speech is Claudius Mamertinus, Julian's quaestor and consul of A.D. 362. Mamertinus' speech of thanks to Julian, preserved in the collection of *Panegyrici Latini*, was delivered on the day he became consul; both Ammianus and Mamertinus describe the ostentatious *ciuilitas* adopted by Julian, including going on foot to the curia, but though Ammianus mentions Mamertinus, he does not mention the speech (Amm. 22.7.1-2 ~ *Pan. Lat.* 2[11].28-30).

In fact, Ammianus generally avoids the sort of scenes in which private citizens might have had the chance to display their eloquence. Panegyrics are nowhere specifically mentioned, though many of the ceremonies to which they might have been attached (consular inaugurations, *adventus*) are described. There are relatively few scenes set in the senates of Rome or Constantinople, and they tend not to involve formal deliberation (Constantius addressing the Roman senate during his *adventus*; the Roman senate in a surely pre-arranged gesture replying to the rebellious Julian's letter with an acclamation; Julian speaking regularly in the Constantinopolitan senate only to rush out when his old teacher arrived;⁶² Procopius finding the same senate house all but empty as he rushed to seize control).⁶³ Nor are courtrooms the site of classic speeches whose rhetoric leads either to condemnation or acquittal, but rather for short anecdotes like the stories of Delphidius and Pergamius.⁶⁴

None of this should surprise: we are in a different world from fifth-century B.C. Greece or the Roman republic. We could perhaps discern the attitude of a soldier in the fact that most of Ammianus' formal speeches are delivered by emperor to army – but also an attitude of Realpolitik. Ammianus' version of classical historiography reflects the fact that formal rhetoric played little part in determining political action. Ammianus' contemporary Libanius spent a life as a practising rhetorician, but this consisted of providing his students with an education, of writing educational materials, and of epideictic composition that was often not actually delivered. While he made the best of his position, including the influence that arose from his relationship with Julian and countless high officials, rhetoric for Libanius for the most part did not involve active influence on the political scene. Indeed, when the later historian Zosimus credited Libanius with assuaging the Emperor Theodosius's anger against the city of Antioch in A.D. 387, he was guilty of a historical howler: the addresses to the emperor as if the speeches were delivered in his presence were a mere pose on Libanius' part – although it is indicative

⁶¹ Ammianus' attitude to Constantinople was not in general positive (see Kelly 2003), and he never mentions the expansion of the numbers of senators in the late 350s.

⁶² Julian is also praised by Libanius for a speech made in the Constantinopolitan senate (*Oration* 12.70).

⁶³ 16.10.13, 21.10.7, 22.7.3, 26.6.18.

⁶⁴ 18.1.4, 29.1.25.

of how important it was for Libanius' public image to give the impression that he could influence an emperor.⁶⁵

That said, contemporary rhetoricians are not wholly absent from Ammianus' history. The paradox is that, despite their not being named, the historian seems to have had a good knowledge of the political orators of his period, as has been shown above all in Guy Sabbah's *La méthode d'Ammien Marcellin*. It is clear that Ammianus knows many of the works of Libanius, for example (take the suggestion that Julian should have been buried in Rome, a knowing correction of Libanius' fantasy of a burial in Athens⁶⁶). He clearly knew Julian's works (for example, the latter's description of the cataphract cavalry in Constantius' entourage reemerges in the adventus of Constantius II to Rome (16.10.8 from *Oration* 1.37c-38a). There are unquestionable echoes of Mamertinus and Symmachus' panegyrics, and plausibly also of that of Pacatus Drepanius, the panegyrist of Theodosius who was probably responsible for the *Panegyrici Latini* collection.⁶⁷ Sabbah shows that Ammianus was aware of Themistius' orations and of Gregory of Nazianzus' invectives against Julian.⁶⁸ It has also been attractively argued by Peter Heather that a reference in Ammianus to learned flatterers of Valens (*adulatoribus eruditus*, 31.4.4) is an allusion to a single individual who unarguably matches both epithets, Themistius.⁶⁹ It is particularly worthy of note that echoes of the rhetoricians of the day find themselves insinuated into the context of imperial speeches.

