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**Between Panegyric and History: Literary
Representations of the Emperor
Valentinian I (364–375)**

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degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

This thesis examines the literary representation of the Pannonian emperor Valentinian I (364–375) in two different types of source dated to the fourth and fifth centuries AD. More specifically, it analyses how literary sources which were contemporaneous with Valentinian's reign (Symmachus' imperial panegyrics; and imperial legislation) and which promoted the 'official' view of Valentinian's regime, were received and interpreted in the later historical sources for the emperor's reign (namely, Ammianus Marcellinus' *Res Gestae*; and the histories of the Christian historians Tyrannius Rufinus, Paulus Orosius, Socrates Scholasticus, Sozomen and Theodoret). By analysing three themes (dynastic, military and religious) which were prominent in both forms of representation, this thesis explores how and why these 'contemporary' and 'historical' representations of the emperor differed, and asks what the interaction of these sources can tell us about the literary representation of Valentinian more generally.

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List of Abbreviations

Ambr. <i>Ep.</i>	Ambrose	<i>Epistulae</i>
<i>De ob. Val. Con.</i>		<i>De Obitu Valentiniani Consolatio</i>
Amm.	Ammianus Marcellinus	<i>Res Gestae</i>
Aug. <i>DCD.</i>	Augustine	<i>De Civitate Dei</i>
Aus. <i>Mos.</i>	Ausonius	<i>Mosella</i>
Cass. Dio	Cassius Dio	
<i>Cons. Const.</i>	<i>Consularia Constantinopolitana</i>	
<i>CTh.</i>	<i>Codex Theodosianus</i>	
Eus. <i>HE</i>	Eusebius	<i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>
<i>LC</i>		<i>Laus Constantini</i>
<i>VC</i>		<i>Vita Constantini</i>
Evag. <i>HE</i>	Evagrius	<i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>
Jer. <i>Chron.</i>	Jerome	<i>Chronicon</i>
<i>Ep.</i>		<i>Epistulae</i>
Lib. <i>Or.</i>	Libanius	<i>Orationes</i>
Oros. <i>Hist.</i>	Orosius	<i>Historiarum Adversum Paganos Libri VII</i>
<i>Pan. Lat</i>	<i>Panegyrici Latini</i>	

Philost. <i>HE</i>	Philostorgius	<i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>
Rufin. <i>HE</i>	Rufinus	<i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>
Serv. <i>Comm. in Verg. Buc.</i>	Servius	<i>Commentaria in Bucolica Virgilii</i>
Sid. <i>Ep.</i>	Sidonius Apollinaris	<i>Epistulae</i>
Socr. <i>HE</i>	Socrates	<i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>
Soz. <i>HE</i>	Sozomen	<i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>
Symm. <i>Or.</i> <i>Ep.</i>	Symmachus	<i>Orationes</i> <i>Epistulae</i>
Them. <i>Or.</i>	Themistius	<i>Orationes</i>
Theod. <i>HE</i>	Theodoret	<i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>
Zon.	Zonaras	<i>Epitome Historiarum</i>
Zos.	Zosimus	<i>Historia Nova</i>

<i>ILS</i>	H. Dessau, <i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i> (Berlin, 1892-1916, 3 vols.)
<i>PLRE I</i>	A. H. M. Jones, J. R. Martindale and J. Morris (eds.), <i>Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire I</i> (AD 260–395) (Cambridge, 1970)

Introduction

The primary concern of this thesis is the representation of the emperor Valentinian in the literary sources for his reign. It will be appropriate, therefore, to start with a brief biography of the emperor and a historical overview of his reign, including some of the most important issues and events within it. The soldier who was to become the sixty-fifth Roman emperor, Flavius Valentinianus, or Valentinian, was born at Cibalae in the province of Pannonia Secunda in AD 320/1.¹ His father, Gratianus Maior, was a soldier, renowned for his physical strength, who rose from a low rank in the army, first to the position of imperial bodyguard (*protector*), then to the rank of *tribunus* (of unclear function), and finally to the positions of *comes rei castrensis per Africae* and *comes Britanniae*.² From the first panegyric of the Roman orator Symmachus, it is clear that Gratianus took his young son with him when he relocated to Africa, which was probably in the late 320s or early 330s.³ It was in Africa that Valentinian was first introduced to the military existence which would henceforth define his own life and career. Prior to his accession on 25th February 364, Valentinian's career had not been particularly distinguished, but he did have considerable military experience.⁴ He served as a tribune in Gaul but, according to the historian Ammianus Marcellinus, was dismissed from the army by the emperor Constantius II for allegedly undermining operations.⁵ What Ammianus had represented as a somewhat dishonourable dismissal, a sacking even, did not seem to preclude Valentinian from returning to the service, for he reappears as an officer stationed in Mesopotamia in 360/1, and as *comes et tribunus cornutorum* in 362.⁶ Christian historians generally concur that, at some point during the

¹ *PLRE* I, Valentinianus 7. For his birthplace, see Amm. 30.6.6, Lib. *Or.* 20.25, Zos. 3.36.2, Philost. *HE* 8.16.

² Amm. 30.7.2-3. For the career of Gratianus Maior, see Drijvers' important article (2015); cf. also Lenski (2002), 36-41, Tomlin (1973), 2-4.

³ Symm. *Or.* 1.1; Drijvers (2015), 483. On Valentinian and Valens' early life, see Lenski (2002), ch. 1.

⁴ Den Boeft *et al.* (2008), 20-22; *PLRE* I, 933-34. For the date of the accession, see Den Boeft *et al.* (2008), 23-4.

⁵ Amm. 16.11.6-7.

⁶ Philost. *HE* 7.7. Cf. Den Boeft *et al.* (2008), 21-2.

reign of the emperor Julian, Valentinian was banished as a result of his Christian faith, although several modern scholars have disputed the historical accuracy of this event.⁷ With the accession of the Christian emperor Jovian in 363, Valentinian continued his military career.⁸ Dispatched on a special mission by Jovian to Gaul, he was almost killed during a mutiny of soldiers, and only escaped with the assistance of a friend.⁹ Upon his return, he was appointed commander of the *schola secunda Scutariorum*, a position which he held until Jovian's death at Dadastana on 17th February 364 paved the way to the purple.¹⁰

After his proclamation as emperor by the soldiers on 25th February 364, Valentinian elevated his brother Valens to the office of co-emperor before the end of the following month and initiated the *divisio regni* within the year, a course of action which affected the political and physical landscape of the Roman world for centuries to come.¹¹ Valens was assigned the eastern half of the Empire, and Valentinian took the west for himself, a decision which surprised many. Although this was not the first time that the Empire had been divided and power shared between imperial colleagues, Valentinian's *divisio imperii* was far-reaching in its administrative and military partition of the Empire into eastern and western halves, and no doubt served as a model for its final division in 395.¹² The later division of 395 is often regarded as a symptom of the Roman Empire's disintegration and decline, but it is clear that the *divisio regni* of 364 was intended to enhance the dynasty's strength, and to preserve the Empire's administrative and political unity.¹³ Indeed, as Jan Willem Drijvers argued, 'even though the partition in

⁷ For the event, see Rufin. *HE*. 11.2, Socr. *HE* 4.1.8, Soz. *HE* 6.6.3-6, Philost. *HE* 7.7, 8.5, Theod. *HE* 3.16, Oros. *Hist.* 7.32.2. For the reliability of their information, see Woods (1998) and Lenski (2002a).

⁸ Philost. *HE* 8.5; Zon. 13.15.4.

⁹ Amm. 25.10.7.

¹⁰ Amm. 25.10.9. For Jovian's death, see Amm. 25.10.12, Socr. *HE* 3.26.5.

¹¹ For the *divisio regni* of 364 and the circumstances surrounding it, see our primary source for the event: Amm. 26.1-2, 4-5.6. The *divisio regni* of 364 has not received much attention from scholars, something which Drijvers (2015), 82-96, has now attempted to remedy.

¹² Drijvers (2015), 86.

¹³ Drijvers (2015), 95.

eastern and western half [*sic*] ultimately led to the disintegration of the Roman Empire, the *divisio regni* of 364 fits well in the context of efforts of keeping the Empire together and securing it for the future.’¹⁴

A major element of this context was Valentinian’s unusual decision to take control of the western half of the Empire. As Drijvers has correctly observed, the sources are vague in giving the reasons as to why Valentinian made this decision and gave preference to the west when ‘the centre of gravity had been continually pushed eastwards since the reigns of Diocletian and Constantine’.¹⁵ Valentinian’s panegyrist Symmachus claimed that the emperor’s decision was rooted in the latter’s spirit of self-sacrifice and his desire to protect the threatened western frontiers, while Ammianus also mentioned the emperor’s desire to strengthen the cities located on the Rhine and Danube frontier.¹⁶ John Drinkwater, however, argued that the reasons for his selection were, in fact, to be found in ‘the brittleness of internal Roman politics and in the need for all emperors to secure the loyalty of the western armies’.¹⁷ Drinkwater based his argument on the premise that the Alamanni were not a plausible threat at the time of Valentinian’s accession, arguing that whatever recalcitrance there may have been under Constantius and Julian had been easily kept in check.¹⁸ Given the events of 365, however, it would surely be problematic to suggest that they did not constitute a serious threat.¹⁹ Their defeat of a Roman army and its two veteran generals, one a commander of both upper and lower Germany, and the seizing of the legionary standard, must have been highly embarrassing for the new administration.²⁰ Drinkwater’s argument, therefore, that the Alamannic threat was insignificant appears overly reductionist in the context of Valentinian’s decision to take the western half of the Empire. A more

¹⁴ Drijvers (2015), 94.

¹⁵ Drijvers (2015), 90.

¹⁶ Amm. 30.7.5.

¹⁷ Drinkwater (1997), 9.

¹⁸ Drinkwater (1997), 9.

¹⁹ For the dating of this disastrous defeat at the hands of the Alamanni, see Den Boeft *et al.* (2008), 112-3.

²⁰ Amm. 27.1.1-6.

plausible suggestion in my view is proffered by Drijvers; namely that Valentinian simply considered the problems in the west to be more serious than those in the east.²¹

It was not, however, only the external Alamannic threat which confronted Valentinian in the first few years of his reign. On 28th September 365, the usurper Procopius instigated a rebellion in the eastern half of the Empire, claiming to be a relative of Julian and to have been appointed successor by the latter on his death-bed.²² Although Valentinian may have originally intended to travel east in aid of his brother, he eventually chose not to and some scholars have argued that his decision was in the interests of self-preservation; that is, that Valentinian was reluctant to leave the West because of the precariousness of his own situation there.²³ Without the help of his brother then, Valens oversaw the defeat of Procopius' rebellion and the latter was executed on 27th May 366.

By the end of 366, the Alamannic threat in the west had been halted by Valentinian's general Jovinus, who was duly rewarded with the consulship of 367.²⁴ It was sometime in 367 that Valentinian learned about the so-called 'barbarian conspiracy' in Britain. While the exact chronology of these events is uncertain, it is clear that Valentinian was struck down with a severe illness before he could deal with the matter personally, and instead Theodosius the Elder was sent to extinguish the rebellion.²⁵ The severity of Valentinian's illness was such that it sparked a battle for succession at the court among the different factions who regarded his death a *fait accompli*, and while Valentinian survived, the important question of his successor had been raised.²⁶ To ensure, therefore, that his own offspring remained on the imperial throne, Valentinian resorted to an unorthodox practice by elevating his nine-year old son Gratian to the status of an

²¹ Drijvers (2015), 90-1.

²² Amm. 26.5-9; Zos. 4.4-8.

²³ Drinkwater (1997), 11; Lenski (2003), 76 also echoes this opinion, although not with quite the same conviction as Drinkwater.

²⁴ *PLRE* I 1044.

²⁵ Tomlin (1974).

²⁶ Cf. Amm. 27.6.

Augustus on 24th August 367 at Amiens.²⁷ Although his age meant that he could be of little immediate assistance to his father, his elevation to *Augustus* was the first stage in Valentinian's attempt to found an enduring dynasty.

Theodosius' campaign in Britain was an overwhelming success, and by the end of summer 368, order had been restored throughout the province. The situation on the Rhine frontier, however, had not progressed quite as smoothly. The unpredictability of the Alamanni, a people who were 'at one time abject and suppliant and soon afterwards threatening the worst' continued to create significant instability on the Rhine frontier.²⁸ To prevent any resurgence of the threat, in the summer of 368, Valentinian, accompanied by the emperor Gratian, his generals Severus and Jovinus, and a large army, crossed the River Moenus (Mainz) and pushed deep into Alamannic territory.²⁹ Having branched out from the main body of the army for the purpose of scouting, Valentinian was ambushed in a particularly marshy area at Solicinum, and only marginally escaped with his life.³⁰ In the larger battle which followed a week later, the Alamannic forces, drawn out from their advantageous positions in the hills, were no match for the trained Roman army on open ground, who won decisively with minimal losses. The expedition ultimately secured a year-long peace in the region, and with the cessation of hostilities for the foreseeable future, the emperor and his entourage marched back to their winter quarters in Trier, where planning was underway for the last of the western Empire's great building programmes, due to begin in the spring of 369.

In 369, Valentinian embarked on a programme of fortification works which included the construction of new structures and the renovation of old structures along the Rhine frontier. For the western Empire, the construction of these fortifications could not have

²⁷ Amm. 27.6.4-5. The date is given at *Cons. Const.* s.a. 364; Socr. *HE* 4.11.3.

²⁸ Amm. 27.10.5, *milite nihilo minus accenso, cui ob suspectos eorum mores nunc infimorum et supplicum, paulo post ultima minitantium nullae quiescendi dabantur indutiae.*

²⁹ Amm. 27.10.6.

