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DEPICTIONS OF THE PERSIANS IN THE CONTEXT OF JULIAN THE
APOSTATE'S DEATH IN PERSIA

THE UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

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INTRODUCTION

“Nobody was allowed to see the king, and it was an offence for anyone to laugh or spit in the royal presence...There was a risk that if they saw him habitually, it might lead to jealousy and resentment, and plots would follow; but if nobody saw him, the legend would grow that he was a being of a different order from mere men.” Herodotus

When Julian the Apostate bled to death in his tent in Persia, it was the starting point for a war of ideas and words that was to be waged over this moment. Julian’s religious policies would determine the way that people wrote about his life, career and death, and it further made the war against Persia into an ideological tool. Instead of a simple narrative of Roman victory or loss against a foreign foe, the story of the Persian Expedition held great potential for furthering the debate between Christian and pagan. A natural part of any writing is the way that content and form are shaped by the goals of the author, but the Persian Expedition offers us an opportunity to examine the process of authorial shaping of a narrative. This opportunity arises because the accounts of the Persian Expedition have both an easy division between sides (Christian and pagan) in the debate, and with over a dozen works written there is a wealth of evidence concerning this one event.

The historical situation surrounding Julian’s reign revolves around the repercussions of Constantine the Great’s decision to legitimatise Christianity.¹ A nephew of Constantine, Julian was one of the few survivors of a purge of the imperial family by his cousin Constantius II in 337. His brother, Gallus, became Caesar before being executed for attempted usurpation. The imperial family was heavily associated with Christianity, and Julian spent his early childhood being educated in a Christian fashion, though both he and our other sources emphasise his surreptitious pagan education, leading to his later preoccupation with philosophy. Upon being made Caesar by Constantius II, Julian made a mark with successful campaigns against the tribes on the far side of the Rhine, and by restoring the province of Gaul to health after long depredations. This set the stage for his usurpation, as his soldiers became attached to him through these campaigns; when Constantius

¹ For more detail, please see Tougher (2007), as well as Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*.

tried to call them to the east in order to fight the Persians under the Shahanshah Sapor II, they rebelled and proclaimed Julian as Augustus. Julian is presented in our pagan sources as refusing this elevation at first, and attempting to prevent the rebellion from taking place, but we should be careful to note that reluctance to accept the title was a common element in imperial acclamations, and that there is a reasonable possibility that Julian helped to orchestrate the rebellion among his troops. When Constantius II died of natural causes, neither side had yet come to blows; by naming Julian his heir, he allowed Julian to take the imperial power without bloodshed. This fortuitous turn of events – combined with Julian’s successful campaigns in Germany – may have persuaded the new emperor that his luck would hold. He began a policy of religious reform, attempting to bring paganism back into prominence: a new hierarchy and set of unified beliefs was prescribed for pagan cult, which clearly reflect the influence of the Christian church as well as the neo-Platonism that Julian was so fond of. Part of this reform package was a law that sought to prevent Christians from teaching rhetoric or other elements of the ‘Classical’ education.² The tension between traditional Classical education and learning – dominated by pagan figures and mythology – and Christian teaching was one that the Christian intellectual elite was struggling to overcome at this time. His law was thus a direct threat to the ability of the new Christian elites to consolidate their place within Roman society. Julian, now in preparation for the Persian Expedition, moved to Antioch where he met the orator Libanius; however the people of the city received Julian less kindly, and his time here is recorded in the *Misopogon*, which along with the *Contra Gallileos* show us a picture of the emperor at war with his subjects over religion. When Julian was launching his invasion of Persia, the empire that he ruled was divided by his unfinished religious reform. It seems likely that Julian hoped to give strength to these reforms by a great victory in Persia; however we do not have any concrete description of his objectives to clarify this possibility.³ So the situation at the time of the Expedition was tense, and the sharp divisions and sectarianism that we see in the accounts are the result.

² For more details, including Gregory Nazianzus’ response to this challenge, see Elm (2012), chapter 8.

³ A problem which is discussed at more length at appropriate points in the work that follows.

The focus of this investigation will be the way that the Persians are depicted in the context of Julian's death during his invasion of Persia. The Persians had been depicted in a remarkably static way within Greco-Roman writings since Herodotus, forming a tradition that Greco-Roman authors could draw upon without need for other evidence.⁴ Furthermore, they occupy an interesting ideological position, being both barbarians and also civilised, meaning that they did not fit easily into the categories that the Greco-Roman writers liked to use. They could win battles against Roman armies, kill emperors, and successfully besiege cities. This all made them a far more significant threat, and one that had lasted a very long time, meaning that any writer depicting them had to decide how to explain their stubborn refusal to be annexed by Roman forces. Critically to this project, they had defeated Julian,⁵ humbled his army, and extracted a treaty that all of our sources decry to various degrees. Any description of Julian's death must – to some degree – describe his opponents who achieved that death. In describing the Persians, including elements such as their habits and actions, the authors had the opportunity to shape the forces that prevented Julian's success on the battlefield, and indirectly his religious policies that were so controversial. This process of shaping the Persians required the author to decide what purpose they would serve in his narrative.

The goal of this dissertation is to try and unpack all of these processes. Examining the ways that authors have depicted the Persians is a route to understanding what those Persians were designed to *do* within the narratives. As such, the methodology shall not revolve around ideas of historical truth or accurate depiction of events: instead it shall focus upon the portrayal of the Persians from a *literary* standpoint. That is, when they appear within a work, what purpose do they serve? How does the author make use of them? Why do they appear the way that they do? This is not to overlook the relationship of the Persians in our authors to the historical reality, but to treat it as essentially unknowable, given our paucity of sources on the Persian side to corroborate it. In

⁴ De Jong, (1997) 22-29, provides a brief discussion of the way that Greek writers presented a consistent and unrealistic image of the Persians and other barbarians. Though he focuses on a different period and subject, his remarks are valuable for showing how care needs to be taken with the depiction of Persians in Greco-Roman writings, as well as the existence of a tradition regarding their depiction.

⁵ Elm (2012), 284 notes that Julian apparently considered the Germans "beneath him".

addition, this is not a work of Iranology. Instead the current work treats the works here considered as deliberate works of literature, written within the context and norms of their genres. From this viewpoint, we can consider how each author has made use of this element, and discuss what it reveals to us of his intent and goals.

The authors considered here have been split into different groups for the purpose of analysis. The historian Ammianus Marcellinus is our first considered author, and his monumental work *Res Gestae*, with its long and detailed account of the invasion and of Persia, demands close consideration. As a result, this chapter is the longest chapter in the work, and the other sources (most of which were written later) use Ammianus' work as a comparison tool when appropriate. Next we consider the other Pagan historians Eunapius, Zosimus and Festus, who occupy a parallel tradition to Ammianus, and whose accounts do not always agree with his in details. They are also much shorter, prompting us to analyse them together. The final group is the Christian writers, including both orators and historians. The Christian writers present the highest divergence from Ammianus, with even the historians possessing not only a separate tradition but also a different genre (church history), with its own requisite expectations. These groupings were determined partly to facilitate the structuring of the dissertation, but also because of the different traditions that can be traced through them. Differences in accounts of Julian's death and the Persian role give rise to widely divergent depictions of the Persians, which is discussed in each chapter.

All translations within this work are the author's own.

AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS

The Persian Expedition forms the majority of three books of the *Res Gestae*, and acts as the end of the narrative of the reign of Julian, whose brief years of office form the most detailed part of the work. Though the Persians appear throughout the *Res Gestae*, this chapter shall focus solely upon the Persian Expedition itself, as the purpose of this dissertation is to examine the portrayals of the Persians in that precise context. Ammianus serves as our most copious and detailed account of this expedition, and it is important for us to remember that he is an eye-witness to the events that he is describing: as his account makes clear, he served with the army under Julian. Returning home after Julian's Persian Expedition, Ammianus, as a pagan, was clearly deeply affected by the events that he had played a role in, and the condemnation and praise that the characters in the expedition receive stands as testimony to the depth of his feelings. That the *Res Gestae* should form a major part of this dissertation is not surprising, given the extensive treatment that Ammianus provides of the Expedition, and the presence of a lengthy digression about the Persian Empire itself.

Within the ideological framework identified in the introduction, this chapter shall begin by discussing the techniques that Ammianus uses in the Expedition narrative. As an eye-witness account, Ammianus provides a valuable opportunity to see how one who had personal experience of the Persians portrayed them, a narrative technique known as autopsy. He is also noted for his extreme allusiveness, with a very high density of references to previous authors, and the implications of this for the way that he presents the Persians shall be considered. Autopsy and allusion are important to this undertaking because the former may indicate how he utilises his own first-hand experiences, and the second could help determine whether Ammianus felt bound by the literary motif of the Persians that had been used by Greco-Roman writers since Herodotus.

Finally, this chapter shall turn to examine the major themes in the way that Ammianus presents the Persians within his work. These shall disclose the essentially Julian-centric nature of the

Expedition narrative and the Persians themselves. The primary themes are danger on the expedition, the Persians' as deserving of destruction, their exoticism, and finally the treaty that ended the war.

AUTOPSY

It is worth first considering the role of autopsy within the narrative of the Persian expedition. Ammianus – apparently a resident of Antioch, and so like Libanius from the part of the Roman Empire bordering Persia – was present on the expedition, and was a member of the army during earlier bouts of hostility. This makes him an eyewitness for the Persians, and so his presentation of them might well be said to reflect this perspective. However, before we may make full use of this different perspective, we must first investigate the way that he uses autopsy. Is it trustworthy – does it add greater veracity to his depiction – or do his autopsy sections owe more to narrative concerns than historical fact? Why did he use this technique, and how does the purpose underlying the technique influence his depiction of the Persians?

When the individual instances of autopsy are considered, there are a few themes that are immediately apparent. The narrator chooses to emphasise three themes in particular in his uses of autopsy: danger, exploration and links with the past. He does this by introducing sections that deal with these three things with first person plural verbs such as *venimus*, or by using a *nos* as the direct object of a verb.⁶ Danger is the most striking of these three themes, coming as it does frequently throughout the narrative. For example, he says that the army has been penned in by the Persians, with both the nearby crops and the Roman ships burnt, *ut inedia nos cruciarent*.⁷ Similarly, Ammianus blandly moves on from the death of a Roman soldier (*in conspectus nostro [...] occisus est*), to the army's progress (*pervenimus*) in the space of two lines.⁸ We should identify this for what it is: a clear way of indicating to the audience that the lives of all those on the expedition were at stake, and that the historian – one of the *nostri* – shared that danger. Ammianus wants us to know that he personally risked his life. Then we have the moments of exploration. Beyond the basic fact

⁶ Usually with 'Persians' as the subject.

⁷ RG 24.7.7.

⁸ RG 24.1.16-24.2.1.

that many moments of autopsy consist of verbs of motion, we have the way that he uses autopsy commonly to indicate the arrival of the army in some new locale of the Persian empire. It is not enough to relate that the army reached a certain place; Ammianus wishes to emphasise that he was there, that he personally saw the ruins of the Mesopotamian dyke system or that he saw Persian palaces.⁹ This serves to add to the exotic nature of the narrative. There are numerous occasions on the expedition where Ammianus takes the time to describe wondrous things, and when he does there is a marked tendency to use the first person to emphasise it. And finally, we have the links with the past. Ammianus is quite careful to collocate autopsy with the various memorials of prior Roman expeditions into Persia. The first instance of autopsy in the expedition is when the army comes to the tomb of Gordian.¹⁰ Later the old Roman soldier, a veteran of the army of Severus, is found and speaks *ad nostra*.¹¹ The army visited and repaired the *Naarmalcha*, which Trajan had previously interacted with, and Hatra, which Trajan and Severus had previously attacked.¹² Ammianus chooses to emphasise his own involvement at these places. This is an interesting choice, for it means that the author's technique of autopsy is collocated with historical mentions that form allusions to the past. Kelly¹³ identifies both of these techniques as attaining towards the same goal, that is demonstrating the reliability and truthfulness of the author over other writers of history at this time. So this brief overview of the instances of autopsy within the expedition demonstrates that there are multiple purposes being served by this technique.

An important point to consider when investigating the autopsy is that Ammianus does not claim direct personal contact with the Persians during the Expedition. We never hear of him personally engaging in combat; nor of him personally negotiating with the enemy. Unlike Caesar or

⁹ RG 24.3.10, 24.6.3.

¹⁰ RG 23.5.7.

¹¹ RG 24.1.10.

¹² RG 24.6.1, 25.8.4.

¹³ (2009), 64.

Xenophon, his own personal role is occluded within this technique. We do hear of him suffering in hardship (for example, when the army is oppressed by hunger,¹⁴ but this is always a generalised issue that affects the whole army. So it is not easy to see what his own actions were during the expedition. This is problematic for our purposes; if the value of the autopsy is that it gives us a direct eyewitness testimony of the Persians, then this failure to be explicit about his own actions vitiates the evidence. Kelly argues¹⁵ that the purpose of the autopsy is, like allusions, to build a sense of credibility and authority appropriate to the historiographical genre. He further develops an argument that one of the purposes of autopsy is to help emphasise his own loneliness – his intellectual isolation from other Latin and Greek historians. This may help to explain why we see so little of his own activity; unlike the war of 359 or the conspiracy against Silvanus, here he was part of a huge army and so his role cannot helpfully be used to emphasise his loneliness. That provides an explanation for this phenomenon, but does not help the cause of this investigation. However, within the excursus on the Persian Empire, we find at least one indication of authorial intervention – with regard to the Persians relieving themselves while standing – which Teitler (1999) examines in detail. Here a relatively minor detail has been corrected from the classical accounts of Herodotus, and shows the willingness of Ammianus to use his own personal experience – reflected elsewhere in his autopsy – to make a stand on the subject. As Marincola (1997) discusses, autopsy was an essential element in the historiographical genre, in terms of serving as the source of a historian's authority. Ammianus is careful to denote his own usage of autopsy in the places where his account was either more likely to be challenged (the Expedition) or where his account was relatively unique and thus his own eyewitness testimony played a larger than usual role in establishing the events (so the events in 359). Autopsy as a genre element is about establishing the truth of your claims, especially for contemporary history where you cannot rely on the literary proof of prior historians;¹⁶ Ammianus' usage thus indicates the places where he felt that his narrative was most likely to be challenged by

¹⁴ RG 25.7.14.

¹⁵ (2009), 66.

¹⁶ Marincola (1997), 86.

competing accounts. Throughout this chapter, we will examine the use of autopsy both for Ammianus' position within his genre and for the effect on his account of the Persians.

A prominent concern when investigating the autopsy in Ammianus is the truthfulness of his claims, and of his account in general. This has exercised scholars, with Austin making forceful claims in favour of trusting Ammianus. In 1989 Paschoud delivered a blistering attack on Ammianus, citing several incidents from his account of the war of 359. While Kelly remains “agnostic” concerning this question,¹⁷ he does offer some rebuttals to Paschoud’s arguments. As noted above, a central theme in Kelly’s argument is that the autopsy serves to create the impression of authorial reliability. This accords with Marincola’s (1997) view on autopsy, which is that the genre role of autopsy is to serve as proof of the narrative’s claims; the Greek and Roman historians broadly believed that proximity to events was the surest guarantee of truthfulness. An interesting example of this in practice can be found in Morgan’s study of Pollio,¹⁸ where he says, “Pollio, it would seem, sought to resolve the radical indeterminacies of the Roman civil war into one authoritative account guaranteed by his own independence and self-sufficiency.”¹⁹ In short, Pollio felt that the best method for staking his own claim to authority was via autopsy. For Momigliano Ammianus was the ‘lonely historian’;²⁰ he stood alone within his field, deliberately separated from his peers by his style and his condemnation of all Latin historians since Tacitus. This loneliness is only increased by his autopsy, for his frequent use of it during the Persian Expedition suggests that Ammianus was trying to establish his own version of events as the truthful account. This is similar to Libanius, whose overriding concern when discussing the Persians is to affirm not only a connection with the past, but also his own authority as a

¹⁷ (2009), 64.

¹⁸ (2000).

¹⁹ Morgan, (2009), 60.

²⁰ Momigliano, (1974).

Hellenistic figure.²¹ Libanius invokes them primarily to display to his audience his own grasp of the Herodotean tradition. But if we have now considered the technique of autopsy, and seen what purpose it serves for Ammianus himself, we must now consider what purpose it serves for our investigation: what light does it shed on the representation of Persians within the narrative?

By bringing the narrative down to the first person level, close to memoir (Marincola notes²² that Ammianus is unlike his predecessors in bringing memoir into historiography), there is an elision between Ammianus the soldier who took part in the expedition, and Ammianus the historian who wrote about it decades later. An interesting perspective on this is offered by Heather who offers²³ the comparison to a German soldier of 1918, who took part in the successful battles but nevertheless saw his country lose the war; the conclusion is that Ammianus' distortions and bitterness towards Jovian suggest that he, too, lacked the strategic position required to discern the true realities of the hopeless position that Julian led his army into. This is relevant for our purpose because it shows us that narrative techniques and shaping can indicate – even if indirectly – the author's own view on events. So the autopsy offers to us an elision between the perspective of the two Ammiani, and indeed between their views. To return to the themes of the autopsy identified above, we can now consider them not from stubborn concerns of veracity, but instead from that of perspective. The themes show us that the author's own experiences on the campaign were ones that he wanted to show as being grounded in danger, exploration and the past. Put simply, for Ammianus, the trip into Persia was one into a lethal – but exotic – land that had an indelible place within the history of Rome and the classical world. Matthews suggests²⁴ that the expedition – with the philosophers, doctors and other learned men – would have had the air of a "study tour", much

²¹ So, for example, he names the Persian capital Susa, not Ctesiphon, states that Julian held games "before Babylon", not Ctesiphon, and never names the Persian Shahanshah Sapor, instead merely describing him as a descendent of the Achaemenid dynasty.

²² (1997).

²³ (1999), 111.

²⁴ (1989), 143.

like Alexander's did many years before. We can draw this conclusion by looking at the way that Ammianus collocates his autopsy with elements of his narrative that fit these themes. Significantly, he never claims to have personal contact with Julian, nor to possess extraordinary *scientia rei militaris* in the context of the expedition, which would have fitted with his concern to claim authority; instead he chose to emphasise these thematic elements. These elements thus were sufficiently important to form one of the conceptual foundations of his technique of autopsy.

Smith in his foundational article concerning the narrative in the expedition demonstrates²⁵ that there are two embedded "stories". Story A is one of heroic – Homeric – action. Story B is one of doom and gloom, with the divine will of heaven forcing the early end of Julian and his expedition. The three themes of the autopsy within the narrative fit into these two Stories quite easily. The theme of exploration – which Smith discusses²⁶ in the context of generating wonder – fits within the heroic Story A, acting to enhance the marvels of the journey. The theme of the past, however, forms a conversation with the genus of the Roman Empire's past that mimics the references within epic narratives to earlier mythic events. Where Homer's narrative makes explicit allusions to other myths, Ammianus draws upon the Roman emperors of yesteryear, making them stand as role models for his protagonist. Then we have the danger theme, which aligns closely with Story B and its doom-laden arc. The themes of the autopsy work closely with Smith's conception of the dual narrative to form a complex interweaving of authorial techniques that draw attention to the author's underlying views of the Persian campaign.

²⁵ (1999).

²⁶ (1999), 97.

Smith further developed²⁷ the conception of 'focalisation' – from the work of Gerard Genette – to show that the perspective that we take in a work can affect how that work displays and reflects other peoples. For our purposes, when the narrative switches to a 1st person focus to show the Persian empire, its peoples and the expedition, then there is an implicit urge on the reader to associate themselves with the narrative; to see themselves as the participant on the expedition. So it is “we” who see curiosities and the tombs of emperors in the east. The use of autopsy, thus, not only helps to emphasise these thematic elements, but also seeks to include the reader within the emotional experiences that they provoke, making the reader a part of the ‘we’ rather than a passive third party. When “we” arrive in Persia, when “we” come to the relics of the long ago past, when “we” are pressured by hardships and the Persian cavalry, then it is “we” who have the emotional responses that the author seeks to provoke.