Symmachus' first oration, for example, provides material not only for Valentinian's speech promoting Gratian (the opening section of the fragments of the panegyric is echoed 27.6.8⁷⁰), but the imagery of the panegyric also pervades the account of Valentinian's own elevation, particularly the comparison to a traditional republican-style election by the Roman people.⁷¹ Julian's speeches sometimes contain suggestions of his own works (for example the letter to the Athenians). The resentful tone of Constantius' last speech (21.13.10-15) seemingly takes over the arguments of Gregory of Nazianzus' invectives, disprizing the victory at Strasbourg as light skirmishes against half-armed Germans and accusing Julian of ingratitude.⁷²

⁶⁵ *Oration* 19, 20; cf. Zosimus 4.41.

⁶⁶ Ammianus 25.10.5, cf. Lib. *Oration* 18.306.

⁶⁷ Sabbah 1978, pp. 321-346, as well as Den Boeft et al. ad 26.2.2; on Pacatus and Ammianus see Lunn-Rockliffe 2010, pp. 332-336.

⁶⁸ Sabbah 1978, pp. 347-372.

⁶⁹ Heather and Moncur 2001, p. 201.

⁷⁰ For Ammianus' Valentinian, Gratian was *non rigido cultu ab incunabulis ipsis ut nos educatum, nec tolerantia rerum coalitum asperarum, nec capacem adhuc Martii pulueris* ('he was not brought up, like us, with a tough training from the cradle, nor hardened by endurance of bitter adversity, nor is he yet able to bear the dust of Mars'): cf. Symmachus, *Oration* 1.1 on Valentinian's early training with his father in Africa: *ibi primum tolerans solis et pulveris esse didicisti, cuius dudum cunabula Illyriae nives texerant* ('there first you learned to endure sun and dust, you whose cradle had previously been covered by the Illyrian snows').

⁷¹ 26.2.2 *comitiorum specie* ('with the appearance of an election'), cf. *Oration* 1.9. In the view of the Dutch commentators ad loc., 'one can hardly doubt that Ammianus alludes to this passage'. A few sentences later, at 26.2.6, they suggest that Valentinian's words *nec speranti nec appetenti* ('neither expecting nor seeking [empire]') 'are perhaps again a tasteful correction by the historian of a passage in Symmachus' panegyric, viz. the *excusatio* implied in *cur in medium invitus existi, cur diu obluctatus, cur sero mollitus es?* (*Oration* 1.10) ['why did you come out into the middle unwillingly? why did you resist long? why were you appeased late?'].

⁷² Strasbourg: 21.13.13, cf. Greg. Naz. *Oration* 5.9; ingratitude: 21.13.14, cf. Greg. Naz. *Oration* 4.21.

Ammianus was not unaware to the oratory of his own day, but he preferred not to transfer it to speakers other than emperors.

5. Conclusion

For Ammianus, rhetoric was an integral part of being an educated man, and equally of being a historian. That said, one can see something of a disjuncture between the strong focus on theorizing about rhetoric and history, drawn above all from Cicero, that we saw in section 2, and the actual place of rhetorical prowess by characters in his history. Both the use of speeches and the presence of other forms of rhetoric is generally more limited in Ammianus' work than in earlier classical historiography. This could be understood as a reflection of the political system. In Tacitus' *Dialogue about orators*, Maternus explains the decline of contemporary rhetoric since the late republic by asking: 'What is the need for long deliberations in the senate when the best men quickly agree?... Or for many speeches in the popular assemblies when it is not an inexperienced multitude taking the decisions but one man, and he most wise?' (41).⁷³ When he later turned to writing history, Tacitus did in fact include the first of these types of speech, senatorial debate, but Ammianus' treatment of rhetoric and its practitioners, where only the emperor gets to make long speeches, is the logical conclusion of Maternus' remarks. So the disjuncture that we see in Ammianus' work is between the rhetorical expectations of the genre of historiography and the reality of the world in which he lived. The later Roman empire was certainly a rhetorical society: there was abundant use for rhetoric in civic and educational contexts, but at the highest level of politics, decisions were made in cliques. There was a use for rhetorical ability in the courts, but Ammianus gives virtually no sense of that and indeed offers a high-flown and allusive display-piece attacking the corruption and incompetence of lawyers and the decline of forensic oratory (30.4).⁷⁴ The vast majority of speeches at the time, at least those that had any wider impact through publication, were epideictic; we have seen (section 3) that Ammianus had read and felt free to allude to many of these, but these are allusions not citations, and he did not name their authors.