³⁰ Amm. 27.10.8.

come at a more opportune time. In the spring of 370,³¹ reports reached the court in Trier that an army of Saxons was rapidly advancing towards the frontier of Gaul, having already raided many coastal areas and defeated a Roman force led by the general Nannenus.³² News of this development prompted Valentinian to dispatch his leading general Severus immediately to intercept the enemy before they reached the northern frontier; despite the negotiation of a peace treaty, Severus' army, perhaps in vengeance for the previous defeat, laid an ambush for the unsuspecting Saxons at Deuso³³ (perhaps Deutz, Cologne) and massacred them all.³⁴ Theodor Mommsen cited this ambush as proof of how honour had truly departed from Roman warfare.³⁵ Indeed, traditionally, Severus' actions would have been those associated with the barbarians they had conquered.³⁶

In 370/1, following the failure of a Burgundian-Roman partnership against the Alamanni, Ammianus relates how the *magister equitum* Theodosius, taking advantage of such an opportune moment, immediately passed through the province of Raetia and attacked the scattered Alamanni, killing and capturing many.³⁷ The defeat, however, did not permanently subdue the Alamanni, and it was not long before they were causing trouble in the region once again. Their king Macrianus had grown significantly in power by 372, according to Ammianus, and was in the process of stirring up his subjects, presumably for another assault on the Roman frontiers.³⁸ The plan which Valentinian drew up to combat this renewed threat was audacious: the abduction of King Macrianus on Alamannic territory.³⁹ The involvement of Valentinian's best generals, Severus commanding the infantry and Theodosius the cavalry, highlights the importance of the

³¹ Jer. *Chron.* 246h mistakenly gives the date as 373.

³² Amm. 28.5.1-2.

³³ Jer. *Chron.* 246h.

³⁴ Amm. 28.5.5-7.

³⁵ MH.III, 206.

³⁶ Salzman (2006), 364.

³⁷ Amm. 28.5.15.

³⁸ Amm. 29.4.2.

³⁹ Amm. 29.4.2.

mission. Valentinian is said to have travelled with the rest of the men, who were lightly equipped, even sleeping out in the open with only a rough blanket for cover.⁴⁰ The events which followed have been obfuscated by a lacuna of three and a half lines in the original manuscript of Ammianus' work. Valentinian may have actually met Macrianus, but the noise from his men outside awoke the king's attendants, who, realising what was happening, whisked Macrianus away in a wagon. The fact, however, that the subject of the next sentence after the lacuna, is ambiguous (either Severus or Valentinian) could mean that Valentinian never met Macrianus, being 'prevented by the continuous noise of his men'.⁴¹ Ammianus is careful to emphasize the rowdiness of the army as the reason for the mission's failure, as it fits with his belief, to be discussed later, that the emperor gave the army and military men too much power, ultimately creating a military order that assumed the prestige of the old senatorial order with which Ammianus was aligned.⁴²

By 373, it was the turn of the Quadi to rebel against Roman authority. There had been some unrest in the Danube area at the beginning of Valentinian's reign, but the silence in our sources tells us that it had been quickly and efficiently quelled. The cause of the Quadi's anger this time was the building of a garrison-camp across the Danube boundary, part of Valentinian's fortification-building programme. Their complaints, however, to Aequitius, the *magister equitum*, fell on deaf ears. Following an act of treachery which resulted in the death of their king Gabinius, the Quadi, having gathered together a vast army which included their Sarmatian allies, proceeded to ravage the unprotected province of Valeria by the spring harvest of 374.⁴³ The two legions, which were sent to suppress the rebellion were routed by the Sarmatians, and only the intervention of the future emperor Theodosius the Younger prevented the enemy

⁴⁰ Amm. 29.4.5.

⁴¹ Amm. 29.4.5, *frequenti equitatu cum Theodosio rectore praeire disposito, ne quid lateret* <<<lacuna>>> *tempore iaceat (?)*, *extento strepitu suorum est impeditus quibus assidue mandans*.

⁴² Jones (1964), 142.

⁴³ Amm. 29.6.8-12.

overrunning the province of Moesia.⁴⁴ Valentinian did not receive news of this rebellion until late in 374.⁴⁵ His most recent campaign against the Alamanni involved the destruction of minor Alamannic settlements and the construction of a fortified post near Basel; on hearing the news, however, it was clear that Valentinian would have to move court, all but abandoning an assault on the Alamanni. The officials, who begged him to stay in Trier until the following spring, did so on the grounds that Illyricum was impenetrable with an army during the winter months and that Macrianus and the Alamanni would once again rise up and attack even fortified cities, once Valentinian had left for Illyricum.⁴⁶ The only realistic solution, therefore, for Valentinian was to nullify the Alamannic threat by making peace with King Macrianus.

The arrival of spring the next year, 375, heralded the beginning of Valentinian's campaign. Leaving his residence of nine years at Trier, he travelled to Carnuntum, a ruined and deserted city in Pannonia (near modern Vienna), where he stayed for three months, preparing for the campaign by gathering the vast amount of supplies required to maintain the army.⁴⁷ In the autumn of 375, with his generals Sebastianus and Merobaudes, Valentinian finally crossed into Quadic territory at Aquincum (Budapest), and after bridging the Danube, pillaged many Quadic villages without a loss, before retiring to the fortress of Brigetio (present day Komarom-Szöny, Hungary) for the winter. On 17th November 375, however, after discussions with representatives for the Quadi, a peace treaty was successfully negotiated: the Roman offensive would cease if the Quadi agreed to supply the army with new recruits. A truce was agreed. Nevertheless, on hearing that the barbarians continued to cite his fortifications as the

⁴⁴ Amm. 29.6.15. Theodosius the Elder had already been executed for unknown reasons.

⁴⁵ Amm. 30.3.1-2.

⁴⁶ Amm. 30.3.3.

⁴⁷ Amm. 30.5.11. Elton (1996), 237 highlights just how vast such a task was: 'Even Julian's small army at Strasbourg, 13,000 men, of whom perhaps 3,000 were cavalry, would require a minimum of 30 tons of grain, 13 tons of fodder, and 30,000 gallons of water *every day*. These estimates consider only the fighting men and horses.' For Julian's lack of preparation and its consequences, cf. Tomlin (1974), 304, n. 12.

cause of the war, Valentinian became enraged to the point that he suffered a stroke and died.⁴⁸

Valentinian and his reign are subjects which have engendered much scholarly debate, but which nevertheless remain understudied and undervalued. There have been two recent studies by Milena Raimondi and Sebastian Schmidt-Hofner in Italian and German respectively, and there is, of course, Roger Tomlin's impressive unpublished DPhil thesis, which is accessible only via a visit, or visits, to Oxford's Bodleian Library;⁴⁹ but none of these works are comprehensive in the style of Noel Lenski's learned study of Valens' reign in the eastern half of the Empire.⁵⁰ Given that the primary source for Valentinian's reign is the *Res Gestae* of Ammianus Marcellinus, it is unsurprising that there has been much scholarship on the latter's representation of the emperor. I cannot possibly name or list all of them here, but it will suffice to identify some works of scholarship which have influenced this thesis considerably. Firstly, the work of John Matthews, whose balanced assessment of the emperor Valentinian found an appropriate middle ground between those scholars who had argued for extremes.⁵¹ For example, Otto Seeck, in the fifth volume of his magisterial *Geschichte des Untergangs der antiken Welt* (1913), was one of the first modern scholars to construct a historical account of Valentinian's reign based on the surviving evidence. Seeck's vast knowledge and contribution to classical study meant that his work was extremely influential, although in terms of Valentinian, Andreas Alföldi rightly argued that Seeck had merely created a 'caricature' of the emperor.⁵² In his own work, however, Alföldi,

⁴⁸ For Ammianus' graphic description of Valentinian's death, cf. 30.6.3-5; also Zos. 4.17.

⁴⁹ M. Raimondi, *Valentiniano I e la scelta dell'Occidente* (Milan, 2001); S. Schmidt-Hofner, *Reagieren und Gestalten. Der Regierungsstil des spätrömischen Kaisers am Beispiel der Gesetzgebung Valentinians I.* (München, 2008); R. S. O. Tomlin, 'The Emperor Valentinian I' (Oxford, unpubl. DPhil, 1973).

⁵⁰ N. Lenski, *Failure of Empire: Valens and the Roman State in the Fourth Century AD* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

⁵¹ Matthews (1989); cf. also *ibid.* (1975).

⁵² Alföldi (1952), 8.

aiming to ‘correct the characterisation of this hard personality’, unfortunately was so argumentative in some parts of his work that it simply becomes unhelpful.⁵³ Secondly, Timothy Barnes’ *Ammianus Marcellinus and the Representation of Historical Reality*, with whom I find much to agree on in terms of his interpretation of Ammianus’ general representation of Valentinian (and Valens), to be discussed in Chapter One.⁵⁴ Thirdly, a well-known article by François Paschoud, which argued that Ammianus Marcellinus sketched ‘a perfidiously and maliciously distorted portrait’ of Valentinian.⁵⁵ Hans Teitler’s response to this article corrected some elements of what can only be described as Paschoud’s overzealous argument, but there still seems, at least in my view, much on which to agree with Paschoud.⁵⁶ Fourthly, Gavin Kelly’s excellent study of Ammianus’ literary technique, which highlighted not only the complexities of the text, but also the high level of authorial intention which lay behind it.⁵⁷ And finally, Hartmut Leppin’s article ‘Der Reflex der Selbstdarstellung der valentinianischen Dynastie bei Ammianus Marcellinus und den Kirchenhistorikern’; at the heart of this short work is a brilliant idea, from which my own thesis ultimately stems.⁵⁸

My interest in the emperor Valentinian originated from my first, fortuitous reading of Ammianus Marcellinus’ *Res Gestae* as an undergraduate student researching potential topics for my final year dissertation. Despite having little knowledge of the Late Antique world, I was fascinated by Ammianus’ change in language and tone when he moved from discussing the emperor Julian, to the emperor Valentinian (J. C. Rolfe’s Loeb translation, for all its faults, captures Ammianus’ disdain with distinction). In my younger and more vulnerable years, therefore, I wanted to prove that Ammianus had set out to deliberately ‘misrepresent’ Valentinian; that is, that he had written a history which showed as ‘bad’ an emperor who was, in actual fact, ‘good’. At the beginning of

⁵³ Alföldi (1952), 9.

⁵⁴ Barnes (1998).

⁵⁵ Paschoud (1992). Quote taken from Teitler’s response (2007).

⁵⁶ See previous footnote.

⁵⁷ Kelly (2008).

⁵⁸ Leppin (2007).

this current thesis, some years later, such black-and-white notions in a complicated world like Late Antiquity were quickly discouraged by my wiser supervisors, and so I proceeded to embark on a historical consideration of Valentinian's reign. As I realised, however, that my interest lay more in the textual representation of Valentinian than in the facts of his reign, I settled on the idea of analysing how Valentinian was represented in the different literary sources for his reign. For it was clear to me that the central issue with our sources was not that they represented the emperor as 'good' or 'bad', but that each source represented the emperor in a different way, and for very different reasons. In this thesis, therefore, I will consider the textual strategies of imperial representation by analysing our sources for Valentinian's reign as literature, not historical documents; and I will examine how they represent the emperor in the different roles which constituted the job of the emperor. Indeed, these texts do not simply show Valentinian performing one activity or another; rather they represent him in a specific light, magnifying the respective elements or aspects which they regarded as important, and covering up others.

The main sources for this thesis then can be separated into two discrete categories of authorship, which are related to their proximity to the emperor. The first group, which I have termed 'contemporary representation', is those sources which were written during Valentinian's reign and whose authors were directly linked to the regime: namely, the three imperial panegyrics of the Roman senator Symmachus, all of which were delivered before the emperor; and the imperial legislation which emanated directly from the emperor, and/or his immediate vicinity. The second group, which I have called 'historical representation', includes those sources which have no connection to Valentinian's regime, and which were written sometime after his reign: namely, the *Res Gestae* of Ammianus Marcellinus, the Latin church history of Tyrannius Rufinus, the history of Paulus Orosius, and the Greek church histories of Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret. By their very nature, the sources which I have placed under the heading 'historical representation' all are themselves historiographical works in one form or another, although it is fairly clear that the approach of each

historian was determined by a number of important factors, including their respective perspectives, aims, preoccupations and intended audiences.

The application of such chronological and textual limitations in my selection of primary sources necessarily precludes the inclusion of every source from the period of Valentinian's reign. In the case of two notable authors – the Gallic poet and courtier Ausonius, and the Eastern orator Themistius – their considerable output has not been entirely ignored, but neither has it been directly addressed in the course of my argument. For Ausonius, the reasoning seems readily apparent: his work dated to the reign of Valentinian is neither epideictic nor historiographical, although his panegyric in 379 to Gratian makes for an interesting case-study in the mechanics of imperial praise. In a thesis which deals considerably with panegyric literature, the side-lining of Themistius requires fuller justification. The panegyric writing of Themistius differs from Symmachus, as both authors focus on different topics and address different themes. Where Symmachus' *Orationes* – as will be discussed in later chapters – show great concern for the representation of Valentinian as a military-emperor with an enlarged focus on imperial achievements, Themistius' panegyrics are often more generic in content, and far more philosophical in their approach to imperial representation. The deeds and achievements of emperors are secondary concerns for Themistius; rather it is the idea of the 'philosopher-king' which interests him most of all, and which he brings up with every emperor he eulogises. I have not, therefore, not included Themistius primarily because of his location in the east; his partial omission in the context of this thesis is a topically and thematically-based assessment of his value as a source for the literary representation of Valentinian.

Given the difference in the nature of the sources, it seems reasonable to expect that the 'historical representation' of the emperor Valentinian would differ considerably from the 'contemporary representation'. And indeed, Ammianus' depiction of the emperor Valentinian in his *Res Gestae* differs considerably from that of Symmachus' imperial panegyrics. The works of both men were shaped by the specific political and historical contexts in which they were composed, and by the audiences for whom they were

respectively intended.⁵⁹ Mark Humphries, considering the image of Valentinian in the works of Symmachus and Ammianus, noted the tension between the genres of panegyric and history which ‘looms large in Ammianus’ final books’, but falls short of arguing that Ammianus’ historical narrative was a direct response to speeches which praised Valentinian (and Valens) unconditionally.⁶⁰ Hartmut Leppin was more successful in addressing the relationship between these two genres. He committed to the idea that Ammianus was aware of, and even vexed by, the ‘official narrative’ of Valentinian and Valens’ regime which was promoted in the panegyrics of Themistius (Leppin’s focus) and Symmachus; and so Ammianus’ historical account was responding, and perhaps over-compensating for, the indulgent self-representation of the Valentinianic dynasty.⁶¹ Leppin’s argument is, of course, enhanced by Sabbah’s discovery that Ammianus had clearly read a version of Symmachus’ first (and perhaps second and third) panegyric to Valentinian.⁶² While I would agree with Leppin’s greater emphasis on the ‘response’ of Books 26-31 of the *Res Gestae* to the imperial self-representation of the Valentinianic dynasty, he is certainly justified to state that, ‘Es wäre gewiß reduktionistisch zu behaupten, daß Ammians Geschichtsbücher als ganze eine Auseinandersetzung mit der Selbstdarstellung der valentinianischen Dynastie gewesen wären’.⁶³ Following Leppin’s lead, I certainly do not intend to argue for such a restrictive interpretation of these sources. I think it is far more effective to show that Ammianus’ history was engaging with and responding to a form of ‘official’ representation, and was attacking elements which would have been present in all the political communications and propaganda which emanated from the vicinity of the imperial regime.