This chapter has discussed the technique of autopsy as found in Ammianus, in order to discover both why he used it, and what it means for our wider project. The technique was used by Ammianus to introduce and emphasise certain themes. Moreover, Ammianus used his autopsy to bolster his narrative's authority. As the range of authors discussed in this dissertation shows, there was a lot of interest and controversy over the events of the Persian Expedition. As the lonely historian, Ammianus sought to establish his own authority and preferential placement within the tradition, and so he used autopsy to help establish and firm that claim. To this end, we see the technique used to indicate his own personal involvement in events, lending his work an air of memoir and establishing him as one who had seen the events described. Furthermore, questions of truthfulness return to the same idea of authority - when we try to consider whether the autopsy in any given area was genuine, we find that it invariably is used to bolster the truthfulness of a passage. So autopsy is important in the narrative for how it impacts Ammianus' authority, and thus his standing in the debate regarding the Persian Expedition. This standing was one of the tools used to try and present his authoritative image of the Expedition, including of the Persians who opposed

²⁷ (1999), 97. See also Rood (1998) and Hornblower (1994).

Julian. Returning to the three themes that his autopsy primarily evoked, we see that Ammianus used autopsy to depict the Persian Expedition - and the Persians themselves - as dangerous, exotic and linked with the Roman past, strengthening that depiction with the dual narrative structure and the emotional impact of such repeated autopsy. These three themes are significant, for Ammianus sought throughout the entire narrative of the Persian Expedition to address issues of Julian's decisions and legacy. Later chapters discuss the ways that the Persians are depicted in such a way as to cast Julian in a certain way: this chapter has shown how autopsy is similarly used to reflect Julian. When, later, we see that the dangerousness of Persia is emphasised, we will observe that autopsy is but one tool used by Ammianus, albeit one with a particularly important role for the way that it controls the emotional impact of the work.

ALLUSIONS

Throughout the Persian Expedition narrative, the weight of history can be strongly felt, not least in the narrative texture of the work. The narrator makes frequent allusions to both historical events and previous writers, and the reader is never allowed to forget that Romans and Persians had been fighting over this land for centuries. The purpose of the present chapter is to investigate the way in which Ammianus' allusions to previous writers has affected the depiction of the Persians within that narrative.

The Persians had been a literary motif with mostly static characteristics for a very long time in the Classical tradition – stretching back to Herodotus – and this implies a lack of novelty on the part of those who utilised it. Like the theme of the 'unruly Roman mob', or the Republican *exempla*, an author could utilise this motif without needing to first invest in any particular degree of innovation or research. This section of the chapter will thus seek to address the way that Ammianus portrays the Persians within the context of the wider motif. A potential concern for us is that his portrayal of the Persians relies so heavily upon this motif that his own purposes were secondary. Though the decision to take on a certain motif must include an acceptance of the associations that the motif brings, this investigation is concerned with Ammianus' decisions to use and develop certain depictions, meaning that there is a concern over whether he adapted those motifs or simply used them unaltered.

To do this, first this chapter will look at the way that Ammianus interacts with his predecessors, beginning with the creation of a distinct variation upon the Persians motif within Ammianus' digression upon the Magi. Then it will discuss Herodotus, and the way that Ammianus both works with him and disagrees with him. Then it will discuss the tone of the Expedition, and the way that Ammianus uses the Persians in order to form a distinct tone that differs from that seen in other uses of the Persian motif.

The extant *Res Gestae* is quite shy about directly naming any given writer. Though allusions are common, Ammianus only rarely specifically names the source. Furthermore he is noted for not having any one source that inspired his work; instead a 'mosaic of sources' has been suggested,²⁸ with authors such as Livy or Dio being no more than simply *tesserae* in the overall fabric of the work. In perhaps the most extreme demonstration of Ammianus' view of other works, he condemns every work of Latin history between his time and Tacitus by explicitly placing the *Res Gestae* as a continuation of the latter's writings. This suggests that Ammianus is keen to mark out his own independence from the tradition: that his *Res Gestae* will not repeat what has been said by others. This section of the chapter will contend that this independence can be seen in the way that he utilises and modifies the motif of the Persians.

A minor but telling example is that during the ethnographic digression on the Persian Empire, Ammianus offers a description of the Persian Magi. den Boeft has shown that²⁹ this description owes very little to his own personal experiences, and a great deal to the previous tradition in classical sources. This tradition included Herodotus (*Histories* 1.101-140, etc), Plato (*Alcibiades Maior*), and Apuleius (*Apology*). Furthermore, den Boeft is brutally honest in describing the digression as "of no use to Iranists". However, what we see here is a conscious shaping of prior material extant in the body of Greco-Roman thought - that is, one side of the debate on whether the Magi were good or bad in terms of their religion. This tradition was primarily a debate about whether the Magi were charlatans who practiced magic, or respectful and wise philosophers and keepers of sacred rites. The material that Ammianus presents belongs firmly in the second camp:

Magiam opinionum insignium auctor amplissimus Plato, hagistiam esse verbo mystico docet, divinorum incorruptissimum cultum... (23.6.32)

Plato, the very honourable conceiver of worthy beliefs, shows that Magia is "Hagistia" in the mystic nomenclature and a pure tradition of religion.

²⁸ See Kelly (2009), 215 for a discussion of this with further reading.

²⁹ (1999).

Ex eo per saecula multa ad praesens, una eademque prosapia, multitudo creata deorum cultibus dedicatur. (23.6.34)

From that time down through many centuries to the present, a group of men, born of and descended from the same family, have been dedicated to the worship of the gods.

It is interesting to note that Plato is cited in one of the above excerpts, an appeal to authority that comes at the very start of the digression. This shows the reader that Ammianus is working with Plato on this issue, taking a stance within the debate. But note also that he disagrees with Herodotus:

Ex hoc magorum semine septem post mortem Cambysis, regnum inisse Persidos antiqui memorant libri, docentes eos Darei factione oppressos, imperitandi initium equino hinnitu sortiti. (23.6.36)

From this seed of the Magi, so the ancient books describe, seven of them seized the royal power in Persia after the death of Cambyses, but we are told that they were suppressed by the faction of Darius, and the beginning of his reign was chosen by the neighing of a horse.

This is in direct contrast to Herodotus 3.70ff. What are we to make of this? Perhaps he simply read a different source, as suggested by Teitler. However, I would argue that in this particular circumstance, the explicit contrast that may be drawn between the citation of Plato and the disagreement with Herodotus shows us that the author is taking sides. He is willing to use certain parts of the tradition about the Magi while ignoring others. In fact, I would agree with den Boeft, who argues³⁰ that Ammianus is actually manipulating the existing tradition concerning the Magi in order to generate an image of the proper kind of religion. In contrast to Julian's overly superstitious religion, Ammianus takes the opportunity to use the Magi to portray the 'correct' kind of religion. He is not beholden to his sources, and instead he is willing to change them to depict an image of his own choosing.

When considering the motif of the Persians, the educated reader must be likely to think of Herodotus, who more than any other author helped create the Greco-Roman image and tradition of

³⁰ (1999), 213.

the ancient Iranians. It is evident that Herodotus' work was central to the Persian Empire digression, and that there are frequent allusions within Ammianus' work to his. But there are also many disagreements between the two, and these disagreements suggest that Ammianus was not simply copying the motif that he inherited (many times removed) from Herodotus. Many of these incidences revolve around minor facts and disagreements over ancient Persian history.

To provide some examples: the two are in agreement on the subject of horses from a certain part of Persia, which are called Nisean.³¹ At 23.6.40 the reason behind the name of the river Cyrus is given, in accordance with Herodotus.³² To these we can add the description of the rise of Medea, a description that owes much to Herodotus.³³ But in contrast, we have considerable divergences between the description of Cyrus' death that we find in Ammianus and Herodotus.³⁴ Herodotus places the death in the lands of the Massagetae, north of the Black Sea, while Ammianus specifies that it happened on the European side of the Bosphorus.

Scholarship has considered the question of Ammianus' debt to Herodotus, and in particular the moments when he disagrees with him. Fornara argues³⁵ that when the examples of Herodotean allusions are considered, the frequent disagreement between the two is a result of an intermediate source - that is, Ammianus consulted some epitome or abridgement of Herodotus found in another author. Teitler,³⁶ for his part, examines a number of incidences within the *Res Gestae*, including one where Ammianus disputes with the tradition concerning Persian judges sitting on human skin, where Ammianus suggests:

aut finxit vetustas, aut olim recepta consuetudo cessavit. (23.6.82)

Either it is an old lie, or an ancient custom that has now ended.

³¹ RG 23.6.30, *Histories* 3.106.

³² *Histories* 1.188-9. But note the contrasting account in Strabo 15.3.6 (729C).

³³ RG 23.6.27, *Histories* 1.102, 106 and 130.

³⁴ RG 23.6.7 and *Histories* 1.204-214.

³⁵ (1992), 422.

³⁶ (1999).

Teitler notes³⁷ that this story can also be found in Valerius Maximus and Diodorus Siculus; he contemplates the possibility that the version presented by Ammianus is drawn from a secondary source, before settling with the conclusion that, "it is more likely that Ammianus drew from his own experience".³⁸

The examples so far considered focus on the level of direct allusions, such as direct quotations or scholarly points of interest. But allusions represent more than that. In taking and using the motif of the Persians, there was an entire atmosphere that will be added to the work. In particular, as discussed later on, the Persians inevitably evoke comparisons with the Persian Wars. This is a significant facet of allusions that can add to the texture of the work in a way that has nothing to do with the exact facts cited within it. For example, when Ammianus decides to call upon the heroes of the Persian Wars in a comparison with the Roman army, it creates a potent atmosphere:

*Sonent Hectoreas poetae veteres pugnas, fortitudinem Thessali ducis extollant, longae loquantur aetates Sophanem et Aminiam et Callimachum et Cynaegirum, Medicorum egregia culmina illa bellorum: non minus illo die quorundam ex nostris inclaruisse virtutem, omnium confessione monstratur. (24.6.14)*³⁹

Let poets sing of Hector's ancient battles, let them extoll the strength of the Thessalian warlord, let long ages speak of Sophanes and Aminias and Callimachus and Cynaegirus, those leading lights of the Persian Wars: for on that day shone forth our soldiers' bravery, not at all inferior to those, as demonstrated by the testimony of all.

By citing not only Homer but also the Persian Wars, the narrative takes on a heroic tinge, one that focuses the attention of the reader upon the great historical⁴⁰ parallels. We have already discussed the "dual narrative" conception of Smith, and his idea of the focalisation of the viewer's interest should also be considered here. Herodotus, the Persian Wars, Homer; these are grand things that inspire a heroic atmosphere. But within the narrative of the Persian Expedition, as described by Smith, we also have the doom laden "Story B" which gradually overwhelms the heroics of the

³⁷ (1999), 222.

³⁸ (1999), 222.

³⁹ This passage will be discussed again later.

⁴⁰ With Homer being considered historical for this purpose, as indeed most Ancient Greeks did.

protagonist. By means of his grotesque style, as described by Auerbach, Ammianus causes almost a subversion of the heroic atmosphere that his own allusions create. For example, after the above quote, the narrative describes the soldiers, laden with gore, rendering praise to the emperor. Julian's response is:

Abunde ratus post haec prosperitates similis adventare, complures hostias Marti parabat ultori, et ex tauris pulcherrimis decem ad hoc perductis, nondum aris admoti, voluntate sua novem procubere tristissimi, decimus vero, qui diffractis vinculis lapsus aegre reductus est, mactatus ominosa signa monstravit. Quibus visis, exclamavit indignatus acriter Iulianus lovemque testatus est, nulla Matri iam sacra facturum: nec resacravit, celeri morte praereptus.(24.6.17)

Clearly thinking after this that he would approach similar successes, he prepared several sacrifices for Mars the Avenger. After ten flawless bulls were led forward for this purpose, nine chose to drop to the ground in grief, before they had reached the altar, while the tenth broke his bonds and was only with difficulty brought back. This one was sacrificed, but showed ominous omens. After Julian saw this, he indignantly and bitterly cried out, with Jupiter as his witness, that he would thereafter make no more sacrifices to Mars; nor indeed did he, as his death swiftly took him.

This is a startling change from the glory and heroism of the narrative immediately before, and serves to provide a sting in the tail akin to Tacitus' mixed comments. The reader expecting to find a heroic atmosphere, redolent in the glories of the Persian Wars, is given a rough awakening by the narrative performing tricks such as this. For another example, there is the aftermath of the sack of Maiozamalcha (24.4.27-28): the emperor is explicitly compared to Alexander and Africanus, who had both refused to take captive maidens as their war-booty, and he is then linked with their valour. A reference here to Alexander the Great is obviously of great moment for both the character of Julian and the literary motif of Persians, as the most famous victor over Persians. However, the narrative immediately punctures this happy image, by relating how one of the Roman soldiers was killed in an accident. This rather odd note – placed in between two separate anecdotes concerning Julian – serves to break up the atmosphere of victorious conquest. As above, Ammianus has chosen to negatively affect the impact of a glorious moment, one that ties in with the Persians literary motif,

with an element of doom and foreboding. The slain Roman, perhaps standing in for the entire Roman army and its chances of success, interrupts what should be a moment of triumph.

By doing this, Ammianus twists the expected narrative of a Persian Wars style victory and glory narrative into one of doom and tragedy. In contrast to what might be expected from this motif, the reader is not presented with a straightforward set of Greek victories. Nor does Ammianus baldly state the facts, of an expedition led astray and nearly lost. Instead Ammianus forges a middle way, allowing the audience to expect one thing while then providing another. The Persian Expedition narrative thus takes and twists the motif of the Persians to create its own unique atmosphere. This atmosphere ties in with the narrative arc of the expedition, where initial successes and glories are suddenly and by the actions of heaven turned into defeat. This narrative arc requires that the glory of the Persian Wars be undermined within the text, and so Ammianus does so by his abrupt moves to dark and foreboding events.

Throughout this discussion, the central goal has been to determine whether or not Ammianus' portrayal of the Persians was reliant upon the already existing literary motif of the Persians. By examining first the way that he depicts the Magi, and then the way that he interacts with Herodotus, it has been shown that Ammianus was capable not only of choosing between multiple different sources for his portrayal, but also of disagreeing with them and forming his own portrayal. Finally, this discussion has shown how Ammianus allows contradictory moments to creep in and interrupt the atmosphere of the Persian Wars. By doing so, he changes that atmosphere, making it into his own shape that conforms to the narrative shape of the expedition. Thus the image of the Persians, far from being entirely predicated by the inherited motif, is actually shaped by his own purposes. This is interesting for us, because it suggests that the other ways in which the Persians are utilised within the narrative are also conscious decisions by Ammianus, and not simply relics of the same tradition that he inherited along with the motif. With this understanding we are

now able to examine the way that the Persians are portrayed within the Persian Expedition, and see how that portrayal ties in with the wider purposes of the author.

INTRODUCTION TO THEMES

Throughout the Persian Expedition narrative, it is apparent that the Persians appear in a number of interesting contexts and ways. This section of the chapter will now turn to examine closely the ways in which they do so, and suggest the reasons and purposes that the author had for this presentation. Firstly the way in which the Persians act to exculpate Julian's failure to achieve victory in Persia shall be discussed. Then the way in which the vices and negative qualities of the Persians is emphasised will be considered, with particular thought as to how this affects the presentation of Julian's decision to invade. Then the question of exoticism shall be considered: to what extent did the author's own fascination with Persia play a role in his portrayal of the Persians? Finally, this chapter shall consider the way that the *Res Gestae* discusses the treaty that Jovian signed to end the Expedition, and how that portrayal ties into the other themes discussed. It shall be shown throughout this chapter that the Persians within the Expedition narrative primarily serve in the role of justifying and explaining Julian's actions.

THE DANGERS OF THE PERSIAN EXPEDITION

During the Persian Expedition narrative, Ammianus consistently stresses the dangers that the Roman army faced, and the difficulties that it had to overcome. The reason for this is simple: he wished to exculpate the emperor Julian for his failure to succeed. The expedition is noted by scholars to have been accompanied by an intense discussion in the Roman empire, concerning its viability and worthiness as a goal; aware of this, Ammianus sought to cover the reputation of his hero by emphasising the elements that ultimately led to his failure, and by stressing the ways in which the Persian Expedition was a task that exceeded all others in its Herculean difficulty. To this end, Ammianus focused on some of the things that he personally encountered on the expedition, as well as the thematic element of divine opposition.

Firstly, it is important to note the intensely visual way that Ammianus describes the Persians, especially their armoured *cataphractii* cavalry. As can be seen on numerous occasions,⁴¹ Ammianus' depiction of the opposing troops is dominated by the glitter of the Persian mail, and he betrays a fascination with the way that their armour is fitted together. MacMullen has noted both the fascination that the Roman writers had for the *clibanarii*, and discussed the prevalence in late antiquity of the concept that bright and glinting troops could terrify the enemy.⁴² If we look at the way in which Ammianus describes the battles between Romans and Persians, we will see how he describes them in a way that emphasises their visual elements. For example, at 24.2.5 Ammianus describes a skirmish between Roman and Persian troops following the sacking of some towns:

Et primo lucis exordio, cum essent hostes iam in contuitu, visi tunc primitus corusci galeis et horrentes indutibus rigidis, milites in procinctum impetus veloci tendentes, eos involavere fortissime. Et quamvis arcus validis viribus flecterentur, et splendour ferri intermicans, Romanorum metum auget, ira tamen acuate virtutem, clipeorum densitate contexti, ne possint emitter, coegerunt.

⁴¹ RG 24.2.5, 24.6.8, 24.4.15, 24.7.7-8, 25.1.11.

⁴² (1990), 86, 89.

And at first light, when the enemy were already in our sight, we then first saw them bristling with flashing helmets and stiff mail; but our soldiers were ready for the fight and bravely rolled them back by making a swift attack. And although their bows were drawn with great strength, and a gleaming glitter shone forth from their armour, increasing the fear of the Romans, nonetheless the Roman virtue was spurred by their anger, and they were covered by the density of their shields. They closed upon the enemy so that they couldn't launch any arrows.

Note how his description of the skirmish makes no mention of Persian tactics or battle dispositions, even though the Roman tactics are alluded to. Ammianus has focused the attention of the viewer upon the sight of Persian arms, not only with such striking words as *corusci* and *horrentes*, but by allowing that to be the *only* element of the Persian army that is really described. Turning to the most extended battle narratives (excepting sieges) in the Expedition narrative, that is the battle before Ctesiphon, 24.6.8-15, and the battle in Maranga, 25.1.11-19, we can see that this pattern is repeated. The Ctesiphon clash is opened by a description of the Persian army, taking up section 8. This is a bold opening. After the initial description (5) that the Persians were resisting the crossing (*facibus [...] conflagrassent*), the narrative had focused on Julian's attempts to force the river bank, and his success in doing so (6). When he describes that the Romans crossed on shields, like Sertorius, (7), the reader might expect this to be the end of the fighting on this occasion. However:

Contra haec Persae obiecerunt instructas catapraetorum equitum turmas, ita confertas, ut lamminis cohaerentur aptati corporum flexus, splendore praestringerent occursantes obtutus...

Against this the Persians opposed squadrons of cavalry equipped as cataphracts, so mustered that they blinded the gaze of those advancing with the splendour of their bodies' movement, which were bound and fastened by plates of iron...