In Ammianus' Roman empire, then, the most important speeches were not necessarily given by orators at all, but rather by emperors. Accordingly, contemporary orators and their speeches alike go unmentioned in Ammianus' work, omitted like other more traditional categories of historiographical speech (senators, Rome's enemies). Longer speeches are restricted to emperors (and not even all emperors), and for the most part addressed only to the army. And while the use of speeches is clearly influenced by earlier historians, Ammianus' palette is more restricted – no movement from indirect to direct speech, for example – and there is a greater emphasis on surrounding formality. This does not mean that they are insignificant: but the rhetoric of Ammianus' longer speeches is merged into and arguably subordinated to the characteristic ceremonial of the late Roman state (section 3). Some emperors were not articulate, like Valens, whose silence testifies to his incompetence; others

⁷³ *Quid enim est opus longis in senatu sententiis, cum optimi cito consentiant? Quid multis apud populum contionibus, cum de re publica non imperiti et multi deliberant, sed sapientissimus et unus?*

⁷⁴ See Sánchez-Ostiz 2016.

like Constantius and Valentinian had some skills (the former is characterized as a more ornate speaker than the latter).⁷⁵ And in fact what makes a successful imperial speech in Ammianus' work is not eloquence *per se* but mastery of the situation (Valentinian's authoritative handling of the demands for a second emperor, for example).

Moving beyond speeches, we have seen that one potential opportunity for memorable eloquence in Ammianus' work comes in the shape of short interventions in debate or discussion (*sententiae*); but for private citizens such self-expression is relatively rare, and excessively free speech is frequently dangerous (section 4).

The great exception – the individual who most frequently demonstrates a full and honest range of expression, both in speeches and in *sententiae* exchanged in dialogue with others – is Julian. Julian, it is agreed, is the hero of the *Res gestae*, though there is an equally clear scholarly consensus that Ammianus' overall attitude to Julian is more complicated than the hero-worship of many other fourth- and fifth-century pagans. This essay did not set out to be about Julian, but, as often with Ammianus' work, he turns out to be at the heart of things, and reflections on the rhetorical treatment of him show a consistency of approach. Julian, by contrast to the other emperors of his time, is overwhelmingly compared positively to examples from the past, and is also depicted as a historian-emperor, the character who can most frequently interpret and set historical examples. Ammianus is remarkably consistent in using the formal devices of rhetoric for Julian's benefit, or placing them in Julian's mouth. It is not just the many speeches or the disproportionately frequent short spoken interventions which make Julian far more alive than other characters in the work. In another rhetorical structure, the obituaries, for example, one sees ostensible balance between positives and negative for all emperors, but other emperors' positives are both less significant and much shorter in comparison to their negatives; other emperors, both in their obituaries and throughout the work, either attract fewer positive *exempla* (Constantius, Gallus, Valentinian) or are simply described without historical comparison (Valens). Julian is the particular beneficiary of Ammianus' most notable rhetorical innovation, the profuse use of

And what of the historian as rhetorician? If Julian's rhetorical (and historical) ability, and the rhetorical tricks used by Ammianus on his behalf, make him seem the only dynamic and vividly portrayed emperor, are we to see Ammianus as the only true rhetorician of his day, suppressing mention of his contemporaries? It has always been tempting to scholars to see Ammianus as the lonely historian isolating himself from and disdaining his contemporaries, as I suggested above,⁷⁶ but I think that this would be an overinterpretation. It is true that Ammianus is a controlling author, but he is also a historian with enough sense of reality to realize that rhetorical talent did not in practice make much difference: hence his lack of mention of contemporary rhetoricians. Despite this silence, he wove the words of these same rhetoricians into the allusive fabric of his work – to characterize, to argue with, and to reinforce his ideas.

⁷⁵ Colombo 2007.

⁷⁶ I have myself argued that Ammianus uses many of the devices of historiography to portray himself as uniquely qualified to be the historian of his age: Kelly 2008, esp. ch. 2.

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