In order to discuss this relationship, which can be distilled down to the principle of imperial self-representation versus imperial representation, I must necessarily employ

⁵⁹ Cf. Humphries (1999), 118.

⁶⁰ Humphries (1999), 117.

⁶¹ Leppin (2007), *passim*.

⁶² Sabbah (1978), 332-46; Den Boeft *et al.* (2008), 42.

⁶³ Leppin (2007), 51.

some kind of schematic framework which will facilitate a comparison between texts which did not naturally identify and separate individual elements of the imperial experience. As such, I have selected three ‘representations’ or themes which, in my opinion, predominate in all of these sources, historical and contemporary alike: (a) dynastic, (b) military, and (c) religious. If this approach seems unnecessarily factitious, it has been done in the understanding that imperial self-representation and representation were both in reality single images with constituent elements, but that only by disconnecting some parts from their natural associations am I able to contrast these images effectively. For example, the process of imperial accession straddles two clear themes of imperial representation, because there is a ‘dynastic’ element to the process, but also a clear ‘military’ element, in that emperors in the fourth century were elevated before the assembled body of troops, and were reliant on their unanimous approval to govern legitimately. This thesis will demonstrate that, by analysing the constituent elements of these representations of the emperor Valentinian, we can gain a more organic understanding of the general representations which our sources respectively proffered, and also see how clearly the historians of Valentinian’s reign engaged and interacted with the official narrative of his regime.

Chapter One will consider our primary historical source for the reign of Valentinian, Ammianus Marcellinus’ *Res Gestae*. This chapter will aim to contextualise this vital source, and will discuss factors which influenced the historian’s representation of Valentinian and of emperors more generally. Chapter Two will give thought to the ‘contemporary representation’ of imperial panegyric, and will also discuss the career of our major source, Q. Aurelius Symmachus. I will contextualise his imperial panegyrics to Valentinian and Gratian, and will also discuss the degree to which these works can be considered imperial ‘self-representation’. Chapter Three will address the dynastic representation of Valentinian through the elevation of his son Gratian to the rank of *Augustus* in 367, firstly as he and this event were depicted in the ‘official’ narrative of Symmachus (*Oration* 3), before analysing Ammianus’ historical ‘response’ to this self-representation in his history. Chapter Four will proceed to examine the representation of Valentinian as a military emperor in the first and second panegyrics

of Symmachus, discussing how the imperial regime wished to represent itself to contemporary observers; this will be contrasted with Ammianus' representation of Valentinian as a military emperor in his *Res Gestae*. And in the final chapter, I will consider the theme of religion in relation to Valentinian's reign. The 'official' view of the emperor in this chapter will not derive from Symmachus' panegyrics, but will be taken from Valentinian's own religious legislation; the 'Selbstdarstellung' contained within these laws will, in turn, be compared and contrasted with the representation of elements of the emperor's religious policy and faith in Ammianus' work, but also in the histories of Rufinus, Orosius, Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret, all of which showed a particularly strong interest in this facet of imperial rule.

For each of my selected themes, or modes of representation (dynastic, military and religious), therefore, I will consider a number of important questions: firstly, with relation to 'contemporary representation', what was the representation of the emperor which emerged from the contemporary literary sources? To what extent did it align with the political priorities of the imperial regime at the time of composition? What elements of the imperial experience did the contemporary representation highlight and promote? What criticisms did it set out to defend the emperor against, and what opinions did it strive to counter? How strongly did each of these themes (dynastic, military and religious) feature in the contemporary sources? To what extent did the contemporary sources themselves contain common messages and shared ideals, and to what extent did these contribute to enhancing and supporting the position of the emperor? To what extent did the contemporary representation promote the legitimacy of the emperor, and if so, what political events or circumstances were used to augment the emperor's legitimacy and authority?

Secondly, with relation to 'historical representation', what were the representations of the emperor which emerged from the historical sources? To what extent did these representations differ from those found in our contemporary sources? If indeed they did, for what reasons did they differ? How can we explain elements of imperial representation which were similar in both types of sources? To what extent were our

historical sources directly engaging with and responding to elements and ideals found in our contemporary sources? How did the biases and preoccupations of the authors themselves influence their respective representations of the emperor? How did the intended audiences and political contexts of these sources modify their content and message? And what were the objectives of these authors in promoting their own form of imperial representation?

Chapter One: Valentinian, History and the Representation of the Imperial Office in the Fourth Century

Introduction: The Historical Representation of Emperors

It is axiomatic that any consideration of the theme of literary representation must necessarily comment upon the context of the texts whence these forms of representation emerged. For the emperor Valentinian, the primary historical account of his reign is found in the work of the soldier-historian Ammianus Marcellinus. This first chapter endeavours to contextualise this historical source and to consider how Ammianus contended with the Roman imperial institution, whilst also considering some general observations and themes in his representation of the emperor Valentinian. In other words, it will discuss factors which influenced Ammianus' representation of Valentinian and of emperors more generally, including his perspective, models, aims, preoccupations and intended audience. Given the nature of the *Res Gestae*, much of this discussion will centre on the notion of the ideal emperor which is key to understanding why Valentinian was represented in the manner that he was. It is only after Ammianus' historiographical approach has been contextualised that we are able to turn our attention to those strains of representation which emerge most strongly from Books 26-31 of the *Res Gestae*, namely dynastic and military.

For the religious facet of Valentinian's rule (to be considered in Chapter Five), our key historiographical sources are the ecclesiastical history of the Latin church historian Tyrannius Rufinus, the history of Paulus Orosius, and the ecclesiastical histories of the Greek church historians Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret. For these historians, the natural focus will be on the Christianised imperial model which was first introduced in the work of Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea, and which furnished his successors with an imitable representation of the ideal Christian emperor. While subsequent church historians took a more pragmatic approach than Eusebius to the principles of Christian rulership, their representation of emperors was also shaped by their preoccupation with religious faith, and their work is therefore vital to our understanding of how Christian

historians interpreted and represented the emperor's faith and religious policy. I intend to contextualise the work of these authors separately in Chapter Five.

Valentinian and the Representation of Emperors in Ammianus Marcellinus' *Res Gestae*

Our knowledge of the soldier-historian Ammianus Marcellinus comes almost solely from self-referential details in his work. Born in the early 330s to an aristocratic Greek family in the Syrian city of Antioch, Ammianus was educated in his home city in the classical tradition.¹ His *Res Gestae* is replete with literary allusions to the works of the classical corpus – as one would expect of a student raised in the tradition of the classical *paideia* – and the manner in which he adapts a vast array of *exempla* from the ancient texts for inclusion in his history proves that his familiarity was more than just superficial.² That such levels of erudition were perhaps not unusual for the time in which he lived makes his extensive knowledge of the classical texts no less impressive.³ For, as has been proved, Ammianus is often a writer who displays a flair for significant innovation in his interaction with the writings of his literary predecessors.⁴ As a young male born into a good family, Ammianus would have enjoyed a career path unavailable to many less fortunate individuals, and he succeeded in joining, at an early age (probably around 350), the *protectores domestici*, an elite corps of the imperial bodyguard.⁵ Timothy Barnes' belief that Ammianus' father was 'probably a career soldier' is speculative, but that he had a military involvement in some capacity is likely, given his son's rapid admission into such a select military division.⁶ In 353, he was assigned to the staff of the military commander Ursicinus, under whom he endured numerous struggles, most notably the siege of Amida in 359 by the Persians, during which Ammianus played an active role in the resistance against the besiegers.⁷ A further role in his hero Julian's ill-fated Persian campaign of 363 is suggested but little

¹ Barnes (1998), 1-2. On Ammianus' origin and social background, see Matthews (1989), 8, 78-80.

² For a discussion of *exempla* and Ammianus' literary allusions, see Kelly (2008), 161-221. For a complete list of Ammianus' *exempla*, see Blockley (1975), 191-4.

³ Kelly (2008), 180-1.

⁴ Kelly (2008), 161-5.

⁵ Barnes (1990), 62-3.

⁶ Barnes (1998), 1.

⁷ Amm. 19.8.1-12.

precise information is given about what exactly he did, although it is evident that his account of the emperor's catastrophic failure was witnessed first-hand.⁸ Perhaps following his military retirement, Ammianus continued to travel around the Roman world, taking in the sights of Egypt and the Black Sea and gathering information, before moving to Rome sometime after 380 to begin the composition of his *Res Gestae*.⁹

The importance of the *Res Gestae* for our understanding of the fourth century can hardly be overstated, not least because the period of global change and historical complexity which we now call 'Late Antiquity' would be significantly 'darker' without it.¹⁰ Its singularity (indeed the first 'grand history' since Tacitus) is somewhat conversely its greatest problem, and consequently there is little scholarly consensus on how this text is to be accurately interpreted. It is not my intention here, however, to become mired in the many debates which continue to engage Ammianean scholars. Guy Sabbah warned against being found on 'all-too-well-trodden paths', given the fact that 'more than ever the experts uphold different or mutually opposed hypotheses about questions that are considered fundamental', as 'each exerts himself to invalidate the other's arguments'.¹¹ Heeding this wise advice, it is my intention only to concern myself with those themes which directly influenced Ammianus' representation of Valentinian, and of emperors more generally.

Ammianus' history is a remarkable achievement, impressive in its scope, its attention to detail, and in its author's ability to reproduce vividly the sights and sounds of the events which he personally observed, or to recount the reports which he procured from other eyewitnesses. Consider, for example, his famous description of the *adventus* of Constantius II into Rome in 357.¹² The description bristles with the excitement of the

⁸ Amm. 23.5.7.

⁹ For Ammianus' visit to Egypt, see 17.4.6; for the Black Sea, see 22.8.1. For the composition dates of the *Res Gestae*, see Matthews (1989), 22-7.

¹⁰ Agreeing with Timothy Barnes' assertion that Ammianus' history is fundamental to modern understanding and interpretation of the fourth century (1998), 2.

¹¹ Sabbah (2003), 45.

¹² Amm. 16.10.1-17.

occasion as the emperor, decked out in the finery of a victorious general, made his way through crowds of awestruck citizens towards the Roman *curia*.¹³ Ammianus goes to great lengths to capture the atmosphere and magnificence of the imperial display.¹⁴ His literary purpose, however, extends far beyond patriotic evocations of Roman imperial splendour. The grandeur of the emperor's arrival casts into stark relief Constantius' inadequacy as a Roman military conqueror, one who has failed to earn the adulation of a triumphal procession:

For neither in person did he vanquish any nation that made war upon him, nor learn of any conquered by the valour of his generals; nor did he add anything to his empire; nor at critical moments was he ever seen to be foremost, or among the foremost.

Amm. 16.10.2¹⁵

This example of historical representation from Ammianus' account of the emperor Constantius' reign sums up the manner in which the *Res Gestae* as a whole represents the imperial office: evocatively, but deeply penetrating in its verdict on the virtues and vices of its occupants. It is a text which focusses on the institution of the imperial office, and which discusses and examines at length the suitability and actions of each of the individuals who occupied 'what was undoubtedly the biggest job in the world'.¹⁶

Ammianus' Audience

Gavin Kelly's monograph on Ammianus' allusions and intertextuality has demonstrated the complex nature of the text. The greatest success of Kelly's book is

¹³ See Matthews' analysis of this scene (1989), 231-4.

¹⁴ See Stenger (2012), 189-216.

¹⁵ Amm. 16.10.2, *nec enim gentem ullam bella cientem per se superavit, aut victam fortitudine suorum comperit ducum, vel addidit quaedam imperio, aut usquam in necessitatibus summis primus vel inter primos est visus*. All translations of Ammianus' text are taken from the English edition of J. C. Rolfe, unless otherwise stated.

¹⁶ Lenski (2002), 1.

the light which it shines on the *Res Gestae*'s various complexities: as he demonstrated in great detail, similarities in vocabulary with other texts, divided allusions, punning alterations of other texts, alterations of context, glossing of other texts, and exemplary allusions all feature in Ammianus' catalogue of allusory literary techniques, and he is shown to imitate or allude to a remarkable range of classical texts and genres including Homer, Herodotus, Plautus, Cicero, Sallust, Livy, Tacitus, Vergil, Horace, Ovid *et al.*¹⁷ Kelly is also correct to issue a caveat not to neglect, as is often the case, the potential significance of internal textual relationships, textual echoes and allusions in Ammianus.¹⁸ Indeed, it constitutes one of the most effective methods of deciphering Ammianus' text, of determining the importance of narrative structure, context and sequencing, and of arriving at the same conclusions which Ammianus expected his contemporary audience to elicit.

As relevant to historical representation as the aims of the author is the identification of this audience for whom the history was originally written. On this subject, there is both much disagreement and speculation amongst scholars. Thompson, Seyfarth and Sabbah believed that the level of sophistication required to understand Ammianus' literary forms and conventions pointed towards an intended audience in the senatorial elites at Rome.¹⁹ Rike and Matthews, however, both contended that Ammianus' audience was not to be found in Rome at all, but was surely in the court of Theodosius I during his residency in the West until 391, because 'visiting imperial courtiers offered the prospect of a more receptive and more open-minded audience'.²⁰ This argument was supported to some extent by the evidence of a letter from the orator Libanius to a certain 'Markellinos' commending him on the success of his 'public readings' and on the

¹⁷ Kelly (2008), 161.

¹⁸ Kelly (2008), 174.

¹⁹ Thompson (1947), 15-16; Seyfarth (1969); Sabbah (1978), 507-39. Cameron (1964) argued against an audience of Roman aristocrats.

²⁰ Matthews (1989), 8-9, including quote; Rike (1987), 135; Rohrbacher (2007) also argues for this 'actual' audience.

reputation which he had acquired at Rome.²¹ The dubious nature of this identification has since been highlighted convincingly by Fornara, who questioned among other aspects the patronising tone of the letter (had it been addressed to a man of Ammianus' seniority), and discussed some of the philological assumptions which had contributed to the misidentification of the recipient with Ammianus the historian.²² More recently, Frakes noted the necessity of distinguishing between Ammianus' intended audience and the actual audience for which Matthews and Rike had both argued.²³ In a prosopographical study, he propounded the idea of an intended audience of imperial bureaucrats for the *Res Gestae* on the basis that Ammianus had named proportionately more of their group within his work.