This bold opening not only startles the reader – there is to be a formal battle after all – but also puts emphasis strongly upon the appearance of the Persian cavalry (*lamminis, confertas*). This description then moves on to the infantry and the elephants, with only the vaguest of spatial descriptions made apparent: the elephants are *post* the infantry, while the infantry are placed *in subsidiis* to the cavalry. The narrative moves on in the next section (9) to the Roman dispositions, before the Roman advance (and thus strategy of advance) (10), and the battle narrative that occupies the next five sections (11-

15). After the strong visual description that opened the narrative, there is no explicit description of Persian strategy, and very little indication of how the Persians were placed on the field of battle.

At Maranga, Ammianus dedicates four sections (12-15) to the appearance – but not the tactical dispositions - of the Persian army. He then describes the Roman battle line (16), and the Roman strategy of a rapid advance (17), before announcing a Roman victory and citing the reasons for this victory (18-19), during which two sections he adds more visual description of the battlefield. So for a battle which is documented in nine sections, Ammianus devotes four to the visual impact of the Persian army and none to the Persian tactics.

Ammianus seeks to depict the Persians as a dread opponent, emphasising their fearsome nature. He does this through the visual medium. Focusing on their appearance, the glinting of their armour, and their elephants, Ammianus suppresses the rational world of battle tactics for the emotional responses that he can generate through the use of descriptions. For Roberts, who analysed the *adventus* of Constantius, the visual descriptions in Ammianus act to “deter the viewer from attempting to piece together the individual scenes into a coherently organised whole.” Furthermore, look at how he describes elephants.⁴³ Their arrival always heralds a fevered description from Ammianus concerning their great size and dread sounds. For example, the battle at Maranga shows the consternation and fear felt by the Roman troops as a result of the elephants; den Boeft *et al.* note⁴⁴ that Ammianus shows the reader this in order to make Julian’s own calm and collected attitude in the situation all the more admirable. This is interesting, because not only is Ammianus emphasising the *dangers* of the situation, but he is also emphasising that Julian could overcome them. The description of the elephants focuses not on their destructive abilities in warfare, which is

⁴³ “The only objects which Ammianus Marcellinus likes less than the Persians are elephants.” Thompson (1947), 12, n.3.

⁴⁴ (2005), 28).

how Vegetius' section dealing⁴⁵ with them is structured, but instead on their appearance: their great size and the loud sounds that they make.

There is a considerable body of scholarly criticism that focuses on the subject of Ammianus' use of the visual element. Auerbach proposed the view that Ammianus' style, "both in diction and syntax, is overrefined and exaggeratedly sensory"⁴⁶. For Auerbach, Ammianus' work has an air of the grotesque, the stately language of historiography taken to the extreme and made to depict a world that it itself "like a bad dream". Roberts (1988) took the view that the visual style acts both to distort the broad image, instead focusing on the specific, and that it nonetheless allows the author to depict general truths. Meanwhile, MacMullen, as discussed above, noted⁴⁷ the fascination that both Ammianus and Romans in general had for the visual impact of the Persian style of armour. This body of scholarship has tended to discuss the visual style in combination with other late antique authors, and draw links between them, noting a 'late antique style'. I would add to this the fact that Ammianus is using his visual style to draw attention specifically to those things that were dangerous during the expedition. Consider how Ammianus uses the dust cloud, a visual element, to close book 24 amidst a rise in tensions and drama. This is a gripping section of the narrative, redolent in danger and rising tension, and it is channelled by the visual element. What happens next is driven entirely by visual imagery and by a powerful sensation of fear and danger.

Et hanc quidem noctem nullo siderum fulgore splendentem, ut solet in artis rebus et dubiis, exegimus, nec sedere quoquam auso, nec flectere in quietem lumina prae timore. Ubi vero primum dies inclaruit, radiantes loricae limbis circumdatae ferreis, et corusci thoraces, longe perspecti, adesse regis copias indicabant. (25.1.1)

And we passed this night, lit by the light of no stars, as always in doubtful and dangerous circumstances, without anyone daring to sit down nor close their eyes on account of their fear. At the very moment when day dawned, the shining armour, bound around with iron bands, and glinting breastplates indicated the presence of the king's army, seen from far away.

⁴⁵ *Epitoma de rei Militaris*, 3.22.

⁴⁶ Auerbach, (1953), 59.

⁴⁷ (1990), 86.

Between the doubt, the fear, the gloom and then the sudden glinting of the enemy, it seems clear that Ammianus wanted to unite the visual and the emotional ranges of his work here, and to utilise the first to drive the second. The Persians are consistently depicted as a *frightening* foe, one that posed a great danger to the Roman army. The way that Ammianus does this is by showing the reader the dread and impressive aspect of the Persian military, rather than by describing how the Persians lined their forces up, or indicating which precise military units advance and in what matter.

Another way in which Ammianus emphasises the difficulty of the campaign is through stressing the environment. Throughout the narrative the Roman army is faced with broken dykes, with fast-flowing rivers, and with threats from Persian troops stationed on the other side of them. This is foreshadowed in the way that his geographical description of the Persian Empire features such a great focus upon the rivers of the empire, taking care to note their presence in each province. While this is undoubtedly due in part to following the forms of ethnographic digressions, his subsequent narrative demonstrates a considerable preoccupation with crossing water bodies. This is undoubtedly reflective of the nature of warfare in Mesopotamia, a region of the world whose very name demonstrates the terrain. However, we should bear in mind the sheer emphasis placed upon it in Ammianus – and the way, already noted, that his autopsy focuses upon the danger presented by crossing rivers.

As an interesting addition to this theme, although not one that is focused directly on the Persians, is the way in which Ammianus depicts the will of Heaven as being opposed to the Persian Expedition. Upon the death of the emperor, while justifying the campaign, he notes that Julian may have achieved success if it was not for the opposition of heaven to him.

Itaque ut orientem pari studio recrearet, adortus est Persas, triumphum exinde relaturus, et cognomentum, si consiliis eius et factis illustribus decreta caelestia congruissent.

And in order to revive the orient with equal zeal, he attacked Persia, and would have brought back a triumph and a surname, if the plans of heaven had been congruent with his plans and illustrious deeds.

This is discussed by den Boeft *et al.*, who note⁴⁸ that Julian's failure to heed the oracles stands in the way of Ammianus' view here. This logical issue aside, Ammianus explicitly depicts the expedition as owing at least part of its failure to the dictates of Heaven. Meanwhile, Julian himself is praised while his failure to conquer Persia is minimised.

Taking these elements together, the reader is presented with a picture of Persia that, in part, focuses on the dangers and difficulties. This image is tailored to demonstrate that it was an impossible task and that thus the emperor's failure is exculpated. The Persians possess cavalry that cause fear – even the emperor is concerned about their prowess on the plains – and their elephants are objects of pure terror even to the narrator. The narrative is shaped in part to depict a slowly growing swell of panic among the troops. Even the will of heaven is opposed to the campaign. Though not all of these elements directly involve the Persians, they do demonstrate that the portrayal of the Persians is at least in part driven by the desire to exculpate the emperor Julian.

⁴⁸ (2005), 167.

PERSIANS AS DESERVING OF DESTRUCTION

One striking moment in the narrative of the expedition comes in the aftermath of a battle, when we are told that the Romans are “trampling on the overthrown bodies of their foes, our soldiers, still dripping with blood righteously shed”⁴⁹. This comment, along with others in the *Res Gestae*, indicate to the reader that the invasion of Persia was somehow a ‘correct’ thing to do, even if it is never quite described as *fas*.⁵⁰ But the sentiment goes beyond merely accepting the invasion as allowable, for we see clear indications that Ammianus thinks that the Persians are appropriate targets of Roman violence and aggression. This point shall now be considered and the role that it played in the portrayal of the Persians.

Ammianus might with some understatement be described as drawing upon references to the past in his work. During the Persian Expedition, we in particular find him calling back to both the Trojan War and to the Persian Wars, periods of obvious relevance for his subject matter. For example, Julian’s fleet is explicitly compared to that of Xerxes (*Xerxis illius potentissimi regis instar, classis advenit...*, 23.3.9). The Roman troops advance using the ‘Spartan step’ (*velut pedis anapaesti praecincentibus modulis*, 24.6.10), a classical allusion easily understood as centred on the Persian Wars.⁵¹ But it is worth noting that these references are not without ideological consequence. The Persian Wars, quite apart from involving Herodotus and his legacy, were universally accepted in the Greco-Roman world⁵² as one in which the Greeks were the side ‘in the right’. By making references or comparisons, there is a certain ideological glow that will transfer from the Greek heroes of the wars onto the Roman soldiers of the (narrative) present. In addition, Ammianus uses archaic terms such as *Media* and *Medes* to describe the Persian empire.⁵³ These anachronistic terms refer more properly to the Achaemenid Empire, and they naturally lean the reader towards thinking of the invading Romans as standing in for the Macedonians under Alexander, who destroyed the Achaemenid Empire.

⁴⁹ RG 24.6.15.

⁵⁰ The Persians are described as *nefas* at one point, however: 25.8.4.

⁵¹ Rolfe (1982) explains this as a reference to the metre of the music used by Spartan forces in their marches.

⁵² And indeed in the modern western world.

⁵³ *Mediae*, 23.3.5; *Medes*, 25.4.13, 25.7.12.

A clear demonstration of this can be seen in the battle narrative before Ctesiphon. Describing the glorious victory, Ammianus exults:

Sonent Hectoreas poetae veteres pugnas, fortitudinem Thessali ducis extollant, longae loquantur aetates Sophanem et Aminiam et Callimachum et Cynaegirum, Medicorum egregia culmina illa bellorum: non minus illo die quorundam ex nostris inclaruisse virtutem, omnium confessione monstratur. (24.6.14)

Let poets sing of Hector's ancient battles, let them extoll the strength of the Thessalian warlord, let long ages speak of Sophanes and Aminias and Callimachus and Cynaegirus, those leading lights of the Persian Wars: for on that day shone forth our soldiers' bravery, not at all inferior to those, as demonstrated by the testimony of all.

Quite apart from the Homeric allusion, we have here a list of heroic Greeks, the 'leading figures of the Median wars', equated with the victorious Romans. Note how explicitly the comparison is made here. The Roman soldiers of this campaign are *as excellent* as the Greeks who resisted Persia. The ideological implications are clear: the heroes who fought against the Persians were virtuous, the Romans are also virtuous. By equating the two in this way, there is implicitly another connection: that their wars shared not only the same enemy, but also the same righteousness.

An interesting adjunct to this is the way that Ammianus presents the Sasanians as equivalent to the Punic adversaries of Republican Rome. While describing the elephants at Ctesiphon, Ammianus relates this story:

Exploratum est enim aliquando ab Hasdrubale Hannibalis fratre, ita citius vitam huius modi adimi beluarum. (25.1.15)

For long ago Hannibal's brother Hasdrubal discovered that in this way the life of beasts of this kind could be quickly ended.

This is a potent ideological association for the Roman audience, as Hannibal was famed as the greatest enemy of Rome⁵⁴. By placing the Persians even by implication as Punic, Ammianus is

⁵⁴ Though modern readers may be more inclined to regard the greatest enemy of Rome to be 'the Romans'.

suggesting that to destroy Persia is an essentially good act. But is there any other evidence for *Persia delenda est*?

During Julian's speech to his troops,⁵⁵ he commands them to destroy Persia:

Abolenda nobis natio molestissima, cuius in gladiis nondum nostrae propinquitatis exaruit cruore. (23.5.20)

We must destroy this most malevolent nation, whose swords yet drip with the blood of our countrymen.

He then relates how the ancient Republic of Rome had utterly eradicated certain of its enemies who had threatened its survival: Veii, Numantia – and Carthage. Earlier in his speech he had emphasised that the army was invading Persia in order to make the Roman world safe. This speech is, thus, an explicit statement about the fact that the Persians were acceptable targets. Delivered by the protagonist of the Persian Expedition narrative, there is no clearer exposition within the *Res Gestae* of the ideological underpinnings of this war. Coming near the start of the expedition narrative, Julian's speech helps to set the tone for the portrayal of Persians that will follow.

It has been noted⁵⁶ that Ammianus never himself describes the Persians using an animal simile, unlike many other peoples and groups such as Gauls, Germans, Saracens, Christians. But this does not hold true for his hero Julian, who decides to boost the morale of the army by parading some half-starved Persian captives. He exclaims to his troops:

"En" inquit "quos Matria ista pectora viros existimant, deformes illuvie capellas et taetras, utque crebri docuerunt eventus, antequam manus conferant abiectis armis vertentes semet in Fugam." (24.8.1)

"Look", he said, "at those whom your warrior hearts thought were men: they are deformed, dirty and loathsome goats, and as events have often proved, before the lines meet they turn their backs, drop their weapons and flee."

⁵⁵ RG 23.5.16-23.

⁵⁶ Barnes, (1998), 110; though he does note that the Romans and Persians are shown themselves trading animal insults.

So the protagonist of the narrative calls the Persians goats and cowards. It is tempting to see here an intra-textual reference to Ammianus' own words, when he earlier described the Persians as having goat-like eyes,⁵⁷ but in either case it is clear that the Emperor is fostering the view of the Persians as animalistic, contemptuous foes. This is certainly not surprising for the general of an army in difficulties. However it is perhaps more surprising for the *character* Julian – the figure that Ammianus weaves throughout the narrative until his death. Ammianus, whose narrative leads up to the death of Julian as a focal point, rarely misses an opportunity to show us how his hero handled a situation or demonstrated an admirable quality.⁵⁸ Presumably the emperor must have made many speeches and directed many meetings, and yet the narrative shows only a few instances of his doing so. So, as when Thucydides chooses to show us the Funeral Oration of Pericles, we have to consider what led him to choose this one particular occasion. The answer must be that Ammianus offers up those speeches, which were designed for the greatest economy – the most illustrative examples and the most important utterances. But why does Ammianus show the reader this speech – and why goats, of all things? Perhaps the opportunity to make a quiet allusion to other historiographical accounts of Persian invasions was tempting.⁵⁹ But more than that: it combines the consistent portrayal of the Persians as appropriate victims with the derogatory animal comparisons that Ammianus himself refrains from.

Ammianus develops the idea that the Persians were an appropriate target of Roman aggression by means of showing the reader their moral failings. During the narrative of the Persian Expedition, the Romans' opponents are commonly shown to act in an unheroic way, exemplifying vices. The most obvious example is during the negotiations between Sapor and Jovian, seeking to end hostilities. The Roman army was in difficulties with supplies, and this clearly impacted Jovian's bargaining position,

⁵⁷ RG 23.6.75, *caprinis oculis torvi*.

⁵⁸ For example: he is immune to the terror caused by elephants, he rejects taking beautiful female captives for his own, he shows mercy, and he dies a philosopher's death.

⁵⁹ Xenophon, *Agésilas*, i. 28, shows us a general parading Persian prisoners in front of his army. This was also a compelling comparison to make, as Agesilaus was a Greek monarch who saw military success against the Persians.

as the Persians were able to achieve a very favourable outcome. Ammianus bitterly condemns the Persians and their treaty:

Et pax specie humanitatis indulta, in perniciem est versa multorum [...] rapti a Saracenis vel Persis, quos (ut diximus paulo ante), exturbavere Germani, caedeantur ut pecora, vel longius amendati sunt venundandi. (25.8.1)

And this peace, granted with a facade of humanity, turned into the death of many [...] seized by the Saracens or Persians, who (as I mentioned previously) the German troops had scattered, slaughtered like cattle, or taken far away to be sold into slavery.

These are strong words of condemnation, and are not the only time that Ammianus speaks in this way. A little later, he describes the Persians attempting to follow the Roman army:

Persas pontem iungere procul e nostro conspectu, ut post firmatam pacem et foedera, sopitis belli turbinibus, incuriosius gradientes aegros et animalia peterent, diu defatigata, verum cum se proditos advertissent, a conatu nefario destiterunt. (25.8.4)

[We learned that] the Persians were building a bridge out of sight, so that after peace and pact had been signed, with the clamour of war halted, they could attack our men wandering listlessly, the wounded, and our animals fatigued by the passing of time. But when they learned that they had been discovered, they desisted from their unspeakable attempt.

The word *nefarius* makes a potent appearance here, serving to illustrate in one word the author's feelings on this action of the Persians. But what are these portrayals doing? Let us turn away from the Persians in victory, and look at their actions as the Roman army advanced.

corpora vidit suffixa patibulis multa necessitudinum eius, quem prodisse civitatem Pirisaboram rettulimus supra. (24.5.3)

He saw impaled on gibbets many bodies of the relatives of the man who had handed over the city of Pirisabora, as related above.

These people, killed by the Persian state in response to their kinsman surrendering Pirisabora, represent in one very brief moment Persian injustice. Ammianus had already mentioned this trait of the Persian legal code in his digression upon the Persian Empire:

Leges apud eos impendio formidatae, inter quas diritate exsuperant latae contra ingratos et desertores, et abominandae aliae per quas ob noxam unius, omnis propinquititas perit. (23.6.81)

Their laws are greatly feared, and those which are most feared are those concerning ingrates and traitors, and other abhorrent ones are those which punish by death all the relatives of one man for a crime that he committed.

This corresponds with the images that we see in Herodotus of tyrannical rulers butchering entire families.⁶⁰ But an intriguing note is introduced in the very next sentence: Nabdates, the man whom Julian's clemency had saved during the sack of Maiozamalcha, is now burned alive by Julian. The reason given for this is twofold: he had failed to deliver the city as promised, but had resisted fiercely, and he had insulted Hormisdas repeatedly. The first point is somewhat confusing – if he was being killed for this, why wait so long? It seems that Julian's goodwill towards Nabdates was not very high to begin with, and that his insults towards Hormisdas (an officer in the Roman army, as well as a traitor to Persia) were too much for the Emperor. The way that Ammianus has written this little vignette is designed to ensure that Nabdates, though the actual victim of the story, is considered to be getting his just deserts. Ammianus has vilified Nabdates within this story, by giving two reasons for the death, and by emphasising the amount of insulting that did, both by finishing the story with it, and by powerful vocabulary:

proruperat insolentiae, ut Ormisdam laceraret omnibus probris (24.5.4)

he broke out into insolence, so that he harassed Hormisdas with all kinds of insults

In short, Nabdates earned his own horrible death by his unjust and foolish actions. If a single man may deserve his death by his unjust acts, then might not a whole nation deserve destruction for being unjust? In addition there are these words from the formal speech that Julian delivers after crossing over the Abora river:

Sciens quod si remanserit usquam, exsectis cruribus relinquetur (23.5.21)

Knowing that if any were left behind, he would have his legs cut off [i.e. hamstrung]

⁶⁰ For example, Xerxes' killing of Pythius' son, *Histories* 7.39.

It seems clear that Ammianus is attempting to depict the Persians in a way that justifies hostile action towards them. They are cruel, they are worthy of contempt: this is the message that the Persian Expedition's depiction of the Persians fosters.

By examining the narrative and the way that it presents the Persians, it is apparent that there is a consistent theme in the Expedition narrative to depict them as an appropriate target of conquest. This is achieved through a number of ways: the presentation of the Romans as the equivalent of either their own ancestors or the Greeks who fought at Marathon, a focus on the injustice of the Persians, and by using the person of the emperor to elucidate not only that they can be conquered but that they should be conquered. This last point is very important. By making such a strong emphasis on the necessity of conquering Persia, Ammianus directs the reader to consider the worthiness of the expedition as a whole. Just as we earlier saw how his portrayal of the Persian Empire and its military resources sought to emphasise how difficult the expedition was, here we see that his portrayal of the Persians and their actions often seeks to demonstrate that they were rightful victims of aggression. In the continuing dialogue with the legacy of the expedition that this section of the *Res Gestae* represents, we have the author seeking to persuade the reader of the correctness of the decision to launch the expedition in the first place. Perhaps this was not the argument that needed to be made (den Boeft *et al.* offer the salient point that "Even those who had opposed Julian at the beginning of the campaign had not done so because they thought that the campaign was unjustified") but it is clearly the argument that the Persians in the *Res Gestae* are made to fulfil.