On the nature of Ammianus' intended audience, Kelly, in keeping with the focus of his own argument, considered whether the historian's allusions 'were likely to be recognisable or meaningful' to his audience.²⁴ They had to be sufficiently erudite if they were to identify and comprehend the significance of the allusions, both subtle and obvious, which pepper Ammianus' text.²⁵ To refute this claim is conversely to suggest that Ammianus' allusions were not meant to be recognised, understood or admired, which leaves the odd matter of why they were included in the first place.²⁶ Notwithstanding this paradox, Kelly argued that the notion of an audience is not 'a particularly helpful one', since 'in writing classical historiography, he [Ammianus] was producing an eternal possession, and not an ephemeral performance, aiming to establish the *Res Gestae* as the canonical historical account for distant posterity as much as for contemporaries'.²⁷ In other words, to link Ammianus' text with a specific audience diminishes the scope of a work which the historian himself evidently viewed as relevant

²¹ Libanius' letter (Foerster, *Opera Libanii*, 1063). Cf. Matthews (1989), 8; Cameron (1964), 18-9. Sabbah (2003), 53 considers the letter to be addressed to Ammianus the historian.

²² Fornara (1992).

²³ Frakes (2000).

²⁴ Kelly (2008), 179. On the question of Ammianus' intended audience, see also 179-83.

²⁵ Kelly (2008), 180-1.

²⁶ Kelly's observation (2008), 180.

²⁷ Kelly (2008), 181-2.

to both his contemporaries, future readers and to those historians who would follow in his wake. Very recently, Alan Ross, observing Kelly's warnings 'about seeking to construct a single intended audience', opted to 'instead...situate Ammianus' *Res Gestae* within both the political and literary context of its place and time of composition, Rome in the late 380s'; although he remained confident that Rome's inhabitants were 'if not the sole audience, an important and unavoidable one' for the work.²⁸ But while seeking to identify a specific audience is undoubtedly problematic, we must acknowledge the basic interaction which exists between the author and those whom he expected to read his work, and the onus which this then places on scholars to at least suggest the kind of people for whom Ammianus wrote. Indeed, the choices which Ammianus made in his text and the direction of his narrative can only be understood in relation to an audience whom the historian relied upon to read, publicise, distribute, and fundamentally value his life's work. Ammianus wrote with a clear audience in mind, and the *Res Gestae* after all was no mere rhetorical exercise. I would disagree, therefore, with John Matthews' assertion that the nature of Ammianus' history ('complex, challenging and varied') pointed towards an audience who did not already know him and who did not share his background and opinions.²⁹ It seems clear to me that, in a generic sense, Ammianus' intended audience was anyone who agreed with him and who endorsed his traditional *Weltanschauung* in an epoch when identities were shifting and political ideals were fluid.

Emperors in the Res Gestae

Timothy Barnes, in his influential work on Ammianus' representation of historical reality, argued that the last six books of the *Res Gestae* on the reigns of Valentinian and Valens clearly differed from those which had preceded them. He claimed that they constructed 'a subtle and complex argument to prove that the weakness of the Roman Empire after 378 was caused by the corruption that began with Constantine, flourished under Constantius, and reached a peak under Valentinian and Valens, when it infected

²⁸ Ross (2016), 5, 204; see also 2-5, 24.

²⁹ Matthews (1989), 446.

not just the emperors and their *proximi* but the whole administration of the empire'.³⁰ It is my belief that Barnes was correct in his understanding of Ammianus' purpose in Books 26-31.³¹ While Barnes' argument used this purpose to cast doubt on the *Res Gestae*'s accuracy as a historical source, his observation is germane to any consideration of Ammianus' imperial portraits, because Ammianus' aims and purpose organically affected his representation of emperors, favourable or otherwise. Equally important to the representation of emperors in the *Res Gestae* was Ammianus' aspiration to 'detail the highlights of events, [and] not to ferret out the trifling details of unimportant matters'.³² By detailing only the 'highlights' (*celsitudines*) of events, Ammianus was able to select those which suited better his aims as a historian, whilst hypothetically remaining true to his promise that he would write 'without ever...consciously venturing to debase through silence or through falsehood a work whose aim was the truth'.³³ It seems necessary, therefore, to approach and analyse Ammianus' work on its own terms, and to look for the 'bigger pictures' which he self-consciously attempted to create. Expressed in the introduction to Book 26, Ammianus' intention, in the tradition of the ancient poets, to 'withdraw his foot from the more familiar tracks', suggests that he regarded his history as more than just a mere literary vanity, but a serious contribution to historiography which, through knowledge and understanding of past events, would help both him and his contemporaries to make sense of the world in which they lived.³⁴ We do not necessarily have to trust his representation of emperors and events, but we can all admire the ingenuity and skill with which these representations were created.

³⁰ Barnes (1998), 183.

³¹ Cf. also Matthews (1989), 204-7 for Ammianus' shift in intention and technique at the beginning of Book 26.

³² Amm. 26.1.1, ...*discurrere per negotiorum celsitudines...non humilium minutias indagare causarum*.

³³ Amm. 31.16.9, *opus veritatem professum numquam (ut arbitror) sciens silentio ausus corrumpere, vel mendacio*.

³⁴ Amm. 26.1.1, ...*referre a notioribus pedem*. The 'untrodden paths' of Callimachus' *Aetia* are a well-known example of such a tradition. On Ammianus making sense of the contemporary world, see Hose (2015), 81-96, and Wittchow (2000).

The narrative of the *Res Gestae* is dominated by secular military and political events, and in these governmental spheres, there existed the centripetal force of the emperor, whose inescapable position at ‘the apex of the patronage pyramid’ reeled in all those in pursuit of imperial favour and those who sought the political preferment which accompanied it.³⁵ By ensuring that proximity brought success, emperors guaranteed their continued appeal.³⁶ It was clear, however, that for the majority of individuals outside the *proximi* in the later Roman Empire, access to the emperor was a rare privilege.³⁷ In fact, the phenomenon of ‘absent emperors’, residing in distant courts, ensured that the majority of imperial subjects probably never even glimpsed the emperor in person.³⁸ The emperor, as Christopher Kelly reminded his readers, was not omnipotent and the extent of his power was ‘tightly circumscribed by a range of physical and technological limitations’.³⁹ So whilst the centralisation which characterised late Roman government protected an emperor’s position,⁴⁰ it also conversely diluted his influence and visibility among the majority of the civilian population, whose engagement with the imperial office was arbitrary and limited. Kelly also hinted at the artificially constructed distance which emperors sought to establish between their office and the political factions which orbited it. Not only did this ensure that centralised power remained the preserve of the emperor himself, but it also maintained the mystique of the imperial office and disguised a level of unpredictability, which on occasion, for those nearest to the emperor, could prove violently destructive.⁴¹ Ammianus famously reported several instances in his *Res Gestae* where he had perceived the unchecked cruelty of imperial power. These instances, more often than not, were taken from the reign of Valentinian.⁴² Matthews neatly summarised the behemoth nature of the imperial power when he stated that, ‘Imperial government in

³⁵ Whitby (2008), 87.

³⁶ Kelly (2004), 193.

³⁷ On access and accessibility to the emperor, see Kelly (2004), 114-29.

³⁸ On absent emperors in Late Antiquity, see Humphries (2003).

³⁹ Kelly (2004), 204.

⁴⁰ Kelly (2004), 193.

⁴¹ Kelly (2004), 196-8.

⁴² E.g. Amm. 27.7.1-9; 29.3.1-9.

Ammianus' time was unmatched in Graeco-Roman history in its scale and complexity of organisation, in its physical incidence upon society, the rhetorical extravagance with which it expressed, and the calculated violence with which it attempted to impose its will'.⁴³ Given the concentration of power, therefore, in the imperial office and the centrality of the emperor to the Late Antique political and military system, it is to be expected that the actions of the latter would form the natural basis for Ammianus' historical account. As Blockley argued, 'In Ammianus' *History*, the Emperor, or Caesar, is central...The Emperor figures largely in Ammianus' thought and he is central to the historian's critique of the political system'.⁴⁴

Historians like Ammianus, however, were not only interested in the actions of emperors, but also in the extant to which each emperor compared with the ideal model of secular rulership. As part of a wider discourse on the notion of the ideal ruler, therefore, Ammianus' *Res Gestae* made a meaningful contribution. Drawing ideas from a variety of sources and the later context in which he was writing naturally equated to innovations and peculiarities in Ammianus' rulership model, but it was hardly isolationist. His use of historical *exempla* linked his notion of the ideal emperor to paradigms from the ancient past, to the praise or detriment of the emperor under review.⁴⁵ For example, Ammianus wished that the emperor Valens

'had been permitted...to learn...that royal power – as the philosophers declare – is nothing else than the care of others' welfare; that it is the duty of a good ruler to restrain his power, to resist unbounded desire and implacable anger, and to know – as the dictator Caesar used to say – that the recollection of cruelty is a wretched support for old age.'

Amm. 29.2.18.⁴⁶

⁴³ Matthews (1989), 253.

⁴⁴ Blockley (1975), 32-3.

⁴⁵ See Wittchow (2000).

⁴⁶ Amm. 29.2.18, ...*si Valenti scire per te licuisset, nihil aliud esse imperium, ut sapientes definiunt, nisi curam salutis alienae, bonique esse moderatoris, restringere potestatem, resistere cupiditati omnium*

In this instance, Ammianus used the *exemplum* of Julius Caesar to admonish Valens, and to provide a benchmark of appropriate conduct. Gavin Kelly demonstrated effectively how Ammianus made use of such *exempla* to link his work to the established historiographical tradition.⁴⁷ It was through this tradition that Ammianus demonstrated his belief in a continuity of rule and imperial conduct between earlier rulers and those of the later Empire. As Meaghan McEvoy averred, Ammianus' viewpoint was 'an argument for moral continuity', while Matthews also noted Ammianus' belief in 'the relevance of historical modes of behaviour, and in knowledge as the source of true moral action'.⁴⁸ Ammianus made it clear that an emperor like Julian was enhanced, even defined, by his attempts to emulate and study the *exempla* of 'good' rulers like Alexander the Great, Marcus Aurelius and Antoninus Pius, even if he did occasionally stray from their high standards of imperial conduct.⁴⁹

In the *Res Gestae*, therefore, Ammianus formulated certain expectations of emperors based on tradition and shared by many of his contemporaries. These expectations underpinned the assessment of any ruler. 'Good' emperors evinced qualities which could be easily cultivated into imperial virtues, but what were the general standards against which Ammianus judged emperors? His writings on the emperor Julian are a good place to start. Ammianus' preoccupation with the figure of Julian has led one scholar to comment that the *Res Gestae* reads 'like a panegyric to Julian's glory'.⁵⁰ Alan Ross, in an important recent monograph, considered Julian to be 'the undoubted focus of the *Res Gestae*' and suggested a motive for this unique representation of Julian, arguing that the *Res Gestae* sought to ameliorate Julian's reign, since it was not 'a

rerum, et implacabilibus iracundiis, nosseque (ut Caesar dictator aiebat) miserum esse instrumentum senectuti recordationem crudelitatis.

⁴⁷ Kelly (2008), 161-221.

⁴⁸ McEvoy (2013), 28; Matthews (1989), 243-4.

⁴⁹ Blockley (1975), 84. Julian's admiration for and imitation of the idealised Alexander the Great and Marcus Aurelius were well-known. See also Julian's *Caesares*. Cf. Amm. 16.1.4.

⁵⁰ Sabbah (2003), 52. On the emperor Julian as the ideal emperor, see Blockley (1975), 73-103. On Ammianus' representation of Julian, see A. J. Ross' important monograph (2016).

sympathetic subject for a western audience in the late 380s'.⁵¹ Ammianus' representation of episodes in Julian's life, including his final failure in Persia, were designed to transform him into 'a figure wholly understandable from a Roman perspective'.⁵² In a discussion which informed this thesis, Gavin Kelly also considered Julian to be 'the physical centrepiece' of the *Res Gestae*, arguing that Ammianus emphasised Julian's status as 'an heir, even in his faults, to exemplary earlier emperors'; and that in Books 26-31, Ammianus set Julian up as an *exemplum* 'by invoking his memory indirectly and directly as detrimental to, and envied by, the reigning emperors'.⁵³ Ammianus also represented Julian as an emperor who had sought to contribute to the greatness of Rome, as he himself had desired to do with the publication of his 'grand history'.⁵⁴

For Ammianus, Julian was a good emperor primarily because he embodied a series of traditional virtues (*temperantia*, *prudentia*, *iustitia*, and *fortitudo*) which had been developed in kingship theories during the Hellenistic period and which were subsequently adapted to the specifications of Roman ideology.⁵⁵ Carlos Noreña noticed the 'remarkable stability, over centuries of political and ideological change, in the vocabulary employed to define monarchy and to praise individual rulers'.⁵⁶ A famous early example of Roman adaptation was the variation found on Augustus' *clipeus virtutis*, which had all the key constituent elements of the Greek and Hellenistic

⁵¹ Ross (2016), 9, 10. Many possible reasons for this, other than that which Ross cites (i.e. that Julian had shown little contact or interest in Italy or Rome during his reign): the unprecedented military disaster in Persia; legacy of manpower shortages following his defeat; the partial reversal of his pro-pagan legislation under the emperor Jovian, and then Valentinian; the return of the Alamanni over whom he had claimed a comprehensive victory; the lack of successor; a defence system in need of reconstruction: in short, Julian's real legacy was an empire in urgent need of attention and stability.

⁵² Ross (2016), 201.

⁵³ Kelly (2008), 298; see also Kelly (2005).

⁵⁴ Sabbah (2003), 52.

⁵⁵ On the ethical profile of the emperor, see Noreña (2011), 37-100.