THE TREATY

The conclusion of the Persian Expedition saw a Roman army retreat in ignominy, and the new Emperor, Jovian, forced to sign a treaty handing over strongholds and a significant tract of land. This was the first occasion in a very long time that the Romans had been forced to hand over terrain, and it was taken as an outright disaster by our contemporary sources. But upon examining Ammianus' account, the reader is presented with a curious image of this traumatic moment. The presentation of the treaty, and its implementation, in the narrative helps to form a discourse on two separate strands. Firstly, it depicts Roman virtues and Persian malice in a way that suggests a lesson to be taken away. Secondly, it depicts the expedition's failure as entirely the fault of Jovian, even minimising the Persian role, and thus exculpates Julian once more.

During the narrative that closes the Persian Expedition, Ammianus offers many comments regarding the quality of the treaty that is offered by the Persians. It is a *ignobili decreto firmato*;⁶¹ den Boeft *et al.* note⁶² that this word is more appropriately applied to the ruling of a magistrate. It contains clauses *exitiale [...] et impium*, words hardly suited for an equitable treaty. It provided a peace *specie humanitatis indulta*, by which the author's contempt can be easily detected. So we can see that Ammianus regards the treaty as good for nothing. His narrative suggests that the terms that the Persians offered were not acceptable to the Romans, and yet they were accepted anyway.

The emphasis upon moral quality in the above descriptions - impious, merciful, ignoble - suggests to us that we should consider the treaty as indicative of the Persian character. The opportunity for negotiation, offered to the Romans at a time of need, is at first presented as a gift from god,⁶³ suggesting that Ammianus did not regard the treaty itself as a bad thing *per se*. But for a gift from god to be subverted - as is quickly made apparent by the use of delaying tactics (not explicitly spelled out, but clearly part of the Persian strategy) and the way that Ammianus describes Sapor as

⁶¹ RG 25.7.13.

⁶² (2005), 244.

⁶³ RG 25.7.5.

negotiating *obstinatius*. The Persians have shown their true colours: instead of negotiating in good faith, they take advantage of the Romans and abuse the situation. This feeds back into the general portrayal of the Persians as being of inferior moral character, as described above. Indeed, the most telling moment in this portrayal of the Persian negotiations is the way that Ammianus condemns the *conatu nefario* of crossing the river in violation of the treaty. The treaty, despite containing *impium* clauses, is a sacred item having been sworn into existence with religious oaths by both sides and the exchange of (not explicitly stated as such) hostages. Even after achieving their wretched treaty, Ammianus seems to say, the Persians acted like criminals. In this way we can see the Persians themselves condemned.

And in this whole image, of course, the Romans are the victims. It is they who are the victims of the *conatu*, they whom the *impium* clauses bind, they who are insulted by the *specie indulta*, and they who are being forced to accept a treaty more akin to a magistrate's ruling. In such a situation as this - where the demands and concerns of victim and victor are presented in an interpolated format - we cannot read condemnation of one without considering if praise of the other is to be seen. The Romans abandon Nisibis to the Persians, with Jovian not only following the terms of the treaty but explicitly demonstrating his virtue by maintaining the sanctity of his oath.⁶⁴ The Romans, though in no way the central figures of this exchange, nevertheless are shown to have greater virtue than the Persians who oppress them.

The central impression left by the narrative of the treaty is the fact that Jovian failed in his duty. The narrative is shaped to make a mockery of Jovian's legitimacy.⁶⁵ Ammianus explicitly condemns him for failing to march towards Roman territory when first approached by Persian envoys, instead losing time to the negotiations.⁶⁶ He furthermore twice⁶⁷ rails against the emperor's decision to hand over Roman territory, in addition to the speech by Sabinus which drew a powerful contrast between

⁶⁴ *principe permittente Romano*, RG 25.9.1, 25.9.4.

⁶⁵ Kelly (2009), 97.

⁶⁶ RG 25.7.8.

⁶⁷ RG 25.7.10 and 25.8.7.

Jovian and Constantius. By placing emphasis upon the treaty itself, and focusing upon how cruel the Persians were to demand it and how weak-minded Jovian was to accept it, Ammianus is attempting to divert criticism away from Julian.

Through examination of the way that Ammianus has presented the negotiations surrounding the treaty of 363 AD, the purpose behind this presentation can be seen. As discussed above, Ammianus was primarily motivated by the desire to salvage the reputation of his hero Julian, and the narrative here is clearly aimed towards this end. The Persians are depicted as capricious and cruel in victory, showing again why it was a morally good thing to try to prevent them from launching attacks on Rome. Thus is Julian's purpose given favourable light. Furthermore by shifting the focus of the end of the Persian Expedition onto Jovian's disastrous treaty, Julian's failure to succeed in Persia is quietly downplayed. Indeed, the description⁶⁸ of Sapor's state of mind immediately prior to the dispatching of envoys suggests strongly that the Romans actually had the upper hand, and that Jovian thus handed victory to the Persians. In short, the way that the treaty is presented helps to aid the themes that Ammianus' depiction of the Persians had already been doing.

⁶⁸ RG 25.7.1-3.

PERSIANS AS STRANGE

Ut in Perside, ubi feminarum pulcritudo excellit (24.4.27)

As in Persia, where the beauty of the women is exceptional

et ursos, ut sunt Persici, ultra omnem rabiem saevientes (24.5.2)

and the bears, as is customary in Persia, are savage beyond all ferocity

The Persian women are beautiful, the Persian bears are savage. These comments by the author act to make an explicit statement of differentiation: that the Persian women and bears are distinct from the Roman varieties. Indeed, the *Res Gestae* makes it apparent that in many way the Persians are very different from the Romans. Ammianus depicts the Persians as 'exotic': this does not mean that the Persians were actually unknown or even particularly strange to the Romans at this time; instead it describes the way that Ammianus' portrayal rests upon the depiction of the Persians as strange or different. In this discussion, the way in which this stance is developed by the author shall be considered, focusing first upon the lengthy digression concerning the Persian Empire. Then it shall examine the way in which Ammianus describes the Persians' appearance, as well as how the description of their culture is structured. Finally, it shall briefly examine the *topos* of Persian wealth as it appears in the *Res Gestae*.

The most obvious point to be made is the importance given to the land of Persia by the size and placement of the digression about it. Ammianus is well noted for his frequent digressions, but the one on Persia is easily the longest in the extant *Res Gestae*.⁶⁹ Taking the time to discuss not only the character of the people, but also the provinces of the empire and even some of its distant eastern neighbours, Ammianus spares no effort in his exertion here. The subject matter of the expedition clearly called for some description of the Persian Empire, but it is hard to justify the scale of the digression with the requirements of the expedition itself. Taking up more than half of book 23,

⁶⁹ Emmett (1981), 28.

the digression is so long that not only does it feature multiple sub-digressions (*inter alia* upon the Magi), but it takes up nearly a fifth of the entire Persian Expedition narrative. The narrator presents himself almost passively:

Res adigit huc prolapsa ut in excessu celeri situm monstrare Persidis, descriptionibus gentium curiose digestis, in quibus aegre vera dixere paucissimi. (23.6.1)

The situation compels that this be laid out, so that in rapid haste I demonstrate the landscape of Persia, with a description of the peoples carefully laid out, things which have only rarely been said, and then with scant truthfulness.

Ammianus is almost the object of the first clause, as the situation demands that he start this exposition. It is a way of emphasising just how imposing the subject matter is: the author is unable to control his own narrative, but must instead yield to the need to begin the digression. According to Emmett,⁷⁰ the promise here to use haste in describing the Persian Empire is not a lie on Ammianus' part. The promise of brevity that Ammianus here, as elsewhere, makes is not false: he considers the digression to be appropriate in length for the subject matter. The Persian Empire is a very important topic, and so requires a very lengthy digression.

But there is one odd thing - the position of the digression. It begins immediately after Ammianus relates the reception of Julian's speech to the troops, interrupting the narrative and closing the rest of book 23. This placement – which severely disrupts the narrative⁷¹ - places a very strong emphasis upon the importance of the digression, just as its very considerable length does.

At the end of the digression, the narrative immediately resumes, with no mention of the vast stretch of material that the reader has just finished:

Post exploratam alacritatem exercitus, uno parique ardore impretrabilem principem superari non posse... (24.1.1)

⁷⁰ (1981), 28.

⁷¹ Already disrupted by the way that Ammianus relocates the speech of Julian and the sighting of Gordian's tomb: see Matthews (1989), 131.

After the army's eagerness had been tested, who with one and equal ardour exclaimed that the emperor who achieved so many things couldn't be overcome...

Emmett notes⁷² that only thirty one percent of digressions within Ammianus have a conclusion. But it is notable just how sharp and abrupt the change in flow actually is. By comparison, Ammianus finishes the nearby digression upon siege works with these words:

Nunc ad rerum ordinem revertamur. (23.4.15)

Now let us return to the account of what happened.

This is a neat signposting of his narrative flow. At the Persian Expedition we have nothing more than an immediate resumption of the narrative: if the digression were removed in its entirety, then the reader would have no clues that it existed from the nearby text.

What are we to make by this? It is tempting to imagine that this digression was composed in isolation from the main body of the text, and was inserted here – at the end of book twenty four – in order to give it greater emphasis. But beyond speculation, the importance of this digression is apparent from the ways that Ammianus uses narrative techniques to emphasise its significance. Yet that importance cannot solely rest upon the needs of the narrative: as Matthews notes,⁷³ the digression is far excessive in its scale and degree for what is required to illustrate the progress and actions of the Expedition. The answer is that the digression was considered to be important in its own right. Ammianus, in the context of the Persian Expedition, was seeking to emphasise the fact that Persia was large and unknown, even if his digression owes much to previous ethnographic descriptions. By making his largest digression one that focuses upon the Persians, and by allowing that digression to force its way into the narrative in such a striking and powerful way, Ammianus makes sure that the reader is left with a powerful sensation of the fact that Persia is *strange*: it is so strange that it requires him to describe it at such great extent. Just as the reader of Herodotus is left

⁷² (1981), 30.

⁷³ (1989), 111.

to wonder whether it is a history of Greece or one of Egypt, after the third book of his *Histories*, so the reader of Ammianus might be in doubt as to the central topic of this part of the *Res Gestae*.

Ammianus' observation that Persian women were beautiful – as quoted above – is interesting not only for the rare concern in a Latin author for the female half of the population, but also because of the way that it seeks to state that this beauty is standard: women in Persia are [all] beautiful: the comment makes the fabulous every day and mundane. We might note that in his ethnographic digression upon the Persians there was no mention of this standard quality. There is, however, a detailed description given of Persian clothing and jewellery, so detailed that it inspires a further digression upon the origin and source of pearls. As in the way that Ammianus shows the fearsomeness of the Persian military, he focuses upon the visual aspects of Persian culture to show its exotic nature. In comparison to Roman togas and tunics, Persian varicoloured clothing was decidedly striking and distinctive. Ammianus decides to emphasise his description: he places it last in his discussion of the Persian people, he uses striking visual elements (e.g. *lumine colorum fulgentibus vario*, 23.6.84) to build his description, and he suggests that his own experience led to the description (thus invoking the device of autopsy to strengthen his authorial authority here). To finish, he caps all of this effort off by immediately moving onto a similar digression on the subject of pearls, which keeps the audience's attention upon the same subject.

Furthermore, the description of the customs and mores of the Persians can be seen to be structured to emphasise their exoticness. To briefly demonstrate the structure of his description of the Persian people:

| Place | Contents |
|---------|---|
| 23.6.75 | Physical description of the Persians |
| 23.6.76 | Polygamy and vices |
| 23.6.77 | Their eating habits, differed from Roman |
| 23.6.78 | Superstition |
| 23.6.79 | Don't pass water in public |
| 23.6.80 | Their oriental swagger, their manner of speaking, prohibition of speaking during dining |
| 23.6.81 | Severity of their laws |
| 23.6.82 | The fiction of judges sitting on skins |
| 23.6.83 | Their military |
| 23.6.84 | Description of their clothing and jewellery |

It is intriguing that visual elements book-end this section, fitting in with Ammianus' strongly visual style. We should not be surprised that Ammianus focuses on things that differ from the Romans; he perhaps did not consider areas of commonality to be of interest to his audience. However he can be seen to focus first on the most exotic elements in his description. He clearly intends to impress and amaze his readers, for example by showing on two separate occasions the way in which Persian and Roman banquets differ, both the style of eating and the atmosphere of the dinner. Their marriage laws – which show massive divergence from Greco-Roman practice – are the first part of their culture to receive detailed analysis. If we expected this section to merely discuss things relevant to his Expedition narrative, we might expect the military to be more prominently placed. Instead Ammianus demonstrates a clear interest in discussing those parts of Persian culture that are visually striking and most extremely divergent from traditional Roman *mores*. The presentation of the Persians here is framed in a ring-like structure through the focus on physical qualities that begin and end the description. This narrative shape further emphasises those physical descriptions. Their appearance, their everyday actions, the way that they eat; these visual elements are given

preference over the military description and focus that we might expect from the subject matter of this part of the *Res Gestae*, and so offer an indicator of the author's intent. Ammianus has focused his description quite explicitly upon those things which are most immediately *different*.

Another noteworthy element in Ammianus' description of the Persian Empire is his emphasis upon its riches. When the emperor Julian is seeking to calm the indignation of the soldiers, angry at an unappealing donative, he dwells upon this point.

"En" inquit "Persae, circumfluentes rerum omnium copiis: ditare vos poterit opimitas gentis, si unum spirantibus animis fortiter fecerimus. (24.3.4)

"Look", he says, "at Persia, overflowing with riches of all kinds; the wealth of this race could enrich you, if we bravely do this one deed with expressed courage.

Note the way that Julian phrases this: the very land itself is rich, evidence of the future prosperity of the Roman troops. They will become rich by the very act of invading Persia. The narrative shows us the Roman armies coming across two *paradisoi*,⁷⁴ garden retreats for the Persian monarchs, whose palaces inspire wonder among the Roman troops. Furthermore, the narrator is clear to emphasise to the reader just how full and overflowing these paradises are: the description of Roman troops eagerly slaughtering the Persian animals, which I would suggest is evocative of a desire to perform the same slaughter on the Persian people themselves, is itself an elaborate display of the fabulous allure of the Persians.

This discussion of the ways that Ammianus focuses on the differences between Persian and Roman would be incomplete without an explanation of why he does so. The reason for this focus lies within the figure of Julian himself, the hero of the narrative. It has been shown elsewhere in this chapter how Ammianus' portrayal of the Persians is heavily predicated by the need to justify Julian to his readers. Here, in this chapter which focuses more upon the Persians themselves than upon the Roman actions within Persia, that Julian focus still exists. For even in the way that Ammianus

⁷⁴ 24.5.1, 24.6.3.

presents the most basic information about the Persians – their vices, their customs, their style of dress – the underlying purpose leads back to Julian. Ammianus sought to justify the invasion of Persia to his readers, and part of that process included the shaping of the image of Julian himself to match. Julian rose to prominence by fighting against barbarians in Gaul and Germany, and had managed to emerge from the civil war with his hands relatively clean of Roman blood. Now, the narrative shows us, Julian is enacting the proper course of action for an *imperator*; he is invading a foreign people. This distinguishes him from the likes of Constantius and Constantine, who were primarily victorious over internal enemies. To further make this distinction, Ammianus shapes the portrayal of the Persians to highlight the way in which they are definitely *not* Romans. He makes them other, different, strange. Even if the Persians had ceased to be exotic in and of themselves by this time, Ammianus' narrative seeks to establish their strangeness as a primary characteristic. He does this by the universalization across their civilisation of extraordinary elements – their beautiful women, their clothes, their strange dinner manners. He uses an intensely visual style in doing so, focusing upon their jewellery and art, perhaps because this more powerfully reinforces in the readers' mind that otherness. And finally, Ammianus demonstrates to us their wealth, and in so doing the image of Julian is further bolstered; for the Persians, as a rich nation, are the perfect targets of Roman aggression. As the man who sought to conquer this strange and rich people, Julian is thus acting as the perfect emperor. The portrayal of the Persians, rather than tailoring itself to the requirements of the expedition narrative, takes the effort to build this strange and exotic image in order to construct this implicit view of the emperor's actions. Like so much else in the Persian Expedition narrative, the sections that deal with the Persians ultimately reflect not, as it turns out, on the Persians themselves; but on the emperor who tried to conquer them.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this chapter, the intention has been to examine not only *how* Ammianus wrote about the Persians but also *why* he chose to depict the Persians in those ways. Beginning with a discussion of methods, it moved on to his portrayal of the Persians. We shall now draw these disparate threads together, and see what the cohesive picture thus created displays.

The Persians were a part of the authorial toolkit available to Ammianus. The first technique considered was that of autopsy, or first person narrative. The historian himself is apparent in the Persian Expedition, and he functions more importantly for theme and for canonical status than he does for truthfulness. By his usage of autopsy, Ammianus strongly emphasises three particular themes: the past, exoticism, and danger. We shall return to these in a moment.

For the second section of this chapter, the technique of allusion was considered at length. This was concerned with whether Ammianus utilised the motif of the Persians in an independent fashion. That is, does his portrayal of the Persians reflect his own opinions and purposes? By examining the way that Ammianus interacted with the great authors of the past, through his allusions, it has been shown that he was capable of modifying and correcting minor elements in the motif. But more than that, the discussion of the way that he modified, changed and made surprising additions to the Persian motif has demonstrated that his utilisation of the motif was driven by his own purposes.

The central argument of this chapter is that the presentation of the Persians within the *Res Gestae's* Persian Expedition is primarily directed towards repairing the reputation of the Emperor Julian. The Persians within the expedition demonstrate that the invasion was worthwhile, through their malice and cruelty which I have described as making them “deserving of destruction”. In essence, Persia is *natio molestissima*, and so the attempt to eradicate them was entirely acceptable. Furthermore the dangers and difficulties faced by the Roman army are emphasised, in such a way as

to shift the blame for defeat away from Julian. This strategy is continued by the way that Ammianus relates the signing of the treaty ending hostilities, where we see that Persian malice and Jovian's incompetence combined to rob the Roman army of its rightful victory. These three themes correspond nicely with the theme of danger which we noted in the section on autopsy, as Ammianus-the-soldier is himself presented with many of the dangerous obstacles that ultimately conspired against Julian's glorious victory.

Even the emphasis on the strangeness of the Persians can be seen as designed to reflect upon Julian's actions. Ammianus creates an image of Julian as the traditional Roman conqueror in part by this approach in depicting the Persians. Similarly to the theme of appropriate victims, the narrative shows the Persians as both rich – thus a good target for aggression – but also so divergent from Roman customs that they serve to accentuate Julian's campaign as definitively not a civil war. In short, their strangeness serves to provide an unspoken contrast with the all-too-familiar civil opponents of recent emperors.

Through these disparate themes, it may seem that the *Res Gestae* has rather more to say about Julian than it does about the Persians. This would not be entirely correct. The narrative gives a great deal of prominence to its digression upon the Persian Empire, and Ammianus is at pains to provide striking descriptions of the Persian military. But it is undeniably true that this section of Ammianus' work is focused on the figure of Julian, who serves as the hero and protagonist of this part of the narrative, and that as a result all other themes are drawn into that orbit. By giving his work this powerful central force, the Persians are formed into a mirror, reflecting Julian and the Roman effort to invade Persia. Thus, although the *Res Gestae* seemingly tells us about the Persians, in reality it tells us about Ammianus' views of Julian and how he sought to protect his image for posterity. In short, we should look at the Persians within the Persian Expedition narrative as embodiments of what Ammianus needed them to be, rather than perhaps as what they were.