⁵⁶ Noreña (2011), 55.

tradition.⁵⁷ These virtues, hallmarks of the ideal ruler, were shared ‘in broad outlines and with variations in emphasis’ between historians, kingship theorists and panegyrists, and ultimately derived from the work of Plato.⁵⁸ Julian was said by Ammianus to possess them all in abundance, including four complementary practical virtues (*scientia rei militaris*, *auctoritas*, *felicitas*, and *liberalitas*).⁵⁹ Ammianus’ representation of Julian as the ideal emperor may also have been influenced by the latter’s own musings on rulership, which similarly drew their ideals of character from the kingship models of writers like Dio Chrysostom and the prescriptions of Menander.⁶⁰ Blockley, therefore, observed that, in respect of the virtues and functions of the ideal king, Ammianus stood ‘in close relationship with these two groups of writers [kingship theorists and panegyrists], both in general and in many details’.⁶¹

Although the focus of this thesis is the emperor Valentinian and not Julian, it must nevertheless be acknowledged that much of the representation of the former was conditional on the actions of the latter. As discussed, Julian’s reign was not only Ammianus’ central concern in the *Res Gestae*, but also an imitable model of imperial rule against which both predecessors and successors were judged. As Den Boeft *et al.* remarked in their commentary on Book 26, when Ammianus proceeded into the third extant hexad of the *Res Gestae*, the figure of Julian was ‘not forgotten’; indeed, Valentinian and Valens’ expulsion of Julian’s officials and friends, and the general conduct of the brothers ‘compare[d] unfavourably with all that Julian stood for’.⁶² There are, however, more direct comparisons with Julian in Books 26-31. At the

⁵⁷ Noreña (2011), 50; cf. Morton Braund (2012), 89.

⁵⁸ See, for example, the handbook of Menander Rhetor (372.25-373.5; 373.5-17). Quote taken from Blockley (1975), 85.

⁵⁹ Amm. 25.4.1. Cf. Blockley (1975), 73.

⁶⁰ Most notably, Julian’s *Caesares*. See Blockley (1975), 85; Noreña (2011), 55. For the relevant Dio Chrysostom speeches, see *Orations* 1-4.

⁶¹ Blockley (1975), 85.

⁶² Den Boeft *et al.* (2008), x.

beginning of Book 27, for example, Ammianus referenced the plight of the Alamanni under Julian, whose many victories had rendered the former a reduced threat.⁶³

‘...the Alamanni, after the sad losses and wounds which they had suffered from their frequent battles with Julian Caesar, having at last renewed their strength (which did not yet equal its old vigour)...were overleaping the frontiers of Gaul.’

Amm. 27.1.1.⁶⁴

In this passage, Ammianus contrasted the rule of Julian favourably with that of his successor. In mentioning the reduced threat which the Alamanni posed because of Julian’s success against them, the historian underlined the emperor’s martial prowess, and clearly implied that the Alamannic forces facing Valentinian ‘were weaker than those Julian had to deal with’.⁶⁵ With this information, the subsequent rout of the Roman army and the deaths of two Roman generals at the hands of these Alamannic forces, as described in Chapter 1 of Book 27, has the function of representing Valentinian as weaker than Julian, less respected than Julian, and susceptible to future defeats against a people whom Julian had easily contained. As will be discussed in Chapter Three on Valentinian’s foundation of a dynasty, the tone and structure of Book 27 as a whole represented Valentinian’s reign in an extremely negative light.

Ammianus’ assertion that the imperial brothers had actively sought to depreciate the noteworthy merits of the ‘deified’ (*divus*) Julian, even though they could not equal him or come close to him (*nec similes eius, nec suppare*), becomes the salient driving-force of the *Res Gestae* in Books 26-31, as the historian strives to outline his case for irrevocable decline and corruption under the Valentiniani in the years following

⁶³ On Julian’s military encounters with the Alamanni in Gaul, see Drinkwater (2007), 217-65.

⁶⁴ Amm. 27.1.1, ...*Alamanni post aerumnosas iacturas et vulnera, quae congressi saepe Iuliano Caesari pertulerant, viribus tandem resumptis, licet imparibus pristinis, ob causam expositam supra Gallicanos limites formidati iam persultabant.*

⁶⁵ Den Boeft *et al.* (2009), 2.

Julian's death.⁶⁶ Indeed, under the reign of Valentinian and Valens, Ammianus states that even the laws and statutes had become 'pretexts for impious designs'.⁶⁷ In the *Res Gestae*, the final outcome of such moral pollution was that

'executioner, instruments of torture, and bloody inquisitions raged without any distinction of age or of rank through all classes and orders, and under the mantle of peace abominable robbery was carried on, while all cursed the ill-omened victory, which was worse than any war, however destructive.'

Amm. 26.10.9⁶⁸

Ammianus was clear that Julian's reign had brought peace and honour to the Empire. However, with his sudden death and Valentinian's accession, it was no longer peace, but chaos, which reigned supreme across the Empire.⁶⁹

Expectations of the Emperor

Central to Ammianus' representation of the imperial office-holders was the matter of proper imperial conduct, and those modes of behaviour which were considered appropriate for an individual of such powerful standing. Although the political and historical context of the fourth century differed considerably from that of the first or second century, the comportment of earlier emperors like Marcus Aurelius would not have been unfamiliar to the emperors of the fourth century. The emperor had an

⁶⁶ Amm. 26.10.8, ...*et absoluto Euphrasio, Phronimius Cherronesum deportatur, inclementius in eodem punitus negotio, ea re quod divo Iuliano fuit acceptus, cuius memorandis virtutibus, ambo fratres principes obtrectabant, nec similes eius, nec supparet.* Drijvers (2012), 86, 'Ammianus presents an account of a world in transformation, if not in decline.'

⁶⁷ Amm. 26.10.10, *ubi vero consiliis impiis iura quidem praetenduntur et leges.*

⁶⁸ Amm. 26.10.9, *Carnifex enim, et unci, et cruentae quaestiones, sine discrimine ullo aetatum et dignitatum, per fortunas omnes et ordines grassabantur, et pacis obtentu latrocinium detestandum agitabatur, infaustam victoriam execrantibus universis internecivo bello quovis graviolem.*

⁶⁹ Cf. Seager (1986), 131, 'If any one element deserves to be singled out as fundamental to Ammianus' perception of men and events, it is perhaps the antithesis between civilization and barbarism.'

acknowledged duty to adhere to long-standing ancestral traditions, as, for example, Constantius II did when he signed himself as '*Aeternitas mea*', because, as Ammianus observed, the emperor 'laboured with extreme care to model his life and character in rivalry with those of the constitutional emperors'.⁷⁰ Matthews expressed puzzlement at Ammianus' criticism of Constantius for using the title '*Aeternitas mea*', arguing that such a formality had been in use for decades and was considered *de rigueur* for the imperial office.⁷¹ Ammianus' criticism of Constantius, however, illustrates that not all actions firmly located within the parameters of imperial tradition were considered appropriate for every emperor; if an action was unsuitable for an emperor, it was unsuitable regardless of its tradition. Constantius' signature was, at least in the historian's view, a failure of proper imperial conduct, because if proper conduct was a case of what was appropriate for 'time, place and company', Constantius' actions fell short in every respect.⁷²

Similarly, Valentinian, although endowed with some talents and virtues of imperial quality, was represented as unnecessarily cruel, a characteristic more consistent with the behaviour of a boorish soldier than that of an imperial statesman.⁷³ In the way that Julian's virtues were shown to have resonated with the virtues of earlier emperors, given the immutability of proper imperial conduct, so too were Valentinian's vices shown to be those which attached themselves to historically 'bad' emperors. Criticism of imperial conduct, however, was not limited to the actions of those emperors to whom Ammianus appeared unfavourably disposed. Julian's famous encounter with the philosopher Maximus of Ephesus was also an instance of behaviour unbecoming for a

⁷⁰ Amm. 15.1.3, *Quo ille studio blanditiarum exquisito sublatu immunemque se deinde fore ab omni mortalitatis incommodo fidenter existimans confestim a iustitia declinavit ita intemperanter, ut 'Aeternitatem meam' aliquotiens subsereret ipse dictando scribendoque propria manu orbis totius se dominum appellaret, quod dicentibus aliis indignanter admodum ferre deberet is qui ad aemulationem civilium principum formare vitam moresque suos, ut praedicabat, diligentia laborabat enixa.*

⁷¹ Matthews (1989), 235. Cf. Kelly (2008), 293, n. 109.

⁷² Matthews' expression (1989), 237.

⁷³ Amm. 29.3.3ff.

Roman emperor.⁷⁴ Ammianus' criticism of Julian's excessive superstition and thirst for popularity further suggests that even the best emperors could be guilty of occasional indiscretions, without tarnishing their reputation as 'good' emperors.⁷⁵ Clarifying Ammianus' methodology, Sabbah succinctly defined those criteria which characterised the nature of the historian's imperial portraits:

In a perhaps anachronistically republican view, for him [Ammianus] the emperor is not the master but the first servant of the state. In the Hellenistic tradition taken on by Rome, his mission and justification are to 'save' his subjects...Hence the reproof of cruelty based on ignorance, of injustice, greed, favouritism and weakness towards the mighty, as well as symmetrically, praise of justice supported by culture...and clemency and of an administration careful not to oppress its subjects...At the summit is military courage, *virtus*...valour framed by the *prudentia* and *temperantia* of a *dux cautus*, who is careful to spare his soldiers. These are precisely the criteria according to which the evaluating portraits of the emperors are drawn up.⁷⁶

In Ammianus' history, these criteria were framed within a debate which contrasted strengths with weaknesses, virtues with vices, and which inevitably questioned the suitability of emperors for the office they occupied.

For all that the imperial office by the fourth century had in almost every respect shifted from its self-conscious origins to ostentatious forms of imperial self-representation and self-glorification, it is interesting that Ammianus continued to define the role of the emperor in terms which would not have looked unfamiliar at any point in Roman imperial history. In his account of Valentinian's vices, Ammianus remarked that 'the aim of just rule (as the philosophers teach) is supposed to be the advantage and safety

⁷⁴ Amm. 22.7.3-4. For this episode, see Elm (2015), 91.

⁷⁵ Matthews (1989), 236.

⁷⁶ Sabbah (2003), 73-4.

of its subjects'.⁷⁷ Constantius and Julian were depicted in the *Res Gestae* as voicing or embodying similar sentiments regarding their duty of care to their subjects.⁷⁸ This duty was fundamentally military in nature, which corresponds with what Matthews had previously identified as a defining characteristic of the *Res Gestae* – its military focus:

That that mission [of the imperial office] was in essentials a military one is clear not only from Ammianus' formulation of the growth of Roman power, but from the sheer weight of narrative – not to mention the professional interest – that he devotes to warfare in all aspects.⁷⁹

It is unsurprising, therefore, that in his account of Valentinian's reign (Books 26-30), the military nature of the imperial office was prominent. Inextricably linked to military endeavour was – as the previous examples attest – the requirement for the emperor to preserve the safety of his subjects, and to act in their best interests.⁸⁰ Of course, the Realpolitik of the Roman world from its inception dictated that this was not always practical or likely. The recent example of Constantine's rise to power and that of the emperor Augustus over three hundred years earlier were prominent examples of instances when the 'morality' of Roman institutions and the conduct of rulers were disregarded in the face of political expediency, but quickly restored and exalted following the resolution of the victors' respective civil conflicts. Nevertheless, from Ammianus' point of view, the model of the ideal emperor who protected his subjects,

⁷⁷ Amm. 30.8.14, *finis enim iusti imperii (ut sapientes docent) utilitas oboedientium aestimatur et salus*. Cf. Matthews (1989), 252 here, 'Ammianus was no abstract theorist on political, any more than he was on philosophical or religious matters. His views on the imperial office and its duties are in this sense not original, but they are straightforward and serviceable.'

⁷⁸ At 14.10.12 and 25.3.8, respectively.

⁷⁹ Matthews (1989), 250. Cf. Whitby (2008), 83, 'Although the emperor, as *imperator*, had always been a military figure, the importance of personal military ability and involvement had varied from reign to reign, often depending as much on the individual ruler's personality and reputation as the threats to imperial stability.'

⁸⁰ Cf. Whitby (2008), 83, 'What the inhabitants of the empire wanted was security, and if an emperor could provide this...it was of less importance who actually commanded the relevant forces.'

which he had read in the historiographical texts of his forebears, remained highly relevant to his understanding of the imperial role.

The Necrologies of the Res Gestae

One of the key narrative structures which facilitated Ammianus' imperial representation was his necrologies of each respective emperor, in which the historian took leave of his narrative of the emperors whose reigns feature in the surviving chapters of his *Res Gestae*, namely Constantius II, Julian, Jovian, Valentinian and Valens.⁸¹ The main purpose of these obituary notices was to summarise for the reader the virtues and vices of the emperor in question, thereby reinforcing the representation which had previously been depicted in the course of the narrative, but also subtly promoting Ammianus' own objectivity as a neutral, and indeed reliable, observer of events.⁸² Christopher Kelly, in his *Ruling the Later Roman Empire*, captured something of the difficulty in taking Ammianus' obituary notices at face value:

His [Ammianus'] obituary notices, in their formal juxtaposition of long-recognised categories of virtue and vice, held out the promise of a systematic and orderly method of evaluating imperial policies and achievements. That promise remained unfulfilled. In their careful construction, Ammianus' obituaries artfully reflected something of the ambiguities of imperial power. Any resolution is the readers'. And that judgement must remain evidently provisional.⁸³

What can be stated with some fact, however, is that Ammianus' representation offers little doubt as to whom the authorial bias of the *Res Gestae* favours. Valentinian's obituary notice begins with a fourteen-paragraph chapter on the vices of the emperor,

⁸¹ Blockley (1975), 37 on the importance of these *elogia*; see also Seager (1986), 18-42.

⁸² For further discussion of Ammianus' use of obituaries and their importance, see Sabbah (1978), 449-53.

⁸³ Kelly (2004), 197.

in addition to several other previous sections concerning specific elements of his imperial conduct.⁸⁴ A list of virtues, a section of only six paragraphs, follows. Similarly with the emperor Constantius, who fares somewhat better in his obituary, with seven paragraphs on his virtues but eleven on his weaknesses.⁸⁵ Julian, however, finds a small four-paragraph section on his vices sandwiched within a twenty-seven-paragraph section on his virtues and embodiment of the ideal imperial qualities.⁸⁶ Although Ammianus adheres to the method of assessing imperial conduct as defined by the traditions of the historiographical genre, through a systematic consideration of strengths and weaknesses, it is evident that he employs different criteria to assess the skills and flaws of different emperors. This is problematic because it inevitably generates invalid comparisons when many of the factors that the historian uses in them are exceptional. For example, Ammianus' condemnation of Valentinian for his *avaritia* because of his need to raise funds for the imperial coffers is communicated as a personal vice, when the reality of the situation was that Julian's disaster in Persia had drained the imperial accounts and left a plethora of resources in need of urgent replenishment.⁸⁷

In the obituary notice of Jovian, Ammianus criticised the emperor's excessive love for food, wine and women – distinctly un-Roman faults that reflected poorly on both the emperor himself and the office he represented.⁸⁸ Ammianus felt that Jovian, as a mere temporary custodian of the imperial power, had not given the position of emperor the respect which it merited; however, he also claimed that Jovian would have corrected his faults, out of regard for the imperial dignity.⁸⁹ What this suggests is that Ammianus' conclusions on the suitability of an emperor for imperial office were measured and carefully thought out conclusions that point ultimately to the power and responsibility of a historian to shape actively the legacy of the emperors whom he represented for

⁸⁴ For the obituary of Valentinian, see Amm. 30.8.1-9.6.

⁸⁵ For the obituary of Constantius, see Amm. 21.16.1-18.

⁸⁶ For the obituary of Julian, see Amm. 25.4.1-27.

⁸⁷ Cf. Matthews (1989), 239 for a discussion of Ammianus' tendency to attribute to the personal character of rulers actions that are better understood in terms of the situations in which they found themselves.

⁸⁸ Amm. 25.10.15. See Heather (1999), 105-16 for Ammianus' account of Jovian's reign.

⁸⁹ Amm. 25.10.15.

posterity.⁹⁰ This kind of statement, however, also contributes to the difficulty of Ammianus as a historian, because he links his narrative (with particular reference to Books 26-31) primarily by an unbroken chain of ideas, associations and comparisons rather than by a tight chronology or selection of themes.⁹¹ Indeed, Peter Heather argued that Ammianus' account of Jovian's reign should not be read as a 'self-standing piece', but that the historian's 'grander design' required Jovian to serve as a counterpoint to his hero, the emperor Julian.⁹² In addition to this, I would also argue that the reign of Jovian functions as a lens through which one can compare and contrast Julian directly with Valentinian. Despite Jovian's importance as a political figure, the brevity of Ammianus' narrative here shortens the period – literally – between his account of Julian's reign and his account of Valentinian's rule;⁹³ and, although it is not a 'self-standing piece', it is arguable whether any of Ammianus' imperial accounts can actually be labelled 'self-standing pieces'. As previously mentioned, Kelly has conclusively demonstrated the complex nature of Ammianus' narrative and the need to read it as a self-referential text in order to elicit its true meaning.⁹⁴ Thus, in the example of Jovian noted above (25.10.15), the potentiality of Jovian's desire to correct his vices is linked and contrasted with Valentinian's much-publicised (in Ammianus) inability in the following book (26) to even recognise his own weaknesses and vices in the first place. The true winner of this episode, of course, is Julian, whose *temperantia* had been widely advertised by the historian only one book earlier.⁹⁵

As well as focusing on the weaknesses of certain emperors (Constantius and Valentinian), Ammianus was careful to highlight the strengths of others, which suggests that positive and negative representation were often more than just

⁹⁰ Blockley (1975), 95-6.

⁹¹ See Barnes (1998), 181-84, and Matthews (1989) 204-7 for a discussion of the change in narrative structure which occurs when Ammianus moves away from the reign of his beloved Julian.

⁹² Heather (1999), 115.

⁹³ For Jovian's importance as a historical figure, see Heather (1999), 106-7.

⁹⁴ Kelly (2008).

⁹⁵ Cf. Blockley (1975), 89-90 for a discussion of how Julian's self-control features prominently in the *Res Gestae*.

coincidental, but fundamentally reliant on one another. For example, Valentinian, represented as avaricious, looks even more avaricious when juxtaposed with the generosity of the emperor Julian, especially when generosity was such a crucial part of the imperial image.⁹⁶ Furthermore, as an *exemplum* from the past could emphasise an emperor's outstanding quality, so too could it be used to further tarnish an emperor's poor reputation. The mention of Valentinian's avarice in his necrology at 30.8.8 would have reminded the reader of the all-consuming avarice of the emperor Constantius II.⁹⁷ The association served to further reinforce what was already an extremely unfavourable quality. So too can this technique be applied to the mention of Valentinian's excessive cruelty and bloodthirsty nature,⁹⁸ a quality which would have stirred in the reader's memory recollections of Constantius, who was said to have surpassed even Caligula, Domitian and Commodus in that respect.⁹⁹ Not only does this technique therefore achieve effectively what it sets out to do, but it also serves the function of disguising Ammianus' biases as a historian.

⁹⁶ Whitby (2008), 88, 'Generosity was a crucial part of the imperial image, and failure to meet expectations could lead to damaging accusations.'

⁹⁷ Amm. 21.16.17.

⁹⁸ Amm. 30.8.3-4.

⁹⁹ Amm. 31.16.8.

Conclusion

The figure of the emperor was the central focus of Ammianus' *Res Gestae*. His role was fundamentally a military one, and his key requirement was to ensure the safety and security of his subjects. In the *Res Gestae*, Ammianus' general representation of the emperor Valentinian was predicated upon a number of influential factors. The most important of these was the capability of imperial rulers to embody the traditional virtues associated with good rulership; and Ammianus judged the imperial suitability of Valentinian by comparing and contrasting him with this traditional notion of 'the ideal ruler'. This model, however, was not restricted to rulership examples from the distant past. *Exempla* from the reign of the emperor Julian, who was Ammianus' primary concern, were as valid for imitation and learning as those of well-regarded previous emperors like Marcus Aurelius. Julian's embodiment of all the traditional virtues required to be a good ruler uniquely equipped him to be the worthy champion of Roman values, those which Ammianus himself had defended with both his sword and his pen; and the historian lamented the deficiency of many of these virtues in both Julian's predecessors and his successors. It is evident, however, that Ammianus' model of the 'ideal emperor' was both complex and fluid: it derived from, among other aspects, the traditional criteria of the historiographical genre; from previous models of imperial conduct (*exempla*); from Ammianus' own experience; and even constituted elements taken from mainstream ethics. In the *Res Gestae*, the emperor Valentinian was unfavourably compared against this model of imperial rule.

Chapter Two: Valentinian, Panegyric and the Imperial Office in the Fourth Century

Introduction: The Contemporary Representation of Emperors

The manner in which the emperor Valentinian was represented in the *Res Gestae* of Ammianus Marcellinus was shaped and determined by a number of important factors, not least of which was the political context and audience for whom the historian was writing. Writing with the benefit of distance and hindsight allowed Ammianus to shape his narrative, and his representation of emperors, according to his own expectations, biases and preoccupations. Set against this historical representation of Valentinian, this chapter will now turn to our major source of contemporary representation: namely, imperial panegyrics delivered before the emperor. I will seek to contextualise the delivery of Symmachus' three imperial panegyrics, considering firstly the genre of imperial panegyric as a whole and its importance, before proceeding to discuss Symmachus' political career and his relationship with the emperor Valentinian. In the final part of the chapter, I will discuss the panegyrics themselves, their audience, and the political context of their delivery. As well as contrasting the proximity, literal and metaphorical, of these contemporary sources to the emperor with the distance of our primary 'historical' source, and the different representations of the emperor which this engendered, it will also be argued that the 'contemporary' sources for Valentinian's reign can be further distinguished from their 'historical' counterpart by the nuanced strands of imperial self-representation identifiable within them. The contemporary representation of the imperial legislation, particularly in those laws which underpinned key imperial policies, will be discussed in their own right in Chapter Five on religion.

The Genre of Imperial Panegyric

Of the three traditional 'types' of rhetorical delivery – forensic, deliberative and epideictic – 'panegyric' (praise), paired off with its antitype 'invective' (blame) is

categorised as the latter.¹ Indeed, the delivery, the ‘display’, of panegyric before the Roman imperial court or other public setting was an integral part of the genre’s nature, as vital to its efficacy as the drama and tension of the courtroom setting was to the success of forensic oratory.² This, however, admittedly does not account for those panegyrics which were composed without a view to public delivery, and it is this factor which has led some scholars to view panegyric less as a distinctive, criterial genre and more as a self-conscious mode of writing which could be incorporated into any work of literature, including but not limited to historical narratives, political speeches and kingship treatises.³ To cite a well-known example of this crossover, Ammianus Marcellinus, prefacing his account of the life and career of the emperor Julian, famously asserted that it would ‘almost belong to the material of panegyric’, and Blockley was right to notice that the historian was not always successful in avoiding this fall.⁴ Indeed, Ammianus’ focus on details of Julian’s personal character, on the wide spectrum of imperial and personal virtues which he possessed, and on an exhaustive list of his achievements, was intended to show the praiseworthy nature of his imperial rule, and thereby to throw into stark relief the cruelty, injustice and mediocrity of both his predecessor(s) and his successor(s) in office. In this respect, Ammianus’ account of Julian was indeed ‘panegyric’ in nature, resembling the manner in which Symmachus, in his first *Oration* to Valentinian, sought to ignore the ‘fictions of poets’ and focus on imperial ‘examples of deeds’ (Symm. *Or.* 1.4), a standard device which juxtaposed the initiative of Valentinian with the idle self-indulgence of previous office-holders:

¹ For a more detailed discussion of the history and origins of panegyric, see Rees (2012), 3-48 and Nixon and Saylor Rodgers (1994), 1-37. MacCormack (1975) remains an excellent introduction to the genre.

² MacCormack (1981), 10-11.

³ Rees (2012), 3-6, particularly 5.

⁴ Amm. 16.1.3, *ad laudativam paene materiam pertinebit*. Blockley (1975), 100.

‘...you yourself speedily set your standards over the semi-barbarous banks of the unquiet Rhine, and defend out of shame for ancient cowardice provinces given over by the extravagance of your predecessors.’

Or. 1.14.⁵

The distinction, therefore, between Ammianus’ historical narrative and Symmachus’ panegyric oratory is more nuanced than it would appear at face value. Both are similar, in the sense that they have a clear tendency to praise one emperor; both present the achievement of certain deeds, in expectation of their respective audience’s praise for those deeds which their subject has achieved; both seek to elevate one emperor above others, and to persuade others that their views are widely held; and both repeatedly emphasize the veracity of their claims.⁶

While this does not prove any connection between the method of the historian and that of the panegyrist, it does adequately demonstrate that establishing clear criteria, in an abstract sense, for what ‘panegyric’ is and what it is not, is more problematic than might often be presumed.⁷ What is evident, however, by the time of Symmachus’ *Orations*, is that the Roman senator, in his capacity as imperial panegyrist, was writing self-consciously within a previously established literary tradition, one which dictated adherence to certain conventions associated with the ceremonial delivery of a speech to an enthroned Roman emperor. Nixon and Saylor Rodgers’ commentary on the *Panegyrici Latini* identifies some of these conventions which appear in eleven of the twelve speeches in that corpus; for example, the collective effort of the panegyrists to avoid naming imperial rivals, and to allude to them, when necessary, by only the most

⁵ *Or.* 1.14, ...*ipse supra in pacati Rheni semibarbaras ripas raptim uexilla constituens et prouincias luxu superiorum deditas ueteris ignauiae pudore defendens*. All translations of Symmachus’ *Orations* are by Barbara Saylor-Rodgers, and are only accessible at <https://www.uvm.edu/~bsaylor/>. I will be using Jean-Pierre Callu’s Latin text (Les Belles Lettres, 2009).

⁶ *Or.* 1.4; cf. Sogno (2006), 8.

⁷ Sogno (2006), 9 does draw a connection between the method of the historian and Symmachus’ method of panegyric-writing when discussing the latter’s stress on the historiographical tradition of *autopsia* (the witnessing of events narrated). Cf. also Sogno (2011).

derogatory of terms, would be one such example.⁸ It is necessary, however, to exercise caution when associating certain common characteristics of panegyric speeches with conventions of a literary genre and the lack of consideration which such a term connotes on the part of the author. The temptation to define all panegyric by its similarity and the imitative nature of the genre has, after all, led to great misunderstanding of its contemporary value. Edmond Vereeke, discussing this ‘problem’ of imitation in Latin panegyric, highlighted many of the unsupported asseverations of some twentieth century scholars, and denounced the simplistic way in which they connected the speeches of the Gallic panegyrists to the precepts of Greek rhetoricians or to the speeches of Cicero and Pliny, all of which were written several hundred years earlier. Vereeke questioned to what degree it is possible to identify with surety, given the limits of our knowledge, direct imitation in encomia, and concluded that the ‘practically identical situations’ in which these orators found themselves (viz. offering a eulogy of an emperor) meant that we should be ‘surprised that these panegyrics are so different’.⁹ The frequent inclusions in Latin panegyric of sections on an emperor’s home country, his parents, his origins, his virtues *et al.*, in chronological order were, he argued, not primarily the result of literary affectation, but an unavoidable selection of topics in speeches which praised an individual, and which would be present ‘even if the eulogy [had been] delivered in a poor rural cemetery by a panegyrist who [had] not studied rhetoric’.¹⁰ Vereeke’s conclusion may somewhat oversimplify the respective political contexts under which each panegyrist composed and delivered his speech, but he does legitimately query to what extent the material of panegyrists could vary in basic structure and content, and to what degree we can identify, firmly, the sources of imitation for each individual writer.

It would be easy, therefore, given the frequency of panegyric address in the Roman world and the imitative nature of the genre, to view these speeches as little more than

⁸ Nixon and Saylor Rodgers (1994), 25; for an example of this in Symmachus’ panegyric, see *Or.* 1.17, where the usurper Procopius is referred to only by a derogatory term.

⁹ Vereeke (2012), 263.

¹⁰ Vereeke (2012), 262.

ceremonial, a hackneyed formula of Roman governance, and even a sign of decadence and cultural decline in the imperial courts of the fourth century.¹¹ If this was the case, it is perhaps not unsurprising that so few examples of the genre remain extant. Indeed, the poor survival record of Latin imperial panegyric suggests a distinct lack of enthusiasm from subsequent readers towards the preservation of all but the best examples of the genre for posterity. That this was, however, a form of literature which was to be understood in one specific context, as important as any speech at the time of delivery, valuable thereafter for dissemination and didactic purposes, but of little political value upon the death or deposition of the addressed emperor, perhaps hints at a more plausible reason for the poor survival record of panegyric texts than simply misfortune. Indeed, it is telling that the fragments of Symmachus' imperial panegyrics should have survived only in palimpsest form, fortunately hidden under the Latin translation of the acts of the Council of Chalcedon;¹² a historical detail symbolic perhaps of the genre of panegyric's own struggle for serious literary recognition within and without the classical corpus.¹³ But the contribution of panegyrics, understood within their own specific political context, was significant enough that the practice was actively maintained and modified according to an emperor's needs and circumstances throughout the course of the fourth, fifth and even (mostly in verse) the sixth century. These speeches played a very active, indeed vital, role in the mechanism of Roman imperial power, comprising part of a wider effort by emperors to consolidate their identity, imbue their power with increased legitimacy, and, in the case of the emperor Valentinian, enhance the status of his new and unproven dynasty, as we shall see in the following chapter.