PAGAN CHAPTER

The Pagan authors who wrote histories of the 4th century knew that Julian's reign was a critical moment in the change from a pagan to a Christian empire. The Apostate, the last pagan Emperor, Julian occupies a central role in the histories of Zosimus, Eunapius and Festus.⁷⁵ The events surrounding his death in Persia thus provide a stark moment of change and of loss, offering a variety of interesting positions and purposes for the Persians to occupy. Like Ammianus, the pagan authors sought to defend Julian's reputation against his detractors; we will see through this chapter the way that they used the Persians to do so.

The sources that we cover in this chapter are threefold. The *Nea Ekdosis*, the history of Eunapius, survives only in fragments preserved in three Byzantine sources.⁷⁶ It was composed in two editions, the first stridently anti-Christian and the second less so, between 395 and 404AD. This work, which spent fourteen books to continue Dexippus' history down to Eunapius' own day, served as one of the primary sources for Zosimus, who wrote his own *Nea Istoría* in Greek during the 6th century.⁷⁷ Unlike Eunapius', this work has survived in its entirety. Photius, who wrote a commentary upon Eunapius,⁷⁸ describes Zosimus as essentially epitomising Eunapius and other historians, a statement accepted as correct by Rohrbacher.⁷⁹ Combined with the fact that most of his sources have been lost, this often means that we do not know whether Zosimus' stated opinion on some item is truly his own, or that of his source.⁸⁰ The centrepiece of the *New History* is Julian's reign, with the third book

⁷⁵ Eunapius devotes four books of fourteen to Julian's reign (Liebeschuetz (2003), 192), Zosimus his entire third book of five to Julian, Festus two paragraphs of thirty. These are all notably in excess of the space that he would seem to require in pure chronological terms.

⁷⁶ Rohrbacher, (2002), 65: the three sources are two tenth-century collections of excerpts from Historians, the *Excerpta de Sententiis* and the *Excerpta de Legationibus*, as well as the tenth-century encyclopedia the *Suda*.

⁷⁷ Rohrbacher, (2002), 65.

⁷⁸ As well as upon Philostorgius, whom we discuss in a later chapter.

⁷⁹ Rohrbacher, (2002), 66.

⁸⁰ Liebeschuetz (2003), 206-7 discusses the problems with Zosimus, namely his failure to conduct his own research to fill in the gaps in his account. He then disagrees with other scholars, including Paschoud, concerning whether certain statements consist of Eunapius' opinion or Zosimus', which indicates how ambiguous the identity of the author can be in this work. This chapter does not engage with this concept,

of five opening with Julian's appointment as Caesar, and ending with the election of the Emperor Valentinian. The work as a whole covers the imperial period down to 410AD. Zosimus' work, like that of Festus, is of questionable literary and historical value, but nevertheless it represents a sizeable and coherent alternative account to that of Ammianus Marcellinus, especially for the Persian Expedition. Meanwhile Festus' *Breviarium* survives in its entirety. A pamphlet that covers hundreds of years in a handful of pages, it was dedicated to the Emperor Valens, and was written in Latin around 369.⁸¹ It devotes two paragraphs to Julian's life and death.

This chapter examines the three accounts thematically. Firstly, the role played by Julian - in life and death - over the portrayal of the Persians will be briefly noted. Then we will see the way that the authors present Persian riches, palaces and cities as worthy of destruction. The last point of discussion is the presentation of the period between Julian's death and Jovian's return to the Roman Empire, including the circumstances surrounding the signing of the treaty.

instead treating the author of the work to be Zosimus himself, accepting that a more nuanced treatment is beyond the scope of this current chapter.

⁸¹ Rohrbacher, (2002), 60.

JULIAN

A first point to be made about the Persian Expedition in these accounts is the way that Julian is the central hinge upon which the ability of both sides to control the situation revolves. Though the narratives style the Persians as inferior (for example, in their equipment⁸²), these are only exploited by the Romans when they are led by Julian. He is able to capture and burn cities, and rout Persian forces. Once Julian dies, however, the Romans become passive victims of Persian aggression, repeatedly depicted as being outflanked and outmanoeuvred.⁸³ This moment of transition - which these accounts do not signpost, unlike Ammianus' account or the Christian narratives - results in a total change not only in the events of the campaign, but also the way that the Persians are depicted. They become the superior side, and control the events. We will see more of this idea of the Persians' power as integral to their depiction later on in this chapter.

DECADENCE

We now consider the depictions of the Persian culture and empire. The first thing to note is the way that the authors depict the material resources of the Persian Empire. Similar to the Latin *topos* of decadent oriental wealth corrupting the virtuous Romans,⁸⁴ we see Persian opulence depicted in a negative fashion, and assigned the blame for the failure to take Ctesiphon. Eunapius writes:

Ὅτι τοσαύτη ἐν τοῖς προαστείοις Κτησιφώντος ἀφθονία τῶν ἐπιτηδείων ἦν ὥστε τὴν περισσίσαν κίνδυνον τοῖς στρατιώταις φέρειν μήποτε ὑπὸ τρυφῆς διαφθαρήσιν. (Exc. de Sent 22)

That there was such abundance of provisions in the suburbs of Ctesiphon that it carried the abundant danger of the soldiers being destroyed by indulgence.

⁸² Eunapius (Suda Oi 183) and Zosimus 3.18.6.

⁸³ Persians having power over the Romans: Festus 29 (*Et Persae crebris incursionibus nunc a fronte, nunc a tergo, mediorum quoque latera incursantes, iter agminis morarentur*), Zosimus 3.28.4, 3.30.4.

⁸⁴ For example, Sallust *Bellum Catalinae* 2.

The Persian supplies are presented as actually toxic for the morality and fighting spirit of the Roman troops. For Festus, those same supplies were the very reason that the Romans did not capture the city:

Apertas Ctesiphontis portas victor miles intrasset, nisi maior praedarum occasio fuisset quam cura victoriae.

The soldiers would have victoriously entered the city, if the opportunity for plunder had not been greater than their concern for victory.

This is condemnation both of the Roman troops for their misplaced passions and of the richness of Ctesiphon for undermining the troops in the first place. So we see both Eunapius and Festus seizing on the failing to capture Ctesiphon as being somehow linked to Persian wealth. Zosimus, among the many narrative confusions⁸⁵ around section 26, fails to mention Ctesiphon at all once the Roman army arrives at it, instead moving straight on to the burning of the ships and the march inland, and so we cannot compare his view here. However, there are prior moments of luxury in Zosimus that hold great interest. In section 3.20.1, the Romans reach a grove of palm trees, which Julian presents “as a spectacle” (παρέχουσαί τε ὄρᾱν) to his army. The sensation is that Julian is presenting the Persian Empire to his army as an exotic sight, like a collection of riches, one that the Romans can plunder at will. However, at other times we see a division in the way that the spectacles of Persia are divided. The Romans reach two royal constructions, one in Persian style and one built in Roman style.

Τῆς δὲ ἐπὶ τὸ πρόσω πορείας εχόμενος διήκει μὲν καὶ ἕτερα οὐκ ὀνομαστά φρούρια, παραγίνεται δὲ καὶ εἰς περίβολον ὃν βασιλέως θήραν ἐκάλουν· ἣν δέ τι τειχίον χωρίον ἀπειληφὸς ἔνδον πολὺ, δένδρεσι πεφυτευμένον παντοδαποῖς· ἐν τούτῳ θηρίων παντοίων ἐναποκλειόμενα γένη τροφῆς τε οὐκ ἠποροῦντο διὰ τὸ καὶ ταύτην αὐτοῖς ἐπείσάγεσθαι, καὶ παρείχον τῷ βασιλεῖ τοῦ θηρᾶν, ἠνίκα ἂν βουλευθείη, ῥαστώνην. [2] Τοῦτο Ἰουλιανὸς θεασάμενος διαρρήγνυσθαι κατὰ πολλὰ μέρη τὸ τεῖχος ἐπέταττεν, οὗ δὴ γενομένου φεύγοντα παρὰ τῶν στρατιωτῶν τὰ θηρία κατετοξεύετο· ἐνταῦθα που πλησίον γενόμενος βασιλεία εἶδεν εἰς τὸν Ῥωμαϊκὸν μεγαλοπρεπῶς ἐξησκημένα τύπον, καὶ μαθὼν ταῦτα ὑπὸ Ῥωμαίων ὠκοδομηθῆναι κατέλιπεν, οὐ συγχωήσας τοῖς ταξιάρχοις λωβήσασθαι τι τῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς, αἰδοῖ τοῦ Ῥωμαίου λέγεσθαι τοὺς ταῦτα δημιουργήσαντας. (3.23.1-2)

Holding his course, he went through other garrisons not worth mentioning and arrived at an enclosure which is called the king's hunt. Inside this place, which was cut off with a wall, were

⁸⁵ For example, the chronological displacement of events and a narrative so rushed as to be unintelligible. See the commentary within Ridley (2006) for more information.

planted trees of every kind. In this a well-fed stock of all wild animals [dwelled] and they did not lack for fodder, since supplies for them were brought in, and here an easy means of hunting was available for the king, whenever he wanted. [2] Julian, seeing this, ordered the wall to be broken through in many places, and when this had happened the game was shot by the army as it fled through the gaps. Then it happened that nearby he saw a magnificent palace decorated in the Roman style, and having learned that the Romans built it he left it [untouched], and did not allow any of the tribunes to deface it, respecting the fact that Romans reportedly constructed it.

There is a clear juxtaposition between the two edifices, and Zosimus has taken the time to present the reader with Julian's contrasting reaction to them. Unlike the tribunes, who apparently had to be restrained, Julian bases his actions towards the two entirely on their cultural affiliation. The latter 'magnificent' building is preserved and respected thanks to its 'Roman' quality, while the hunting enclosure is destroyed with holes in the walls and the animals slaughtered. Interestingly, Julian did not treat the royal hunting enclosure as worthy of his own attentions, and instead directed the animals to be slaughtered wholesale by his soldiers. So far from respecting the Persian edifice, then, he deliberately subverts its purpose in the process of destroying it. The Persian royal culture stands for the culture of the whole nation in Zosimus' narrative: under attack by the Romans, at threat of destruction, and possessing nothing of worth for Julian. Like the weapons previously discussed, there is a distinction being made here and those Persian items which do not resemble Roman ones are destroyed.

The distinction made between Persian and Roman hints at an ideological refutation of Persian worthiness, one that underlies the entire invasion within these narratives. Within Zosimus, we can see that refutation at work in the way that he depicts the goals and activities of the invading Roman army. As with our other sources, Zosimus' account lacks a definitive explanation for the invasion. We have no explicit description of what Julian was seeking to achieve, nor why the invasion of Persia was conducted at this time.⁸⁶ What we do have is numerous instances within the work that depict the goal of the Roman army as being to *eradicate* the Persian Empire, with emphasis placed

⁸⁶ "Julian's Persian expedition of 363 holds a particular fascination for historians. [...] since so many questions hang over the enterprise. What motivated Julian to launch the expedition? What were his objectives? Why did it end in disaster?" Tougher, (2007), 63.

upon the permanent nature of that destruction. Twice he uses the same concept to describe the total destruction of a city:

ἦν τινα τῶν οἰκούντων ἔρημον εὐρόντες οἱ στρατιῶται σῆτόν τε πολὺν ἐναποκείμενον ἥρπασαν καὶ ἀλῶν πλῆθος οὐ μέτριον, γυναῖκάς τε τὰς ἐγκαταλειφθείσας ἀποσφάξαντες οὕτω κατέσκαψαν ὥστε οἶεσθαι τοὺς ὀρώντας μηδὲ γεγονέναι πόλιν αὐτόθι. [3] Ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς ἀντικρὺ ἡόνος, δι' ἧς ὁ στρατὸς ἐποιεῖτο τὴν πορείαν, πηγὴ τις ἦν ἄσφαλτον ἀνιέῖσα. [3.15.2-3]

The soldiers, finding this city empty of inhabitants, plundered the large amount of grain that was stored there and the measureless quantity of salt. Then, slitting the throats of some women left behind, they so utterly destroyed the city that you couldn't tell by looking that there had been a city there. [3] On the opposite shore, along which the army made its march, there was a certain spring which gushed forth asphalt.

Κατὰ ταῦτα τοῦ φρουρίου κατὰ κράτος ἀλόντος, ἡβηδὸν δὲ πάντων ὅσοι κατὰ τοῦτο ἦσαν ἀναιρεθέντων, ἐκ παραδόξου δὲ ὀλίγων δια-σωθέντων κτημάτων, ἐφ' ἀρπαγὴν ὁ στρατὸς τῶν ἀποκειμένων κτημάτων ἐχώρει· κομισαμένου δὲ ἐκάστου τὸ προσπεσόν, τό τε τεῖχος ἄχρις ἐδάφους προσενεχθεισῶν αὐτῷ πλείστων μηχανῶν κατηνέχθη, καὶ τὰ οἰκήματα πυρὶ τε καὶ ταῖς τῶν στρατιωτῶν χερσὶ κατελύθησαν, οὕτω τε εἰς τὸ μὴ γεγενῆσθαι ποτε δοκεῖν περιέστη. [3.22.7]

The fort having been taken, all of those captured were massacred, from the youth upwards, although a few were preserved by chance. The army went on to plunder the stored possessions of the town. When each man had taken his share, they brought down the walls from their very bases, having brought up huge machinery, and the dwellings were destroyed by fire and by the soldiers' hands, so that it seemed like it had never existed.

The stress laid upon permanent destruction is interesting, because it implies that the Persian cities are simply unfit for use. Instead of capturing them with the intention of conquering the entire nation, Julian instead opts for erasing Persian cities from the map. The way that Zosimus juxtaposes the spring gushing forth asphalt in the first example incites the reader to imagine the city's remains being covered over and blocked from view.

Ἐπιθέμενοι δὲ τοὺς ἐν χερσὶν ἔπαιόν τε καὶ ἐκ τοῦ τείχους ὠθοῦντες διέφθειρον, τοὺς δὲ καὶ διώκοντες παντοδαποῖς θανάτου τρόποις ἀνήρουν, οὔτε γυναικῶν οὔτε παιδῶν ἀπεχόμενοι, πλὴν εἰ μὴ πού γέ τις αἰχμαλώτους αὐτοῖς ἔδοξεν ἔχειν. [3.22.6]

Attacking and striking those in arm's reach, they wiped them out, pushing them off the wall. They pursued and killed them in a variety of ways, sparing neither women nor children, except for those that they intended to take as prisoners for themselves.

This passage, located shortly before the latter example above, shows us a deviation from the standard phrasing (in ancient histories) that ‘the men were killed and the women and children were sold into slavery’; instead we see that the Romans kill all of the inhabitants, save for those whom they desired as captives.⁸⁷ The urge to permanently destroy this inhabitation extends to an extraordinary level of slaughter of its inhabitants. We may compare this to the bland comment that many Persians were captured and killed, when the Romans arrive at Noorda.

The most telling example of this is the comment, upon Julian’s death, that, “he had almost entirely destroyed the Persian empire.” So far from the Julian whose goal was Romanising Ctesiphon and installing Hormisdas as its king that we saw in Libanius, we now have a Julian who seeks to destroy the cities of Persia and eradicate their inhabitants. The essential point to be made about this is the fact that Zosimus continues to represent the Persians as inferior: so far inferior, in fact, that it is only natural that Julian would be able to defeat them and to then eradicate them. We will return to this thought below, when we discuss the peace treaty.

JULIAN’S DEATH AND THE TREATY

We now turn to consider the dual issue, within the ‘story’ of the Persian Expedition, of Julian’s death and the expedition’s end in a treaty handing Roman territory to Persia. This was a dual shock, and generated great comment among our sources, pagan and Christian alike.⁸⁸ Bound up in the way that our pagan sources depict these events is their depiction of the Persians themselves,

⁸⁷ It is important to remember that ancient depictions of Roman warfare could be notably mixed: Polybius, for example, shows the Romans as both ruthless in victory (10.15) and benevolent towards those that they have conquered (18.37). The point above, however, is not concerning the reality of Roman victories, but rather the depiction in histories of what the Romans were trying to achieve.

⁸⁸ Christian reactions are discussed in the next chapter; for pagan reactions, see Libanius’ works, discussed in another chapter, and the way that Ammianus launches into an immediate panegyric within the middle of his narrative. Zosimus 3.30, Festus 28 and Eunapius Exc. de Sent 29 are the relevant passages from our authors. Notably, the pagan authors focus on Julian’s philosophical acceptance of his death, while the Christian authors depict him as blaming either Jesus or Sol for his failures, both integrating his religious policies into the very moment of his military failure either to forgive that failure or to indicate that his religious policies were also a failure.

whose actions led to these events. There is a nexus of pagan concerns that dominates from the moment that Julian died, to Jovian returning to the Roman Empire: the damage to Julian's legacy, Jovian's resumption of the Christian faith, and the loss of Roman pride to the Persians, and the pagan authors adopted complex strategies in order to try and address these three conflicting issues simultaneously.

A Eunapius fragment (Exc. de Sent 29) presents the moment of Julian's death in a religious atmosphere, with a poem suggesting that Julian would return to Olympus and an immortal existence, and an authorial note by Eunapius to the effect that religion is not a suitable element for "serious history". Another fragment (Suda I 401) contains a strongly-worded hatchet job on Jovian. Pausing to say that he only became emperor because of his father, the fragment focuses upon his religion and his return from Persia. He refused to sacrifice to the gods, we are told, and he burned down a pagan library within a temple built by Hadrian. Then the fragment condemns his "retreat" from Persia, which he conducted in order to enjoy his rank and publicise his elevation. This follows the line in Ammianus Marcellinus, where we find a similar complaint against Jovian.⁸⁹ There is no indication in this fragment that Julian had made mistakes, nor even that the army was in trouble at the time of Jovian's elevation. Eunapius then reports some pamphlets which were distributed around Antioch:

οἱ δὲ Ἀντιοχεῖς ἡγανάκτησαν κατὰ τοῦ βασιλέως...⁹⁰ καὶ τὰ μὲν ἀπέρριπτον τῶν βιβλίων ἐς τὸ ἔδαφος, ὥστε ἀναίρεσθαι τὸν βουλόμενον καὶ ἀναγινώσκειν, τὰ δὲ τοῖς τοίχοις προσεκόλλιζον. ἦν δὲ τοιαῦτα· ἦλυθες ἐκ πολέμου, ὥς ὥφελες αὐτόθ' ὀλέσθαι· καί, Δύσπαρι, εἶδος ἄριστε· καὶ τὰ ἐξῆς. καὶ εἰ μὴ ἐγὼ σε λαβὼν ἀπὸ μὲν φίλα εἴματα δύσω, χλαῖνάν τ' ἡδὲ χιτῶνα, τὰ τ' αἰδῶ ἀμφικαλύπτει, αὐτὸν δὲ κλαίοντα θοῶς ἐπὶ Πέρσας ἀφήσω. (Suda I 401)

But the Antiochenes were vexed at the Emperor... and they cast about some of their pamphlets on the ground, so that they could be picked up and read by those who wished, and some were glued on the walls. They were of this kind. "You came back from the war,

⁸⁹ In general, Jovian does poorly in the pagan authors and well in the Christian ones. In the former, he is repudiated as a fool who lost the provinces through his cowardly treaty, and as being unworthy as Julian's successor. So Ammianus 25.5.8, Festus etc. For the latter, Jovian is a prince of the Christian faith who restored the empire to health, and his piety is heavily emphasised even as his treaty is accepted as necessary. More discussion of Jovian can be found below and in the next chapter upon Christian authors.