We have significantly more examples of prose panegyric written between the reigns of Diocletian and Theodosius than from any other period in Roman history. The *Panegyrici Latini* account for this disparity, and for the fortunate position in which

¹¹ Rees (2012), 4.

¹² Sogno (2006), 1-2.

¹³ Cf. Rees (2009), 136, 'A strongly held but unheralded cultural assumption we have inherited from the classical world is our profound suspicion of, even contempt for, panegyric.'

scholars of Late Antique literature and history find themselves with regards to the genre of Latin panegyric.¹⁴ These panegyrics are often our only source for fourth century events. Spanning a period of over a century, and the rule of five different emperors – Maximian, Constantius I, Constantine, Julian and Theodosius – the corpus represents only a small percentage of the total number of panegyrics which were delivered to the emperors in the course of their respective reigns.¹⁵ Sabine MacCormack advanced the view that those panegyrics which survive are ‘no more than fragments of a continuous frieze of imperial occasions’.¹⁶ The number must have been considerable; certainly more than the six per annum for which the French scholar Camille Jullian had once argued.¹⁷ The entire extant body of Latin prose panegyric, therefore, constitutes only a very small percentage of the total number of panegyrics delivered to Roman emperors in the imperial period, and so its representativeness of the genre must be handled with a measure of caution.

¹⁴ The only Latin oratory, in fact, to survive from the imperial period, with a few mainly fragmentary exceptions. Cf. Rees (2012), 14.

¹⁵ This statement overlooks the revised version of Pliny’s *Panegyricus* which is preserved within the *Pan. Lat.* corpus, but is, for obvious reasons, quite dissimilar to the others.

¹⁶ MacCormack (1981), 9.

¹⁷ Jullian, Vol. 8 (1926), 278.

Symmachus' Political Career

Peter Brown, in his 2012 work on wealth in the Late Antique and Early Medieval period, successfully and eloquently represents Symmachus as a man who was very much a product of the times in which he was living.¹⁸ His ten books of letters contain very few particulars on the politics of the day, but are replete with valuable insights into the life of a leading member of the Empire's powerful senatorial aristocracy during the latter half of the fourth century.¹⁹ One would be forgiven for thinking that these letters would do little to modify the portrait of the Roman senatorial elites which Ammianus Marcellinus famously set forth in his *Res Gestae*, describing in the form of two narrative digressions 'the faults of the Roman Senate and people' (*senatus populiue Romani vitia*).²⁰ Ammianus himself recognised that whenever his narrative turned to the city of Rome, 'nothing is spoken of except plots and taverns and other similar vilenesses' (*nihil praeter seditiones narratur et tabernas et vilitates harum similis alias*).²¹ John Matthews captured the disdain which Ammianus felt towards those whom he depicted as 'totally unworthy of their traditions and social eminence as, sunk in leisure and frivolity, they devoted themselves to the pursuit of trivial, degrading enthusiasms'.²² And special mention is even reserved by Ammianus for a prominent member of Symmachus' own family, his father-in-law Memmius Vitrasius Orfitus, a Roman aristocrat who twice held the urban prefecture and whom Ammianus accused of governing 'with an arrogance beyond the limits of the power that had been conferred upon him' (*ultra modum delatae dignitatis sese efferens insolenter*).²³ As a member of

¹⁸ See Brown (2012). Chapter 5 (93-109) and Chapter 6 (110-19) pertain directly to the life of Symmachus, and present arguably the most engaging portrait of the senator's daily life yet. Cf. also Cameron (2011), *passim*; Sogno (2006); and Matthews (1975), 1-31.

¹⁹ Cf. Sogno (2006), 60, 'Nine books of *Epistulae* have survived almost in their entirety, to which a tenth book containing only two letters must be added.'

²⁰ Amm. 14.6; 28.4ff.

²¹ Amm. 14.6.2. My translation.

²² Matthews' interpretation of Ammianus' portrait of the Roman aristocracy has not been bettered (1975), 1ff.

²³ *PLRE* I 1054-1055, with Den Boeft *et al.* (2009), 40. Orfitus was urban prefect from 353-5, and he held it the office again in 357-9. Cf. Matthews (1975), 2.

one of the most influential and conspicuous families in Rome, it is somewhat inevitable that Symmachus' own writings could be construed as having the same 'arrogance'; an innate desire, indeed zeal, to preserve not only his own *dignitas*, in the Republican sense, but also those elements which marked out both him and his family as *nobilis*.²⁴ It can be readily presumed that the desire to keep power and influence within an exclusive coterie of *nobiles* was a sentiment shared by the entirety of the ambitious senatorial class in the fourth century. Symmachus' reputation as an orator and writer has ensured the survival of his body of letters and his official correspondences with the emperors during his tenure as urban prefect in 384-5, but, although he was one of the system's best exponents, he was far from unique in nurturing, through persistent correspondence, a network of highly placed contacts throughout the Empire with whom he exchanged favours and participated in the *religio amicitiae*.²⁵ This *religio* was passed down from generation to generation, and was one in which *amicitiae*, started by the father, were maintaining and inherited by his heirs, to the advantage of all.²⁶

His copious letters, edited and arranged into nine volumes by his son Q. Fabius Memmius Symmachus in a style modelled perhaps on those of Pliny the Younger,²⁷ attest to Symmachus' hard-earned status as a well-connected individual who used his correspondence to exert influence in the elevated political and social circles of late Roman society on behalf of his family and friends.²⁸ Indeed, the extant letters show Symmachus to have been arguably one of the most politically connected and active individuals of the entire Roman imperial period. Given their abundance, scholars

²⁴ Brown (2012), 100-1.

²⁵ Ibid. Brown's terminology.

²⁶ Sogno (2006), 4 identifies the example of Eutropius and Avianius Symmachus as a possible instance of the son inheriting the friendship began by his father. Several letters from Symmachus to Eutropius exist (*Ep.* 3.46-53). Cf. Kelly (2004), 160.

²⁷ Although this is a widely held view, Kelly (2013) argued against the preconceived notion that the style of Symmachus' work, especially his letters, was modelled directly on that of Pliny the Younger. It is not, in my opinion, a particularly convincing argument, given that general admiration and imitation of Pliny's literary style after his death is widely attested.

²⁸ For Symmachus' letters, see Cameron (2011), 163-4, 203-4, 360-83.

seeking relevant historical minutiae and gossip in the *epistulae* have often highlighted their disappointment in their mundane content.²⁹ If this is a true marker of their authenticity, however, not only with regard to their state of preservation, but also culturally, with regard to the way in which elevated Roman aristocrats were formally communicating and interacting with one another in the late fourth century, then we must reconsider their importance in this light; and we must not seek to detach them from the immediacy and relevance of their composition by examining them as literary exercises self-consciously written for posterity. What these letters clearly show is that epistolography in the fourth century, for Symmachus at least, was not merely an occupational requirement, but also an important opportunity to network and engage with like-minded individuals on an elite cultural platform.

The chronology of Symmachus' letters does not afford us great insight into his early political career, but we can presume that, at a young age, the friendships on which the aristocrat depended for his smooth progression up the traditional *cursus honorum* were those which had been established by his family. Cristiana Sogno has even suggested that Symmachus' first appointment, to the role of senatorial ambassador, may have been partially the result of his family's friendship with the family of fellow pagan aristocrat Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, who held the office of urban prefect in 368 and whose responsibility it was to propose a senator capable of leading the embassy to the imperial court.³⁰ The competition for such a prestigious opportunity must have been stiff, and, notwithstanding the experience Symmachus had gained during his correctorship of Lucania and Brittii, it would be natural to assume that the appointment of one so young raised some questions, or even objections, amongst his more experienced political peers.³¹ What Symmachus' young age denied him in political experience was partially

²⁹ Matthews (1975), for instance, refers to them as 'earnest and dignified' (p. 4), but also 'pure administration' (p. 7). Seeck's opinion was very influential in propagating the view that Symmachus' correspondence was of disappointingly little value to the historian (1883), lxxiii.

³⁰ *PLRE* I 1055 with Sogno (2006), 6. For the friendship of Symmachus and Praetextatus, see Sogno (2006), 40-42; and Cameron (2011), 164, 385-9.

³¹ Sogno (2006), 4-6.

compensated for by his education, training and familial background, particularly his status as the son of another distinguished Roman politician and senatorial ambassador, Lucius Aurelius Avianus Symmachus, who, according to the pedestal of a gilded statue erected by imperial decree in 377, had led numerous embassies on behalf of the senate to imperial courts during his career.³² Symmachus' father, and maternal grandfather, also held the most important office of the regular senatorial *cursus honorum*, the *praefectus urbi*, the former in 364-5 and the latter in 339-41, with the ordinary consulship in the late Empire generally, with some exceptions, being held either by the emperor(s) themselves or by their generals.³³ Although Symmachus' selection for the important role in 368 may therefore have been partially the result of nepotism, as Sogno has argued, the quality of the speeches which he delivered to the emperors at the court in Trier prove that the senator had considerable rhetorical ability to complement the undeniably auspicious circumstances of his political rise.³⁴

Symmachus' selection in 367 as senatorial envoy to the court of the new emperor Valentinian I in Trier constituted the senator's first major political assignment.³⁵ The objective of his trip was not only the delivery of a panegyric in honour of the emperor, but also the delivery of a gift to him from the senate in the form of the *aurum oblativum*, a voluntary donation of gold in commemoration of the emperor's *quinquennalia* and to be used, presumably, to fund Valentinian's ongoing campaign on the Rhine frontier.³⁶ This anniversary was no insignificant affair. Valentinian's *quinquennalia* – the occasion marking the passing of a *lustrum*, or five-year anniversary, of the emperor's accession – was an important event for several reasons. Whilst the event itself was evidently celebratory in nature – marked by, for example, the senatorial delivery of gold and a panegyric – it also represented a more serious marker of political and imperial stability, especially when compared with the five-year period prior to Valentinian's

³² Sogno (2006), 3.

³³ *PLRE* I 1054-5; cf. Matthews (1975), 15-6.

³⁴ Cf. Sogno (2006), 6; also 93, n. 8.

³⁵ Sogno (2006), 2-3.

³⁶ Matthews (1975), 17, 32; Humphries (2003), 34.

coming to power in February 364, one in which three Roman emperors had died, all unexpectedly.³⁷ It was also an opportunity for the Roman senate to evaluate the progress which the Empire had made under Valentinian's governance, and an opportunity amidst the distractions of imperial rule for the emperor to communicate a message to his subjects, both at court and back in Rome.

This was, however, possibly not the first senatorial delegation Valentinian had received. Schmidt-Hofner has suggested that the emperor, with Valens, may have met with a senatorial delegation between late May and early June 364, and published a number of laws concerning the city of Rome in response to submissions by the delegates.³⁸ Valentinian's relationship with the Roman senatorial aristocracy appears to have been initially positive, with the emperor having passed a plethora of favourable and/or concessionary legislation at the beginning of his reign to gain their support.³⁹ For, as Schmidt-Hofner argued, the loyalty of the senatorial aristocracy was vital for the new dynasty's success, as senators were 'at the same time important taxpayers with often enormous landed properties, influential brokers of patronage, and the holders of influential public offices; if discontented, they could easily become a destabilizing power...'.⁴⁰ This relationship, however, was to be severely strained by Valentinian's favour for so-called 'military men'.⁴¹ Their prominence in fact during Valentinian's reign is highlighted in the *fasti consulares*, where no less than six of the eight consuls, who were not from the imperial family, are shown to have been generals or *magistri* during Valentinian's reign.⁴² The rise of this 'military aristocracy' eroded the old prestige of the traditional senatorial nobility, leading to the separation both in central

³⁷ Constantius II in 361, Julian in 363, and Jovian in 364.

³⁸ Schmidt-Hofner (2015), 88-9.

³⁹ Schmidt-Hofner (2015).

⁴⁰ Schmidt-Hofner (2015), 75.

⁴¹ On the militarisation of the Empire under Valentinian, see Matthews (1975), 30-55; *ibid.* (1989), 284-6; Lee (2015). Cf. Alföldi's contrary view (1952).

⁴² Namely, Dagalaifus (366), Jovinus (367), and Equitius (374) in the West; and Lupicinus (367), Victor (369), and Arintheus (372) in the East. See *PLRE* I 1044-5, with Lee (2015), who observes that this pattern of raising military men to the consulship continued under Gratian and Theodosius I.

bureaucracy and in provincial administration of civil and military powers which Matthews argued was ‘a hallmark of the late imperial system’.⁴³ Indeed, in Matthews’ view, ‘the polarisation of social classes and culture...is well illustrated by the visit to the court of Valentinian...of the senatorial orator and envoy, Q. Aurelius Symmachus’.⁴⁴

The imperial residence would have been unfamiliar to the young Symmachus, whose lack of experience did not only extend to the physical environment in which he was to deliver his first panegyrics. Indeed, both Symmachus and Valentinian must have been acutely aware of the novelty of their encounter in Trier: the latter, receiving his first (attested), but possibly only his second, senatorial embassy as emperor, would have been keen to engage with and demonstrate satisfactory progress to the Roman senate; and the former, on his first political mission to the imperial court, was undoubtedly anxious to impress and to accrue valuable contacts in and around the highest echelons of Roman imperial government. Sogno has highlighted Symmachus’ letters as an enlightening source of information for those individuals whose acquaintance he may have made on his first embassy to Trier, including Ausonius, former professor at Bordeaux and tutor to the young *Augustus* Gratian.⁴⁵ Such friendships were an invaluable source of information to a young and ambitious politician like Symmachus, but could have also afforded him a limited degree of political protection during his formative years. While Symmachus’ journey to the court was an important opportunity to construct a network of highly placed contacts, it was also an atmosphere in which the senator could make long-standing political enemies, or, as a result of his mission, find himself ostracised and facing the ramifications of his political commitments; as he, of course, discovered first-hand, when he delivered his panegyric in Milan on 1st January 388 to the usurper Magnus Maximus, whose subsequent defeat and execution

⁴³ Matthews (1989), 284.