⁹⁰ Blockley notes that there is likely a lacuna at this point.

who ought to have died there.” And, “Paris the ill-omened, most handsome visage.” And so on. And “If I do not seize you and take you out of your lovely clothes, your cloak and robe, which cover your modesty, and send you swiftly and lamenting to Persia.”

Fitting into a narrative heavily biased against Jovian, and presented without comment, these sentiments clearly accord with Eunapius’ opinion. Furthermore, the three separate pamphlets reported are each an adapted Homeric quotation, suggesting that Eunapius chose to mention them – or even that he rewrote them – because of their highly literary quality. The first (ἤλυθες... ὀλέσθαι) one is from *Il.* 3.428, a speech by Helen to Paris, bitterly spoken, lamenting that her previous husband Menelaus had not slain Paris in their recent duel. The second (Δύσπαρι, εἶδος ἄριστε) is Hector’s scolding of Paris, given twice – the first time, *Il.* 3.39, chiding him for his inaction and devotion to his own appearance, the second, *Il.* 13.769, blaming him for the battle turning against the Trojan forces. The third line (εἰ... ἀφήσω) is Odysseus’ threat from *Il.* 2.261-63, delivered to the troublemaker Thersites who had interrupted the council of war with his vulgar complaints. This is a potent set of attributions to apply to Jovian. Firstly they tar him with the image of the man whose actions destroyed the city of Troy, clearly analogous to Jovian’s forfeiture of Nisibis to the Persians. Secondly they feature a wish that the previous husband, Menelaus, had killed Paris; another clear analogy for the recent change in emperors, and indicative of a desire for Julian’s continued reign. The third makes Jovian into Thersites, the Iliadic example of the unruly and useless soldier, who undermines the good rule of his betters. The unmetrical addition of Persians to the last quotation, the stated desire for Jovian to have died in Persia – both of these things indicate a belief that the war had not gone according to the desires of the populace, and that indeed they wished for the emperor to die instead of return in the circumstances that he did. Taken as a whole, these things clearly show us that Eunapius had only the most contemptuous opinion of Jovian and his treaty. But they also show that the Persians themselves are not considered the source of the problem, Jovian is. The way that this fragment is framed leaves no room for consideration of the Persians’ military successes or strategic plan. In fact, the Persians are barely mentioned, when it is they who managed to exact the

treaty from the Roman emperor in the first place. This is a trait that will be consistent in our other two authors, whom we shall now turn to consider.

Festus wrote this concerning the treaty:

consumptis aliquot diebus tanta reverentia Romani nominis fuit, ut a Persis prius sermo de pace haberetur ac reduci confectus inedia exercitus sineretur conditionibus (quod numquam antea accidit) dispendiosis Romanae reipublicae inpositis ut Nisibis et pars Mesopotamiae traderentur, quibus cupidior regni quam gloriae Iovianus in imperio rudis acquievit. (29)

After a few days were consumed, there was such reverence for the Roman name that the Persians were the first to hold a conversation concerning peace. The army, weakened by famine, was allowed to return; conditions inimical to the Roman state were applied – a thing which had never happened before – so that Nisibis and part of Mesopotamia were handed over to the Persians. Jovian, who was unskilled in rule, acquiesced to these conditions, because he was more eager for power than for glory.

Within this passage there is a condensed account of the end of the expedition. Festus provides a vision of Jovian that concentrates on his unsuitability for the throne, though he does not mention religion as an element in this. We again see that the condemnation of Jovian centres upon him being the first Roman to hand over territory in a treaty, and the city of Nisibis takes pride of place. The narrative of Julian's expedition is extremely compressed in Festus, but he strives to present the failures of the expedition as the fault of Jovian, for they took place after Julian's death. The other part of this account which is extremely interesting is the way that he explains the Persian peace embassy. Presenting the Persians as respectful fits into a world-view in which Rome is the most civilised and central nation, with other nations being awed of it and obedient to it. Moreover, we again see the role played by the Persians minimised. Their military attacks are mentioned prominently in this section (*Persae crebris incursionibus*), however their potential strategic or diplomatic goals in the outcome of the treaty are simply ignored in favour of an analysis that makes them into docile witnesses of Roman might. Sapor II receives no mention.

Turning to Zosimus, we have a much fuller account of this transitional period than we do in the other authors. He tells us (30) that the army officers gathered to select a new emperor, as without one the army could not escape the dangers of being in enemy territory. The first act of

Jovian, we are told, is to don the diadem and then march for home. The danger continued, however, with a sizeable battle narrative followed by comments about the army being in danger of famine. The start of the next section (31) is as follows:

Καίπερ οὖν ἐν τούτοις ὄντι τῷ στρατοπέδῳ περὶ φιλίας ὁμῶς ἐποιοῦντο λόγους οἱ Πέρσαι, σουρήναν τε καὶ ἄλλους τῶν ἐν δυνάμει παρ' αὐτοῖς ὄντων ἐκπέμψαντες· (3.31.1)

And although it was in these (bad circumstances) for the army, the Persians made a deputation regarding peace, sending the Surena⁹¹ and other men who were powerful in Persian (society).

It continues with an account of the territory that the Romans ceded, which carefully notes whether the inhabitants of each area were to be also ceded. It finishes:

ἐπι τούτοις αἱ σπονδαὶ γεγонуῖαι καὶ γραμματίοις ἐκατέρωθεν ἐπισφραγισθεῖσαι δεδώκασιν Ῥωμαίοις εὐρυχωρίαν τῆς οἴκαδε ἐπανόδου, κατὰ μηδὲν τὰ Περσῶν διαφθεύουσιν ὄρια, μήτε αὐτοῖς ὑπὸ Περσικῆς ἐπιβουλευσόμενοις ἐνέδρας.

The peace was agreed on these terms and was confirmed by accords on both sides, it was agreed that the Romans had the freedom to return homeward, not destroying anything within the boundaries of the Persian Empire, nor would they suffer any ambush by the Persian forces.

Again, we must note the way that the Persian overture is described: Zosimus suggests that the Roman army could have actually been destroyed by the Persians, but that they instead chose to offer peace. Unlike Ammianus or Festus, he does not offer an explanation for the Persian decision to offer terms. However, by focusing the reader's attention upon the unrealised destruction of the Roman army, the Persian decision to offer peace is presented as fortunate for the Romans, even though it resulted in territorial loss. Zosimus does not mask the significance of the territorial changes, but he clearly regarded the situation as offering another, more malignant, outcome which the Persians opted against. This firmly gives the Persians responsibility, and avoids suggesting that their 'reverentia' or fear inspired the decision.

⁹¹ A Persian title, and an important member of their military hierarchy. Ammianus has this to say: *Surena post regem apud Persas promeritae dignitatis* (24.2.4).

We must note, however, the confusing differences between this account and Ammianus. The latter author depicts Persian wickedness and treachery on the return march,⁹² and so contrasts strongly to this account which shows the Persians as faithfully compliant with the treaty. Instead of the *Res Gestae*'s depiction of evil Persians who were justly invaded, here the Persians abide by the treaty. Again, this is a more neutral portrayal of the Persian role in the treaty.

Zosimus is then driven to offer (32) a sadly defective account of prior Roman territorial losses, before discussing what Jovian did on his arrival in Roman territory. The inhabitants of Nisibis once more offer their condemnation of the treaty: they beg (33.2) not to be 'barbarised', and claim (33.4) that they would resist the Persian forces single-handedly if need be. Julian's death in Persia gives rise to widespread lamentation (34.2-3), while the loss of Nisibis is treated with dismay by other cities who now fear Persian attacks themselves.

In summary then, Zosimus seeks to bring the focus of the peace treaty upon the way that the Persians had power over the Roman army, and how only their unexpected benevolence saved it. His account directs the reader to view the Roman army as inferior to the Persians, unable to be saved by the actions of either itself or Jovian. To do this, Zosimus diverges from his co-authors in not taking the opportunity to focus the situation on Jovian's supposed failings. He offers the ambiguous statement that he died, "after ruling only eight months and before he had been able to do anything useful for the state." Though this is not exactly high praise, it is considerably more benevolent than the character assassination in Eunapius. Furthermore, Zosimus' account offers the Persians a more nuanced position than we see in the other authors, one that does not seek to rob them of their own independent actions and desires. He diverges dramatically from Ammianus' account, and refrains from the painting of the Persians as evil and wicked that we see in the *Res Gestae*. By these changes the Persians can assume a position of power over the Roman army, without actually being the villains of the account. The Roman army and Jovian are presented as inferior and weak in

⁹² 25.8.1, 25.8.4.

comparison to the Persians, who themselves were inferior in the face of the army as led by Julian. Thus the way that Zosimus frames his account of the peace treaty delivers both praise of Julian's power, and condemnation of the weak soldiers, who – as the Christian authors exultantly proclaim – were predominantly Christian.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has found that there are considerable similarities between the three pagan accounts, as well as sharp divergences. There are two core elements that underlie the themes described above.

The first element is that of power. The Romans are presented as utterly dominant until the moment of Julian's death, at which point they pass into the role of victims, harassed without hope by the Persians. Thus the way that the authors present the Persian mode of warfare, which is shown to make the Romans powerless. This leads into the treaty negotiations. Each author presents these negotiations differently, but consistent across their accounts is the idea that one side or the other was dominant and held the other in its power: for Festus the Persians were docile in the face of Roman majesty; for Eunapius the Persians' role was of minimal importance, effectively denying that they held power over the Romans; for Zosimus the Persians offered peace instead of an unrealised destruction of the Roman army, implicitly giving them the power of life or death over the entire Roman force. These thoughts centre on that of power, and the way that each side possessed or lacked it.

The second element is Julian himself. The narratives clearly focus on his death, for the reversals in power that we noted above come after his death. His presence seems to be the only thing that allows the Roman troops to defeat the Persians, even if the Persians are described as inferior, and his successor Jovian's responses to the Persians meets with universal condemnation, inevitably making Julian look better by comparison. Unlike in Ammianus, we do not see Julian as the essential element that underlies the entire account, but undeniably he represents one of the elements at work. By changing the dynamic of the Roman and Persian forces, so that the Persians are only able to become the dominant part after his death, this element directly impacts the portrayal of the Persians.

These two elements combine to form the ideological basis of the pagan presentation of the Persians during the Persian Expedition, an ideological basis that is subtly different from that of Ammianus. There is a focus on the way that they are different from the Romans, on the way that military power switched from one side to the other, and on how Julian's presence or loss impacted the invasion of their empire. These show the concerns of the pagan authors. The loss of Julian meant the end of a potential pagan revival, and so his death to a Persian soldier was of vital concern. The loss of territory and prestige as a consequence of the treaty is reflected in presentations of Persian power or lack of power as the treaty was being agreed. We saw above how Zosimus tried to control the blame attached to Julian by using the relative power of the different sides to show how vital Julian was to the Roman cause, and to condemn the army for its weakness subsequently. The disastrous failure of the campaign and the Persian victory over the last pagan emperor would have aroused bitterness and regret among his followers, leading to the denigration of the Persians that we see, but overall there is a consistent focus on using the Persians to defend the person of Julian the Apostate.

CHRISTIANS

INTRODUCTION

A Christian writing about the Persian Expedition of Julian was an author who wrote concerning a defeated enemy: he knew that Christianity, the true church, had triumphed despite the challenge of the Apostate Emperor. Christian authors were also developing their own genre, that of church history, which had a different set of priorities than the traditional histories of our pagan authors. Thus Christian portrayals of the Expedition differ from those of pagan authors, for the underlying assumptions and story were different. They were not conforming to Herodotean-derived concepts of the Persians, nor did they have to explain the failure of a favoured champion: instead their narratives were to focus on the victory of Christianity, while reconciling that victory with the woes that were to befall the Roman Empire in the century after Constantine's victory. In order to understand what this different stance means for the portrayal of the Persians, we will be considering two groups of authors: church historians - Sozomen, Socrates Scholasticus, Theodoret, Philostorgius and Orosius - and those who wrote poems or oratory - Gregory Nazianzus, Ephrem the Syrian and St Augustine.

Eusebius, whose importance can be determined by the fact that all his successors chose to continue his work, founded church history as a genre.⁹³ This genre concerned itself primarily with the internal Christian affairs of the history of the church and its divine protection. As a result, the struggle against heresies was of central interest, while secular events take a subsidiary role.⁹⁴ As a

⁹³ "Like the works of Socrates and Sozomen, Theodoret's *Ecclesiastical History* is written as a continuation of the work of Eusebius." Rohrbacher (2002), 130.

⁹⁴ In essence, secular events have little relevance for a church history except where those events directly affect the church. So Julian's reign attracted significant attention, because of his anti-Christian policies, but the military details of the campaign held little interest. The exception to this was Socrates, who as Rohrbacher ((2002), 114) notes included a substantial amount of secular history because of his own view of history, i.e.

result, Julian's reign is presented with far less prominence than we find in the Pagan sources of the period. Though Julian's anti-Christian legislation, especially that concerning Christians as teachers,⁹⁵ struck a nerve with our Christian writers, and though he was universally condemned, his role within the histories is nevertheless minor. The Church Histories could, however, depict secular affairs, as indeed Socrates' work did.⁹⁶ Though the chronology of publication of these works is beyond our scope here, they were all published relatively closely to each other, in the early-to-mid 5th century, and a tradition existed with Eusebius at the head, and Socrates influencing Sozomen and Theodoret.⁹⁷ Philostorgius comes in the midst, after Eusebius but before the refinements in the genre performed by Socrates *et al.*⁹⁸

We also consider works of oratory and poetry, such as Gregory's invectives against Julian, and Ephrem's poems. The work of Gregory fits into the classical model of epideictic oratory,⁹⁹ and was written during Julian's life but only published after his death. The risks inherent in condemning a ruling emperor helped to keep Julian's Christian critics silent during his lifetime.¹⁰⁰ Though Gregory's invectives are devoid of historical value,¹⁰¹ and were heavily influenced by Libanius' funeral orations upon Julian,¹⁰² they are rich in emotional and descriptive language that gives his depiction of the Persian Expedition great colour. Ephrem, likewise, composed his hymns in the exact context of Julian's reign and death, and his poetry - which fits into a genre independent of Greco-Roman genres and influences - was published in the aftermath of his death. His work offers us a valuable

that secular and ecclesiastical history were closely connected as a result of the conversion of the Roman Empire.

⁹⁵ McGuckin, (2001), 118.

⁹⁶ Rohrbacher, (2002), 114.

⁹⁷ See Rohrbacher, 2002, for more information.

⁹⁸ Nobbs, (1990), 260.

⁹⁹ McGuckin (2001), 119.

¹⁰⁰ Trompf (2000), 192.

¹⁰¹ Quasten, (1963), 242.

¹⁰² Elm (2012), 453. Libanius was pagan, so it is likely that Gregory relied upon him mostly for the shape of his account, not the precise depiction of events.

eyewitness account from Nisibis, as well as a view not reliant upon the same tradition as our other authors.¹⁰³

As each of these Christian sources has devoted only a small amount of space to the Persian Expedition, this chapter will proceed thematically, upon four topics of interest. These topics reflect the weight given by the authors to Julian's failings and the consequences of the campaign. First, we look at the Persian deserter who is blamed for leading Julian astray. Second is the way that the power of the Persian state is depicted: sometimes all-powerful, sometimes completely absent as a participant in the events. Thirdly, the treaty that signed over Roman territory is discussed, including the sequence of events that led to its agreement. Finally, we will look at the handing over of Nisibis, in particular the way that Ephrem depicts the Persians in this context. These topics will demonstrate that the Persians served a particular literary need within the church narratives, and that their portrayal is entirely predicated upon this need.

¹⁰³ Lieu (1989), 98-100 is a concise source upon Ephrem's genre. As Ephrem composed in Syriac, I will here only use Lieu's translations. Regarding Ephrem's tradition, it is important to remember that he was member of a distinct Christian tradition – Syriac – but also that there was a consistent 'Christian' idea about Julian's reign that was accepted in both the Greek and Syrian branches of Christianity. See Griffith (1987), 247, 255 for more detail.

PERSIAN DESERTER

A consistent element in the Christian tradition is the fact that Julian was led astray by a Persian deserter. Though we find this element also in the pagan tradition,¹⁰⁴ it has a far greater role within the Christian tradition, doubtless because of the way that it allowed them to depict Julian as credulous and led astray by bad advice.¹⁰⁵ The thing that differs the most is that the Christian tradition focuses upon his motivations and morality in the act of deceiving Julian and the army. This is quite a unique angle to see, where a Roman author depicts a foreign agent more favourably than the officials of the Roman state. Gregory of Nazianzus provides the fullest account:

Ἀνὴρ γάρ τις τῶν οὐκ ἀδοκίμων ἐν Πέρσαις, τὸν ἐπὶ Βαβυλῶνι πρὸς Κῦρον Ζώπυρον μιμησάμενος, ὡς δὴ τι τῶ Περσῶν βασιλεῖ, μᾶλλον δὲ μέγιστα καὶ ἐπὶ μεγίστοις προσκεκρουκῶς, καὶ δύνους μὲν τοῖς ἐκείνου μάλιστα, εὖνους δὲ τοῖς Ῥωμαίων πράγμασι διὰ τοῦτο τυγχάνων, καὶ τὸ πιστεύεσθαι λαβὼν ἐκ τοῦ πλάσματος· *Τί ταῦτα, φησὶν, ὦ βασιλεῦ; Πῶς οὕτω σαθρῶς περὶ τοσούτου βουλευέσθε πράγματος; Τίς ὁ νηϊτης οὗτός σοι σῆτος καὶ ὁ περιττός φόρτος, ὁ τῆς ἀνανδρίας διδάσκαλος; Οὐδὲν γὰρ οὕτω δύσμαχον καὶ φιλόνεικον, ὡς γαστήρ, καὶ τὸ ἐν χερσὶν ἔχειν τὴν σωτηρίαν. Ἀλλ' εἴ τι ἐμοὶ πείθῃ, τὸ μὲν ναυτικὸν τοῦτο χαίρειν ἑάσεις, καὶ τὴν ἐπομένην ἔκλυσιν τῶ γενναίῳ τούτῳ στρατῶ· αὐτὸς δὲ δι' ἄλλης ὁδοῦ εὐπορωτέρας τε καὶ ἀσφαλεστέρας, ἧς ἐγὼ σοι καθηγητής (ἔμπειρος δὲ εἴ τις ἄλλος φημί τῆς χώρας εἶναι τῆς Περσικῆς), ἐμβαλεῖς τε εἰς τὴν πολεμίαν, καὶ τῶν κατὰ γνώμην τυχῶν ἐπανήξεις· ἡμᾶς δὲ τηνικαῦτα εὖ ποιήσεις, ἡνίκα ἂν ἔργῳ πείραν λάβῃς τῆς ἡμετέρας εὐνοίας καὶ παραινέσεως.*

Ὡς δὲ εἶπε ταῦτα, καὶ εἰπὼν ἔπεισεν, εὐπίστον γὰρ ἢ κουφότης, καὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ μάλιστα συνελαύνοντος, ἅπαντα ἦν ὁμοῦ τὰ δεινὰ· [...] ὁ ὁδηγὸς συναπῆλθε ταῖς ὑποσχέσεσιν. (V.11-12)

A certain man, of no ill-repute among the Persians, taking on the role of Zopuros who took action for Cyrus against Babylon, pretending that he had some quarrel with the Persian king, indeed a very great and huge quarrel, and so had fallen out with his monarch as a result, making him well disposed to the Roman cause; he gained their trust from this deception. "What is all this, oh king?" He said, "Why do you follow such unsound plans in this expedition? Why this flotilla for your grain and why such excessive supplies, which incline the troops towards cowardice? For no-one is at all brave and eager to fight, who has a full belly and has in his hands a means of escape. But if you trust me, you will allow this flotilla to

¹⁰⁴ Ammianus 24.7.5.

¹⁰⁵ Leppin, (2003), 240 notes that the distinction drawn between 'good'/Christian and 'bad'/Pagan emperors includes the idea that, "The 'bad' emperor is a heretic or, still worse, a pagan, who will act upon the council of evil people and who will not be likely to be revoked to a pious behaviour. He easily becomes angry and punishes his enemies cruelly. Misfortune will shape his reign." Theodore himself was exiled by Theodosius II upon the advice of Theodore's episcopal opponents, giving that author ample grounds to utilise this particular trope.

be discarded, and so grant the resulting deliverance to your high-minded army. And you will take another route, much easier and safer, with me as your guide (for I tell you that I am the most expert among my countrymen for knowing the geography of Persia), and you will strike at the enemy, doing whatever you will, before returning home. And then you shall reward me, when you have had proof of my goodwill and advice."

After he said this, and persuaded Julian by his speech (for rashness is credulous, especially when God spurs it on), everything terrible happened simultaneously. [...] The guide had disappeared along with his promises...

Here we see the traits that are evident in many other accounts. The guide is high-minded for his country, and favourably presented, even as his methods are described as pretence and deceit. The army's defeat is directly attributed to the relationship between him and Julian, whose credulousness is here attributed in part to God. We should also observe that, unlike anyone else within the Persian Expedition narrative, he is able to give a speech that is reported directly by the narrator, giving him a significant prominence.¹⁰⁶ Zopyrus, in the Herodotean reference seen at the start of the quoted section, had a lengthy conversation with Darius, which Herodotus gives several sections to. Gregory is helping to further the classicising nature of the passage by giving the deserter a similar speech. In addition, Gregory gives weight to the deserter by means of giving him the largest direct speech in the work. By doing so, the deserter assumes the place of a protagonist, a move of obvious impact for the portrayal of both Julian and the Persians.

This account, written closely contemporary to the events that he describes, clearly influenced the later writers, whose accounts universally feature this deserter in a variety of versions. The authors who used this element did change it notably. Orosius strips it to a bare

*dolo cuiusdam transfugae in deserta perductus...*¹⁰⁷ (VII.30.4-6)

led into the desert by the trick of a certain deserter...

¹⁰⁶ Adding to this prominence is the way that the Herodotean reference gives him the same weight of Pagan classical literature that Julian himself sought to deny Christians through his edict on teachers. McGuckin (2006), 212, notes the impact that Julian's attack on Christians had upon Gregory's career and poetic output, causing him to establish a new curriculum.

¹⁰⁷ Julian is the subject of *perductus*, as the whole paragraph opens with him as the nominative subject.

While Sozomen attributes the deserter, who does not escape, with this statement:

μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα πρεσβύτης τις ἐλόμενος ἀποθανεῖν ὑπὲρ τῆς πάντων Περσῶν ἐλευθερίας [...] ὁ μὲν γέρων ὁ αἰχμάλωτος βασανιζόμενος ὡμολόγησεν ὑπὲρ τῶν οἰκείων αὐτομολῆσαι πρὸς θάνατον καὶ ἔτοιμος εἶναι πάντα προθύμως ὑπομένειν. (VI.1)

After these events, a certain old man who had chosen to die for the liberty of Persia [...] The old man was taken captive and questioned, but he had accepted death for the cause of his country, and was ready and willing to suffer everything for that cause.

This is an image of a courageous partisan dying for his country, and is quite clearly positive. The deserter is presented in terms that closely match tyrannicides or martyrs. Philostorgius reduces¹⁰⁸ the entire Persian Expedition to this one element, with the account moving directly from the launching of the invasion to the deceit of the deserter, and then to Julian's death. By doing this, he focalises the expedition account on the way that Julian was fooled by the deserter, rather than on any of the military events, preserving a tight focus on the way that he can show Julian and his mistakes as the sole motivator of events. Notably he ascribes power over the Roman army to the deserter:

...he gave the enemy, like the prey of a hunter, in the hands of his countrymen. (VII.15)

Socrates relates, under Jovian's reign, that the army blamed Julian for being 'imposed upon' by the statements of the deserter, and thus led to his disasters. Finally, when we look at Ephrem, we see the deserter in a rather different light:

*The insane one [i.e. Julian] raved and set on fire his ships near the Tigris
The bearded ones deceived him, and he did not perceive it
He the goat who avowed that he knew the secrets;* (Hymns II.18)¹⁰⁹

The deserter here is not personalised but is instead depicted as a generic part of the Persians. Instead the focus is very much on Julian and his failure to perceive the deceit. The deserter is only mentioned between two lines that focus on Julian's characteristics, and both lines characterise Julian

¹⁰⁸ It is important to bear in mind that our copy of Philostorgius is preserved entirely within an epitome by Photius, meaning that it is difficult to tell whether the original account of this section was this brief.

¹⁰⁹ Julian, among his other troubles, had to contend with the insults of his enemies, of which Ephrem's favourite appears to have been 'goat'. There are two elements to this. Firstly, Julian's famous beard may have attracted negative comparisons to those of goats. Secondly, Griffith (1987, 251) notes that Daniel 8:21 says about Alexander the Great, 'the billy-goat is the king of Greece'. Whether or not Julian wanted to be a new Alexander, it has always been a powerful comparison to draw.

as mentally deficient. In addition, Julian was famously bearded, as his *Misopogon* suggests, and depicting the Persian defector as bearded helps to form a connection between the two. We shall later discuss the way that Julian is linked to another Persian figure, Sapor II, in Ephrem's work.

When we consider these together, we firstly see that the deserter is credited with a large part in the fate of the expedition, his role taken beyond the burning of the ships to include Julian's death and the famine suffered by the army. He is also presented as a deceitful figure, one who confused and misled Julian. Despite this, he is nevertheless presented in a charitable light, as a tyrannicide or martyr who died for his country: though the exact way that he is presented differs considerably between the accounts, according to how his interaction with Julian is presented, he consistently takes the role of sympathetic protagonist away from the Roman army. Thus we see that the deserter is an essential element in the story of the expedition, in terms of framing it around Julian's inevitable destruction for his religious acts. The authors do this by their focus upon Julian's decision to trust in the words of the deserter, which are typically given greater prominence by the accounts that Julian's own words, and in the quasi-religious way that the deserter is presented as a martyr for his cause.

PERSIAN POWER

We now turn to consider the power over events that the accounts ascribe to the Persians.

καί τινα τῶν φρουρίων ἐξελὼν κατὰ πολλὴν τοῦ κωλύσοντος ἐρημίαν, εἴτ' οὖν λαθὼν διὰ τὸ τῆς ἐφόδου τάχος, εἴτε ὑπὸ Περσῶν οὕτω στρατηγούμενος, καὶ κατὰ μικρὸν ὑπαγόμενος εἰς τοῦμπροσθεν (λέγεται γὰρ ἀμφοτέρω) [...] Ὡς δὲ προϊόντι Περσικῇ δύναμις παραφανεῖσα, καὶ αἰεὶ τις τῇ οὕσῃ προσγινομένη, κατὰ μετώπου μὲν ἴστασθαι, καὶ διακινδυνεύειν οὐκ ᾔετο δεῖν δίχα μεγάλης ἀνάγκης, ἐνὸν ἐκ περιουσίας κρατεῖν· ἐκ δὲ τῶν λόγων καὶ τῶν στενῶν ἧ παρεῖκοι, βάλλουσα καὶ τοξεύουσα, καὶ τὰ καίρια τῆς διόδου προκαταλαμβάνουσα, ῥαδίως εἴργε τοῦ ῥόσω· τηνικαῦτα ἐν ἀπορίᾳ τε ἦν ἤδη πολλῇ, καὶ οὐκ ἔχων ὅπη τράπηται λύσιν εὕρισκε πονηρὰν τοῦ βουλευέματος. (Gregory Nazianzus, Or. V.9-10)

And having sacked many of the forts, in the absence of anyone to oppose him, either taking them by surprise through the speed of his advance, or whether he was merely outgeneralled, and led gradually to keep advancing (for both stories are told) [...] And so a Persian force appeared while he was advancing, and kept gathering more forces, but it did not intend to oppose him and run the risk of an open battle in the absence of the greatest necessity, although their numbers offered victory. Instead they followed their plan of giving way and causing difficulties, shooting and throwing, and occupying the vital routes, thus easily obstructing his progress. Then he was totally bereft of a plan, and found himself without an escape route to follow or a solution to his problems.

The Persians hold great narrative power in this account, explicitly given the power to destroy the Roman army, as well as overwhelming Julian's ability to control the course of events. The core idea of the narrative is that Julian, the Apostate, is being punished for his religious acts by a humiliating death in Persia, and the Persians are given great narrative power to fulfil this.

Other authors follow Gregory in this line of thought. Sozomen creates a moment of tension between the two armies, noting the imminent destruction of the Romans:

σὺν πολλῇ δὲ παρασκευῇ ἰππέων καὶ ὀπλιτῶν καὶ ἐλεφάντων τῶν Περσῶν φανέντων ἐπὶ τῆς ὄχθης τοῦ Τίγρητος, ἰδὼν ἐν πολεμίᾳ γῇ μέσσω δύο μεγίστων ποταμῶν μονονουχὶ πολιορκουμένην αὐτῷ τὴν στρατιάν καὶ λιμῷ διαφθαρῆναι κινδυνεύουσιν... (VI.1)

with many squadrons of Persian cavalry, infantry and elephants appearing on the banks of the Tigris, Julian saw that night that his army was blockaded in the middle of two great rivers, and was at risk of being destroyed by famine...

Again, the Persians are explicitly shown to be able to destroy the Roman army, and again we see the way that Julian is the focus of this, with the narrative using his viewpoint to demonstrate his folly.

Other authors depict the Persians in a different way, yet the underlying purpose remains the same.

For Socrates Scholasticus, who earlier depicted the Persians as weak and enervated in winter,

Julian's folly is in not accepting a timely offer of peace:

Περιστοιχίσας δὲ Κτησιφῶντα τὴν μεγάλην πόλιν τοσοῦτον ἐπολιόρκει τὸν βασιλέα <Περσῶν>, ὥστε ἐκεῖνον πρεσβεΐαις χρήσασθαι συχναῖς ἰκετεύειν τε ζημιωθῆναι μέρος τι τῆς αὐτοῦ πατρίδος, εἰ καταλύσας τὸν πόλεμον ἀποχωρήσῃ. Ὁ δὲ οὐκ ἔπαθε τὴν ψυχὴν οὐδὲ τοὺς ἰκετεύοντας ἠλέησεν, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ τὸ τοῦ λόγου κατὰ νοῦν ἔλαβεν, ὡς ἄρα νικᾶν μὲν καλόν, ὑπερνικᾶν δὲ ἐπίφθονον. (3.21)

He besieged Ctesiphon, surrounding so great a city, and so afflicted the King of Persia that he sent many embassies, stating that he would relinquish part of his territory, if Julian would abandon the war and depart the country. But he did not heed his conscience, nor pity his supplicant, instead being ignorant of the saying, "to be a conquerer is good, to be more than a conquerer brings jealousy."

In this account, the Persians are weak and driven to desperation by the Roman victories. Socrates nevertheless makes Julian's victories into a failing, for he depicts Julian as refusing to accept a beneficial treaty, presenting this information in a moralistic way. Not only is Julian morally vitiated by his failure to be compassionate to the weak¹¹⁰, but also for acting contrary to a maxim about how the victors should act.

In Theodoret, we have perhaps the most interesting of all these accounts. The Persian army, indeed the Persian people, never appear in his narrative, and instead the Persian desert serves the role of antagonist of the Roman army:

ἐνταῦθα δὴ καὶ ποτοῦ καὶ τροφῆς οἱ στρατιῶται σπανίζοντες, καὶ τῆς πορείας ἡγεμόνας οὐκ ἔχοντες ἀλλ' ἐν ἐρήμῳ χώρᾳ πλανώμενοι, τὴν τοῦ σοφωτάτου βασιλέως ἔγνωσαν ἀβουλίαν. ὀλοφυρόμενοι δὲ καὶ στένοντες εὗρον ἐξαπίνης κείμενον τὸν κατὰ τοῦ πεποιηκότος λυττήσαντα [...] τὸν μέντοι τὴν δικαίαν ἐκείνην ἐπενεγκόντα πληγὴν οὐδεὶς ἔγνω μέχρι καὶ τήμερον. (III.25)

Then the soldiers, bereft of food or water, were wandering without a knowledgeable guide although they were in the desert, and they learned of the thoughtlessness of the wisest of emperors. As they were complaining and groaning, they suddenly saw him fall down, he who was raging at his maker [...] indeed, even to this day it is unknown by whom that righteous blow was made.

¹¹⁰ Christian virtues were probably always going to be an easy route to attack Julian.

In this account, the Persian desert serves as a grand canvas upon which Julian's folly is writ large, his divinely mandated punishment delivered in the shape of a mad wandering through the harsh desert. The Persians' role is so minor that they do not even appear. But this extreme divergence from the other accounts is, paradoxically, serving the same purpose: to make Julian look foolish. For here, the lack of importance that the Persians possess simply magnifies the failings of the emperor, who could not even conquer a country with nobody to oppose him.

In all of these accounts, the essential concept that underlies the narrative power possessed by the Persian Empire is the demonstration of Julian's folly. His death was divinely mandated and the reward for his folly, and the narrative power given to the Persians serves, regardless of the actual power, to highlight that folly.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ There is also a possibility that we are seeing a biblical parallel. Numbers:13-14 depicts the tribes of Israel sending scouts to the promised land of Canaan, and returning to report that it is too dangerous to enter. The people, dismayed by their report, responds by rejecting Moses' leadership and trying to elect a new leader to lead them back to Egypt. The parallels between this account and those in the Persian Expedition make it tempting to speculate that the Christian authors were drawing upon the theme of guides trying to lead the people astray. However there are as many differences as similarities, and none of our authors explicitly draw attention to the parallel, meaning that this allusion remains only a possibility.

THE TREATY

The essential story of the Persian Expedition, for our Christian authors, was one of triumph: the story of how the Apostate emperor died, part of the Church of Christ's victory. But there was a fly in the ointment: the treaty signed by the Christian Emperor Jovian, which was both humiliating and potentially dangerous for the Roman Empire, inasmuch as it handed over vital border fortresses.¹¹² After the conversion of the Empire to Christianity, there arose for Christian authors an imperative to explain why problems and disasters continued to strike. This imperative would lead to St Augustine to explain his concept of the 'city of God', following the sack of Rome. But for our authors discussing the Persian Expedition, the treaty which a Christian emperor signed had to be explained in a way that did not disrupt the Christian focus of the narratives.

The most common phrase to depict the treaty was "shameful, but necessary", various forms of which we find in several of our authors:

[...] κατέλυσεν ἐπὶ συνθήκαις τὸν πόλεμον. Αἱ συνθήκαι δὲ πρὸς μὲν τὴν δόξαν Ῥωμαίων ἦσαν ἀπρεπεῖς, πρὸς δὲ τὸν καιρὸν ἀναγκαῖαι. (Socrates Scholasticus, 3.22)

He brought an end to the war with a treaty. The terms were unseemly to the majesty of Rome, but were compelled by necessity.

Foedus cum Sapore Persarum rege, etsi parum ut putant dignum, satis tamen necessarium pepigit (Orosius, Adversum Paganos, VII.31.1-3)

He concluded a treaty with Sapor, the Persian king, which even if it was not thought very worthy, was nevertheless necessary.

ἐν κινδύνῳ δὲ καὶ ταραχῇ τῶν πραγμάτων ὄντων ἐκ τῆς Ἰουλιανοῦ στρατηγίας, καμνούσης τε τῆς στρατιᾶς ἐνδείᾳ τῶν ἐπιτηδείων, ἀναγκαῖον εἶδεν εἰς συμβάσεις ἐλθεῖν, παραδούς τινα Πέρσαις τῶν πρότερον Ῥωμαίοις ὑποτελῶν. (Sozomen, VI.3)

in the danger and confusion which affairs were in as a result of Julian's generalship, and the suffering and deprivation of the army, Jovian saw that he was constrained and so signed a treaty, handing over to the Persians some hitherto Roman territories.

¹¹² Elm, (2012), 340: "As a Roman, Gregory could not but lament the fate of the army struck by the loss of its commander in enemy territory, nor could he applaud the humiliating peace treaty. As a Christian Roman, he had to explain why Jovian, also a Christian, had consented to such a shameful agreement."

νῦν δὲ ὁ μὲν, ὅπερ εἶπον, ἐνὸς ἦν τοῦ διασώσασθαι τὸν στρατὸν [...] Οἱ δὲ ἐπὶ ταῖς
συνθήκαις ταύταις συνέβησαν, ταῖς οὕτως αἰσχροῖς τε καὶ ἀναξίαις τῆς Ῥωμαίων χειρὸς, ἵν'
εἴπω τὸ συντομώτατον· (Gregory Nazianzus, Or. V.15)

*And so now, which I have said, there was only one thing, that is to save the army [...] They
agreed to these terms, which were so disgraceful and unseemly of the hand of Romans, to
say it briefly.*

The basic idea is consistent: that the treaty was unworthy and disrespectful to Rome, but that it had
to happen. There is a definite sensation that our Christian authors regarded the health of the Empire
as intrinsically linked to the health of the church, which we see most prominently in Socrates. So the
treaty is unworthy. But by coupling that sentiment with the idea that it was necessary, they are
trying to exculpate Jovian, for he had only one real option, and that was the one which he had to
follow.¹¹³ In some of these accounts, we see a clear idea that the blame actually belongs to Julian.

Indeed, Gregory continues:

...ὥν εἴ τις, ἐκεῖνον ἀφείς τῆς αἰτίας, τοῦτον καταμέμφοιτο, λίαν ἐστὶν ἀγνώμων ἔμοιγε
λογιστῆς τῶν τότε συμβεβηκότων. Οὐ γὰρ τοῦ ἀμήσαντος ὁ στάχυς, ἀλλὰ τοῦ
σπεύραντος· (Or. V.15)

*... if anyone absolves Julian of blame for this and criticises Jovian, my judgement is that he is
totally ignorant of what happened. For the crop belongs not to the reaper, but to he that
sowed it.*

Meanwhile Philostorgius' account is explicit in the fact that Julian's mistakes forced Jovian's hand:

Ὅτι τῇ ἐπαύριον τοῦ διαφθαρῆναι τὸν ἀποστάτην ἀνίστησιν ὁ στρατὸς Ἰωβιανὸν βασιλέα. ὁ
δὲ (οὐ γὰρ ἦν ἄλλως διασωθῆναι, εἰς δέκατον μέρος τῆς ὅλης στρατιᾶς
ἀπολεπυνθείσης) τριακοντούτεις τίθεται πρὸς τὸν Πέρσῃν σπονδάς... (VIII.1)

*On the day after the Apostate's death, the army proclaimed Jovian Augustus. He (for he had
no other means of preserving the army, it having been reduced to a tenth part of its strength)
concluded a thirty-year peace with the Persians.*

¹¹³ The church historians, in general, portray Jovian in a much more positive light than do the pagan ones. Positive portrayals in the Christian authors include Theodoret's obscuring of the controversy over the treaty and Socrates' transferal of blame for the starvation suffered by the army to Julian's failure to preserve suitable grain stockpiles for the route home. See Rohrbacher (2002), 270-2.

This brings us back to the Persians, whose appearances in the church historians is usually in connection with the spread of Christianity in Persia and the resulting persecutions.¹¹⁴ Their role in the treaty negotiations is sometimes that of saviour, unexpectedly offering peace negotiations to the Romans after the death of Julian. This puts them in the rather strange position of a mentor figure to the Romans, punishing them while they err (i.e. Julian's reign) and then offering a gentle road back to safety when they repent (as Jovian takes over, his Christianity highly emphasised). The best example of this is in Theodoret, who describes the religious attitudes of Jovian before continuing:

τὴν γὰρ τούτου βασιλείαν ὁ Περσῶν μεμαθητὴς ὡς βασιλεὺς πρέσβεις ἀπέστειλεν ὑπὲρ εἰρήνης πρεσβευσομένους· εἶτα τροφὰς τοῖς στρατιώταις ἐξέπεμψε, καὶ ἀγορὰν αὐτοῖς ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ γενέσθαι προσέταξε. τριακοντούτεις δὲ οὖν σπονδὰς ποιησάμενος ἐρρωμένην τὴν στρατιὰν τῆς πολέμιας ἐξέβαλε.

For the King of Persia, learning that Jovian had been crowned, sent an embassy concerning peace. Then he sent out supplies to the army, and told them about a market that they could find in the desert. And so Jovian agreed to a thirty-year peace and brought his army back home from the war safe and sound. (IV.2)

We should note how the negative elements of the treaty do not receive a mention here, and indeed Jovian manages to secure victuals for the army in the meantime.

Gregory once again offers analysis of the Persian's role in beginning peace negotiations:

Εἰ μὲν οὖν μὴ Πέρσαι τῇ νίκῃ μετριάζοντες (καὶ γὰρ νόμος οὗτος αὐτοῖς εἶδέναι μετρεῖν εὐπραγίαν), ἢ τι δείσαντες ἄλλο τῶν λεγομένων, εἰς συμβάσεις ἐτρέποντο, καὶ ταύτας ἀδοκίμους οὕτω καὶ φιланθρώπους, οὐδὲν ἐκώλυε μηδὲ πυρφόρον, ὃ δὴ φασιν, ὑπολειφθῆναι τῷ στρατῷ.

Now, if the Persians had not been moderate in their victory (for this – knowing how to measure out success - is their custom), or if they had not been afraid of something else, according to rumour, thus inclining towards a peace, both unexpected and generous, there was nothing to prevent “not even a fire-carrier left alive from the army”, or so the saying goes. (Or. V.15)

Even ignoring the role of Persians as saviour, it is apparent that they have an unexpectedly benevolent treatment in our Christian authors. Our authors place them as less than antagonists in this context, leading to evaluative statements like “unexpected and reasonable”. The accounts use

¹¹⁴ Leppin (2003), 244.

statements like this to minimise the blame that attaches to either Jovian or the Persians in the context of this treaty. To put it simply, the need to present Jovian as an unambiguously good ruler, and to demonise Julian, means that there is no conceptual space for Persians acting malevolently and demanding more than their due. Instead they are made to serve the purpose of redeeming Jovian's signing of the treaty, by emphasising how reasonable and necessary the treaty was, and even by showing them as helpful participants in this stage of the narrative, freeing the Roman army from its famine-march through Persia.

EPHREM AND THE MAGIAN

The final point to consider in the depiction of the Persians is the eye-witness view given to us by Ephrem the Syrian. He wrote five poems *contra* Julian, in the immediate context of the Expedition, and he was a native of Nisibis before it was handed over to the Persians.¹¹⁵ Fascinatingly, his poems offer us a view into the opinions of the inhabitants of that town, and his depiction of the Persians is unique within the Christian canon. These poems, despite the modern title of ‘invectives’, were really mediations upon the victory of Christianity over paganism and imperial power.¹¹⁶

Within the poems, Ephrem mocks Julian’s paganism by noting that both he and the Persian king shared a religion (worship of the sun, Helios and Mitra) and oracles spurring them to victory. The logical result, according to Ephrem, was that neither the religion nor the oracle could have been trustworthy for Julian, showing the latter’s folly in then trusting them. When we come to the handover of Nisibis, Ephrem once again links Julian to Sapor, saying this:

*The Magian¹¹⁷ who entered our place, kept it holy, to our shame
He neglected his temple of fire and honoured the sanctuary,
He cast down the altars which were built through our laxity,
For he knew that from one temple alone had gone out
The mercy which had saved us from him three times. (Hymns II.22)*

Sapor had thrice tried and failed to capture Nisibis, which Ephrem attributes to the protection of the Christian church and its priest. Julian had, as Ephrem earlier explains, demanded the reconstitution of various pagan temples within Nisibis, and now Sapor enters the city and removes them, while preserving the Christian church. This is remarkable, not only because Sapor is otherwise known as a ‘persecutor’ of the Christians within his empire (thanks to their dual loyalty to him and to the Pope in Rome), but also for the way that Ephrem shows us Sapor acting to undo the pagan acts of Julian. Repeatedly in these authors we have seen Julian’s death in Persia as the result of his folly in religion, but Ephrem here shows us Sapor also making the link. By then removing the pagan temples, Sapor is

¹¹⁵ See Lieu (1989) for more details.

¹¹⁶ Griffith, (1987), 244.

¹¹⁷ Magian refers to Sapor, as it does elsewhere in the Hymns. Ephrem once refers to the Persians as a whole as ‘Magians’. This makes Sapor’s status as a member of a different religion very clear to Ephrem’s audience.

not only protecting himself from the same divine wrath that struck down Julian, but also demonstrating the depth of his victory over Julian, inasmuch as he can take credit for not only his death but also the failure of his religious policies. Another way that the link between the two monarchs is made is in the way that Ephrem explicitly contrasts their religious policies.

*While the (our) king was a (pagan) priest and dishonoured our churches,
the Magian king honoured the sanctuary.
He doubled our consolation because he honoured our sanctuary,
he grieved and gladdened us and did not banish us.
(God) reproved that erring one through his companion in error,
What the priest abundantly defrauded, the Magian made abundant restitution. (2.27)*

Here we see the two pagan monarchs directly contrasted, with Julian characterised for his religious policies and Sapor depicted as fulfilling the role of a benefactor. Ephrem goes so far as to treat Sapor as God's agent, though Ephrem is careful to mention that Sapor was himself still a pagan ('companion in error'). By doing this Ephrem creates a sensation of betrayal, that the emperor had failed to be the benefactor and pious Christian that he ought to have been, and instead left the role of protector of the church in Nisibis to be assumed by Sapor. This does not serve to make Sapor a 'good' figure in the context of this poem; as we see in the above passage, the praise of Sapor is always aimed at the denigration of Julian.

Ephrem, as an inhabitant of the city, clearly lamented the abandonment of Nisibis, but he placed the blame for the event at Julian's door.

*A fortuitous wonder! There met me near the city
The corpse of that accursed one which passed by the wall;
The banner which was sent from the East Wind
The Magian took and fastened on the tower
So that a flag might point out for spectators
That the city was the slave of the lords of that banner.
RESPONSE: Praise to him who clothed his corpse in shame.
I was amazed as to how it was that there met and were present
The body and the standard, both at the same time.
And I knew that it was a wonderful preparation of justice
That while the corpse of the fallen one was passing,
There went up and was placed that fearsome banner so that it might proclaim that
The injustice of his diviners had delivered that city. (Hymns III.1-2)*

The passage is focalised around the speaker's point of view, giving it a very powerful sense of veracity. Ephrem chooses to depict himself here as a literal eye-witness, shaping the condemnation of Julian around his experience of witnessing Julian's body.¹¹⁸ The Persians are used as a means of further denigrating Julian, his failure made manifest through the flag fluttering within sight of his body. This gives him the ability to depict Julian as a participant in affairs, obscuring Jovian's role in events. The passage thus presents Julian as though he was still alive, using the juxtaposition of Julian's body and the Persian flag, signs of defeat and of victory, to cast blame for the fall of Nisibis upon the fallen emperor. In addition, the passage takes justice as its central theme, using the synecdoche of the diviners for Julian's religious policy and connecting it to Nisibis and Julian's corpse to thus depict in one single moment the crime, the consequence, and the subsequent punishment. This "wonderful preparation of justice" is less a discussion of the fall of Nisibis than it is a presentation of Julian's crime of apostasy, his punishment of death, and the consequence of the loss of Nisibis.

Ephrem uses his poetry to perform a posthumous condemnation against Julian. He does this in large part by manipulating the role that the Persians played in the loss of Nisibis, with a comparison between Julian and Sapor carefully constructed in the manner most likely to ruin the emperor's reputation. His own eye-witness account serves to highlight the cost of Julian's Persian Expedition, while the religious policies of Julian pervade the way that Sapor and the Persians are presented. We see that though the Persians make frequent appearances in Ephrem's poetry on this subject, the narrative uses them explicitly to discuss Julian and his failings, with Sapor raised up as the benefactor that Julian *should* have been.

¹¹⁸ Griffith (1987), 248 notes that we can sense Ephrem's powerful respect for the *office* of Emperor in this scene, a respect that derives in part from his role with regards the church.

CONCLUSION

The Christian narratives considered here differ in many ways from the pagan ones, especially in terms of having a triumphant concept underlying them, a teleological underpinning that makes all the elements depicted reflect the ultimate victory of the Church of Christ. These narratives thus depict the Persian Expedition, and Julian's death therein, as a means towards that ultimate victory. The Persians are utilised by the authors as a literary device to demonstrate Julian's failings, and that dramatically affects their depiction. In the process each author utilises the Persians in more-or-less different ways, subtly changing comment elements such as the deserter to fit the exact requirements and tone of their account. The Persian Expedition plays a relatively minor role in many of the works considered here, resulting in accounts that are brief and feature only those elements which the author thought to be most vital to their purpose. As a result, we can see the centrality of the deserter to the Christian conception of the expedition.

Further differences exist between the Persians in these accounts, but it is notable that the basic purpose that underlies them remains the same: to condemn Julian. Thus we have seen how a deserter's advice concerning the ships, which we find mentioned in our pagan sources, here becomes a magnified tale of Julian's folly in listening to lies, as the narrative of the Expedition becomes largely focused on the axis of the deserter and the emperor. In order to further the consistently anti-Julian atmosphere of these works, the deserter is made into a patriot and a tyrannicide.

The Persians themselves, depicted as variously powerful or weak, are also used to create the right depiction of Julian. Their narrative role is entirely subsumed to the need to highlighting Julian's failings. The way that the two sides are depicted owes very little to the historical account, and rather more to the teleological goal of depicting Julian's failure. So our depictions of the Persians, shaped by this dramatic need, is at the one time very different in each account, and at the same time very similar in its purpose.

The sections dealing with the treaty are masterpieces of misdirection, with each author striving to depict Julian as actually culpable for the treaty signed by Jovian. Here too, we see the Persians depicted in a strangely benevolent light, offering reasonable or lenient terms, the complaints about humiliation notwithstanding. The Persians cannot fill conceptual space that the man-devil Julian must occupy, and so their depiction is shunted into a more positive angle.

Ephrem, showing us the view from Nisibis, uses the Persians in a harsh series of juxtapositions with the dead Julian, their king and their banner used to depict the ultimate failure of the emperor and his works. The Persians are again being used in order to serve the end of demonstrating just how crushing Julian's failures were, a judgement delivered through explicit comparisons between Julian and Sapor, along with a focalisation upon Julian's corpse.

So for our Christian authors, the Persians are rather closer to a literary tool than to a coherent adversary within the Persian Expedition narrative. They have taken the Persians and twisted and shaped them for the precise end of demonstrating Julian's failures, within a series of works that strives to show how Christianity had won. The Christian authors are clearly willing to sacrifice both fact and narrative sense to achieve this, as some of the extremely compressed accounts show: the essential moralistic statement of Julian's failure is prioritised above forming a coherent narrative. Though the different authors all depict the events in different ways, with some noteworthy disagreements in their accounts, the Persians remain essentially a literary method to depict Julian's failings.

CONCLUSION TO DISSERTATION

The Persians as depicted by our authors are a varied people. Though they look the same, they certainly shared no common purpose. The different accounts portray Persians with motives so widely divergent as to have been drawn from different wars. It may be that attempting to form a unified and coherent picture of the Persian perspective of the war would not be possible with these sources. However, this dissertation set out to examine the way that the Persians are portrayed with the intention of drawing wider conclusions about the authors' goals, ideological approaches and genre traditions. We have seen this wide divergence in portrayals, and we have also seen the way that those portrayals point to different objectives. The objective of each author was further complicated by the fact that the Persians had killed Julian – the hero for the pagans – and inflicted a bad treaty upon Jovian – whom the Christians idolised. This created a tension that each author had to resolve.

The Persians have been used as a consistent element: by looking at each author through this one specific element, we removed the great mass of other details and focus specifically on how the authors manipulated that one element. Furthermore, the Persians are used as a literary device by our authors, a set element that they utilise to achieve a set effect within their works, which this dissertation has shown tended in the main to reflect upon the conduct and actions of Julian the Apostate. Because they were used as a literary device, the Persians offer us an easy route to analyse the intentions of the authors who first manipulated them. The findings here suggest strongly how our authors intended the Persian Expedition narrative to function, and when they are taken together they can form a comparison between the authors.

We have noted that the Persians are a good analytical tool for examining the motivations of the authors. However the Persians themselves are also of note in this endeavour. In distinction to other barbarian groups, the Persians are typically presented by Greco-Roman writers

as possessing some element of culture, and in Ammianus we see not only interest in that culture, but also a degree of respect. This is a unique position within Greco-Roman writing, and one that distinguishes the Persians from both other barbarian groups and the Greco-Roman participants of historical accounts. A further vital element that distinguishes the Persians from other groups is the way that they successfully defeated Roman armies and captured Roman cities on numerous occasions, meaning that they did not fit into the traditional depiction of barbarians being easily defeated by Roman forces. The Persians are thus a unique element in the Greco-Roman portrayal of the world, as outsiders that could not be treated in a simplistic reductionist manner with other outsider groups. This leads to our interest in investigating the Persians, as they already possess a unique role within the ideological framework of this time. Furthermore, the Persians are a vital element in the accounts, thanks to their role as antagonists to Julian and the Expedition taking place in their territory. Most critically, they had defeated Julian, who was the hero of the pagan authors, and then forced Jovian to accept a bad treaty, which was problematic for the Christian authors.

This means that each author had to decide how to resolve the tension caused by the Persians either killing Julian or inflicting the treaty on Jovian, while simultaneously aiming for their own ideological objective. The finding of this dissertation has been that each author achieved these two objectives by conflating them into one, treating the Persians as a way to further their ideological objective and resolve the tension at the same time. We can now take this important overall finding, and in light of it look at the findings of each chapter.

To briefly summarise the main points of the three chapters, we found that Ammianus used the Persians to defend Julian's reputation, the other pagan authors to control the damage to their side caused by Julian's death and the treaty, and the Christians to show Julian's justified defeat. These different approaches show clearly the focus upon Julian that we have found throughout the work. The centrality of his presence to the depictions of the Persians is hard to overstate, as it has become clear that all our authors have used the Persians to reflect in some way upon Julian.

Ammianus is notable for having a significant focus on the Persians that does not particularly reflect upon Julian for large sections – especially his geographical description of Persia – but the other authors all used the Persians rather more narrowly for this purpose.

By following this thread throughout the narratives, we find very clearly stated the different goals of the authors. Ammianus sought to salvage Julian's reputation almost on a personal level, using the Persians to form a flattering image. Their exoticism and malevolence combine to try and persuade the reader that Julian's invasion – or, rather, his *decision* to invade – was correct and the right decision. This differs significantly from the other pagan authors, who are less focused on exculpating Julian's decisions than with trying to persuade the reader of Julian's importance and abilities. Ammianus' account is much longer, which gives him more space to expound more complex ideas, as well as being written in the genre of Roman historiography, which traditionally includes sizeable descriptions of wars abroad. This gives him the opportunity to try and depict Julian as more Roman, by presenting the Persians as more foreign. The pagan authors, meanwhile, have more to say about Persian power than Persian exoticness. This power ties back into their discussion of how Julian's abilities were crucial to the Expedition's success. For the pagan authors, the purpose that they are following is to show how vital Julian was as an emperor, and how important his own role in affairs was. They implicitly show him as the sole reason for the successes that the Expedition had, and steer clear of assigning blame to him for the failure of the Expedition overall.

When we then compare this to the Christian authors, the comparison shows us the narrative being taken in a completely different direction. Though the focus upon Julian remains steady, we now find the Persian Expedition being used to further the story of Christian victory in the struggle with paganism. This dimension had played a large part in the pagan narratives, as it was one of the essential reasons for the way that Julian dominates, but the Christian authors are in many ways bolder. Taking things that had been minor elements in the pagan accounts, such as a deserter deluding Julian, they turned them into major foci of the Expedition narrative. The differences

between the Christian accounts and the pagan ones must have been obvious at the time, while bitter debate between the pagan and Christian traditions was taking place regarding Julian's accomplishments and death, and so it seems unlikely that this was an accidental occurrence. The Christian authors adhered to their own genre, which was focused on church history as opposed to secular history, and their own tradition, one which pursued a narrative of Julian's death resulting from God's will, and so their accounts pay little attention to those written by the pagan authors. With this different set of priorities, the Christian authors present their dramatically divergent accounts and focus upon the ways that Julian failed during the expedition. The Persians are used as a foil to his attempts to succeed, with the Persian desert and deserter demonstrating his foolishness. The Persians act even more as a malleable element than they did in Ammianus, being shaped according to the method chosen by the author to depict Julian as a fool. In contrast to Ammianus there is no interest shown in the geography or culture of Persia, and unlike the pagan authors there is not the same focus upon the relative power of the two sides. Instead we have the Persians reduced to their simplest depictions, given the singular role of denigrating Julian.

This consistent use of the Persians as a mirror shows that each author seized upon the Persians as a vital tool in the war of words over Julian's legacy. It also introduces a strong note of warning against attempting to sketch a historical account of the Persians or other barbarians from accounts of foreign or hostile groups within Greco-Roman writing. It is clear that if the Persians were so malleable within these accounts, then other outsider groups are equally likely to have been changed and morphed by those who wrote about them, in order to achieve some desired effect. That they did this, instead of following the tradition of Persian portrayals or focusing upon an unbiased account, is a valuable reminder of the way that ancient historians saw their craft as including vital elements of literary skill.

FUTURE RESEARCH PATHS

One possible future option for this research project is to expand the scope, and look at depictions of the Persians in other contexts, to see if their use is consistent with that presented here. It is clear that the Persian Expedition was unique in terms of how widely discussed it was and how much it divided opinions. Other time periods, lacking this vigorous debate, may depict the Persians in a more consistent fashion, leaning on the traditional account. In particular, the religious element to the debate meant that aspects of the traditional Persian portrayal – such as ethnographic ideas of wet and warm countries – were suppressed in favour of elements more conducive to the purposes of our authors. Or we may see the trend continuing, with the Persians (and other barbarian peoples, perhaps) used as a malleable element that can be shaped to reflect upon the protagonists. This expansion would use the current chapters as a base, and add extra ones handling the other time periods, resulting in a work that was longer but with much the same structure.

An alternative approach would be to look at other elements in the Persian Expedition, such as Julian's religion, and use that as a complementary element in examining the accounts. This approach would broaden the topic to be about the way that authors depicted the entire Expedition, with the Persians being only one element within it. This has the benefit of using the current research as the basis of further research, but it would radically alter the structure of the work, requiring a total re-write.

The most radical possibility is to use the current work as an inspiration for a wide-ranging investigation into the way that ancient historiography used outsiders (such as the Persians and other hostile groups) in general, and to then compare that to the way that it uses insiders (such as Roman or Greek generals), in order to see what it could reveal about the genre's use and depiction of those groups. It may be that the way the Persians have been used by our authors is indicative of a wider

trend, one that could be analysed at length to see how it affects not only the depiction of outsiders, but also the purpose and intent of the genre as a whole.

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