⁴⁴ Matthews (1989), 284.

⁴⁵ Sogno (2006), 4. For those letters relevant to Symmachus and Ausonius’ time at court together, see Symm. *Epp.* 1.14, 1.32, with Brown (2012), 186-7.

by the emperor Theodosius I left the orator in a very uncomfortable position, politically and personally.⁴⁶

As the late Alan Cameron argued, Symmachus' skill as a politician and orator has often, and somewhat unjustly, been exclusively linked to his perceived status as the leading proponent of traditional pagan worship during the reigns of the Christian emperors.⁴⁷ His most famous work, both presently among scholars and in antiquity amongst his peers, was his so-called *Relatio de Ara Victoriae* (*Relatio* 3), a formal address to the emperor Valentinian II (375-92) from Symmachus' tenure as urban prefect in 384-5.⁴⁸ It appealed for the restoration of the traditional altar of Victory to the *curia* in the face of stubborn resistance from Ambrose, the equally renowned bishop of Milan, whose response to Symmachus' letter also survives.⁴⁹ Symmachus' lack of success at having the altar restored was not a political defeat *per se*.⁵⁰ Indeed, Cameron even argued that 'nothing in his [Symmachus'] correspondence suggests that this was an issue he felt passionately about'. In the words of one scholar, however, Symmachus had 'misjudged the mood of the emperors'.⁵¹ The idea that Symmachus was in the van of a fourth century pagan resistance to an unpopular religious agenda imposed by absent Roman emperors had for a long time met with little opposition from scholars. Aside from the injustice which this did to Symmachus as an astute politician who utilised his political and social environment to great effect, as Sogno has successfully demonstrated, it also placed a disproportionate amount of attention on the degree to which religious

⁴⁶ Sogno (2006), 68-70; cf. Kelly (2013), 261, n. 1.

⁴⁷ Cameron (2011), 37.

⁴⁸ *PLRE* I 1055. For the text of *Relatio* 3 with accompanying French translation, see Callu (2009), 79-85; for commentary, 148-54.

⁴⁹ Cf. Sogno (2006), 45-57 and Cameron (2011), 37-51 for discussion of the episode. For the wider significance of the dispute, see Brown (2012), 103-9. For Ambrose's response to Symmachus, addressed to Valentinian II, see *Ep.* 17-18; for analysis, see McLynn (1994), 406.

⁵⁰ Sogno (2006), 49. She also points out that Symmachus presents himself in the *Relationes* as the spokesman for the senate and the people of Rome.

⁵¹ Brown (2012), 107.

tendencies influenced Symmachus' political and personal choices.⁵² In fact, the postulate of a fourth century pagan resistance at all has been increasingly questioned, as scholars seek to overcome the artificial lines of religious demarcation which have hitherto defined our interpretation of the period. Cameron, for example, had long promulgated the view that paganism as an influential religious force was in terminal decline decades before the Christian emperor Theodosius I defeated the usurper Eugenius at the Battle of the River Frigidus in September 394.⁵³ Peter Brown, however, remains bullish on the survival of the traditional cults in fourth century Rome.⁵⁴ He has argued, convincingly, that the primary concern of Symmachus' third *Relatio* was not the removal of the iconic Altar of Victory, but the defunding of the Vestal Virgins, and that Symmachus' grievance was not of a religious nature *per se*; rather the senator was concerned at the dangerous precedent which had been set when centuries-old tradition was disregarded on the whim of emperors acting under political pressure from one religious faction.⁵⁵ Michele Renee Salzman adopted a slightly different view, arguing that Symmachus saw the severance of this link between paganism and the state as 'undermining the status of his class'.⁵⁶ Despite Symmachus' efforts as urban prefect, it was the occupation of the highest political offices by practising Christians in the early to mid-fourth century which had decidedly settled the Empire's religious trajectory, and which was to form a resilient basis for Christianity's dominance in the late fourth century and beyond.

Following his eventful tenure as urban prefect in 384-5, and notwithstanding his own religious convictions, Symmachus was to remain one of the foremost figures of the late

⁵² For Symmachus' political acumen, see Sogno (2006), *passim*. For religious tendencies and their insignificance to Symmachus, see Brown (2012), 102, 'Whatever their beliefs, he [Symmachus] wished to treat members of his class as peers held together by the old-fashioned religion of friendship'.

⁵³ Cameron (2011), *passim*.

⁵⁴ See Brown (2012), 108, 'Yet Symmachus' defeat in 384 did not mean in any way that paganism as a whole was suppressed in Rome...The Vestal Virgins were disendowed, but they continued to meet and pray. The other pagan cults were not disestablished.'

⁵⁵ A paraphrase of Brown (2012), 107.

⁵⁶ Salzman (2002), 75.

fourth century, a bastion of traditionalism at a time of momentous religious, political and social change across the breadth of the Empire. But the senator's illustrious career was not without its notable indiscretions. His vocal support for the usurper Magnus Maximus in 388, in the form of a panegyric, would ordinarily have been a career-ending error, and in some cases a fatal one. Fortune, however, and the *clementia* of Maximus' vanquisher Theodosius, proved to be in Symmachus' favour, and following an imperial visit to Rome in the summer of 389, during which he delivered another panegyric in honour of the victor,⁵⁷ Symmachus reached the apex of the senatorial *cursus* in 391 when he was appointed *consul ordinarius* alongside the ill-fated praetorian prefect of the East, Flavius Eutolmius Tatianus.⁵⁸ Despite the relocation of emperors away from the City to *de facto* capitals elsewhere, the Roman office of the ordinary consulship remained a position of significant prestige.⁵⁹ It was fitting, therefore, that the office of *consul ordinarius* was listed penultimately on a commemorative statue erected by Symmachus' son, Q. Fabius Memmius Symmachus, within the grounds of the family estate on the Caelian Hill – second only to an acknowledgement of the rhetorical talent which had defined much of Symmachus' life and political career:⁶⁰

Eusebii Q(uinto) A(urelio) Symmacho v(iro)
c(larissimo)
quaest(ori) praet(ori) pontifici
maiori correctori
Lucaniae et Brittiorum
comiti ordinis tertii
procons(uli) Africae praef(ecto) urb(i)
co(n)s(uli) ordinario
oratori disertissimo

⁵⁷ Humphries (2003), 36-8; Sogno (2006), 68-71.

⁵⁸ *PLRE* I 1045. Tatianus was later condemned under a *damnatio memoriae*.

⁵⁹ On the senatorial *cursus* and the continued relevance of the consulship in the fourth century, see Matthews (1975), 13-16.

⁶⁰ For the location of Symmachus' family estate in Rome, see Symm. *Epp.* 3.12, 88; 7.18, 19.

Q(uintus) Fab(ius) Memm(ius) Symmachus
*v(ir) c(larissimus) patri optimo*⁶¹

Such commemorative statues and their accompanying inscriptions were common among elite members of the Roman senatorial class who sought to advertise widely their long traditions of family consulships, political offices and personal honours.⁶² Peter Brown has sought to illuminate the shared experience and ideals of these aristocrats in the fourth century, noting that while Symmachus' career was indeed long and distinguished, it was not unlike that of many of his aristocratic peers.⁶³ This has engendered assumptions that the Senate, and the senatorial class, was a 'moribund political anachronism', which shared amongst its members a variety of *officia* long drained of any effective power and authority.⁶⁴ The limited nature of their allocation, however, was not a statement on the power of these offices themselves; rather it can serve as a reliable indicator of the degree to which the most powerful Roman families had monopolised the existing political power in the city of Rome for themselves, in order to ensure that their own interests were faithfully served. For instance, having occupied a handful of necessary minor offices, Symmachus' procurement of the proconsulship of Africa in 373, as noted in the inscription above, ensured that his large estates and land-holdings in the territory of Africa would continue to flourish.⁶⁵ But the fair political climate of the 370s and 380s could not continue *ad infinitum*. By the time of Symmachus' death, at least as late as 402, he had experienced at first hand irreversible political change in the western half of the Empire, as the seat of *bona fide* Roman authority shifted permanently to Constantinople under the emperor Theodosius, and Christianity was irrevocably established as the imperial religion of the Roman Empire.⁶⁶

⁶¹ *ILS* 2946. For discussion of this specific inscription, see Chapter 2 in Hedrick Jr (2000), and Cameron (2011), 155-7.

⁶² Matthews (1975), 17.

⁶³ Brown (2012), 95-6; cf. also Matthews (1975), 9-17.

⁶⁴ Humphries (2003), 27.

⁶⁵ Matthews (1975), 17, 24-5; also Brown's discussion (2012), 110-4.

⁶⁶ Symmachus' last letter to Helpidius (*Ep.* 5.86), dated to 402.

The Imperial Panegyrics of Symmachus

Quintus Aurelius Symmachus' first and second *Orations*, delivered to the emperor Valentinian on 25th February 368 and on 1st January 370 respectively, and his third *Oration* to the young emperor Gratian (perhaps delivered on the occasion of his tenth birthday, 18th April 369), make a valuable contribution to our understanding of the imperial office under Valentinian I.⁶⁷ These imperial panegyrics, written in Latin

⁶⁷ The dates of *Orations* 1 and 3 are still heavily disputed. It was Otto Seeck (1883), x, who originally claimed that *Or.* 1 was delivered on 25th February 369, five years since Valentinian's accession date, and not in the fifth year of his reign (i.e. 368). For 369, cf. also Hall (1977), 1, who relied on Seeck, but more recently Raimondi (2001), 95, with n. 28. Seeck's view was primarily based on his interpretation of the statement '*lustrum imperialium iam condis annorum*' (*Or.* 1.16). The precise meaning of the phrase '*lustrum condere*' is debatable (cf. Ogilvie [1961], 31-9). Chastagnol [1987], 255-66, argued convincingly and, in my view, correctly against a date of 369, based on the fact that the *quinquennalia* was usually celebrated in the fifth year of the emperor's reign (so 368). Pabst (1989), 137, thought that the dating problem was unable to be solved, while Saylor Rodgers, in her online translation and commentary of *Or.* 1, leaves both possibilities open. Sogno (2011), 134-35, n. 4, claims that 'February 368 is now the accepted date for the celebration of Valentinian's *quinquennalia*', with the caveat that it is not universally accepted because of the doubt it throws on the chronology of Symmachus' speeches and of his residence in Trier. Cf. also Callu (2009), who argued for 26th February 368. *Or.* 3 presents similar dating problems to *Or.* 1. Seeck dated it to 369, and assumed that it was delivered at the same time as *Or.* 1, so 25th February 369. Bruggisser (1987), 139 agreed that it was delivered on the occasion. McEvoy (2013), 51, dates *Or.* 3 to 368, but without discussion as to why. With no reason to claim that it was delivered on the same day as *Or.* 1, I think it is more likely to have been delivered on the occasion of Gratian's tenth birthday on 18th April 369, an idea already propounded by Callu (2009), xxiii-xxiv. The diminutive '*aurea...munuscula*' (*Or.* 3.1) could be a reference to the *aurum oblativum* recently presented to Valentinian, which would date it to at least a similar time as *Or.* 1, but it could equally refer to birthday presents gifted to the young emperor by the Roman senate. Moreover, I see a link between Ausonius' allusion to the '*iunctos natique patrisque triumphos*' (*Mos.* 422), and Symmachus' focus on Gratian's military development under his father in *Or.* 3.10 and 3.11. Ausonius' '*iunctos...triumphos*' are almost certainly a reference to the Alamannic campaign of 368, as it is the only campaign on which we know Gratian accompanied his father (see Amm. 27.10.1-16, with Shanzer [1998]). Ausonius is assumed to have accompanied Valentinian on the campaign of 368. Following his arrival at the court in early 369 (assuming that he returned to Rome after the delivery of his first panegyric to Valentinian), Symmachus would have been briefed on the successful campaign and would no doubt have encountered Ausonius. In this context, Symmachus' comments on Gratian's military involvement are not just effete

prose, constitute three of the eight fragmentary speeches by Symmachus which have survived, but the other *Orations*, addressed to his father (*Or.* 4) and various senators, are for the most part outwith the scope of this thesis.⁶⁸ Unfortunately, Symmachus' panegyrics have been, and still are, often neglected and ignored by scholars, largely due to Ammianus Marcellinus' history, the *Res Gestae*, discussed in Chapter One, and the *Panegyrici Latini*, discussed at the beginning of this chapter, which constitutes the largest single collection of classical Latin oratory to survive after Cicero.⁶⁹ Sogno, in her 2006 political biography of Symmachus, recognised this trend, noting that his work, in general, is 'virtually ignored by the majority of students of classics and ancient history'.⁷⁰ With regard to Symmachus' panegyrics, she also stated that, 'notwithstanding Symmachus' reputation as one of the greatest Roman orators, his speeches have been, and still are, ignored by most classical scholars with only a few sporadic exceptions'.⁷¹ In evaluating scholarly interest in Symmachus' panegyrics since Sogno's monograph, it is somewhat striking that a very recent volume of studies

flattery, but rather a clear recognition of the emperors' successful campaign against the Alamanni during the summer of 368. *Contra* this view, I find Lizzi Testa's argument (2004), 454 unconvincing: 'Inoltre, il modo in cui Simmaco si rivolge nella stessa occasione a Graziano, alludendo al recente impegno militare del giovane Augusto, non necessariamente implicava che quegli avesse partecipato almeno a una campagna militare per meritarsi siffatti elogi: Graziano, infatti, era diventato capo degli eserciti da quando era stato assunto al trono'. The reference to the *pons Gratiani* in *Or.* 1.9. could complicate the dating of the speech to April 369, given that the bridge was not yet completed, but there is every possibility that Symmachus was simply treating the bridge's completion as a *fait accompli* to impress his audience on such an important occasion. *Oration* 2 is the only speech which can be firmly dated to 1st Jan 370, because it was delivered on the occasion of Valentinian's third consulship (*Or.* 2.2). For the date of *Or.* 2, see Pabst (1989), 140, and Sogno (2011), 133-41.

⁶⁸ *Orations* 1-3 are very fragmentary, as outlined by Seeck (1883), v-x. Cf. Hall (1977).

⁶⁹ I am not including Pliny the Younger's *Panegyricus* to the emperor Trajan (100 AD) here, for obvious chronological reasons. Notable studies on various aspects of the *Panegyrici Latini* include Mary Whitby's edited volume *The Propaganda of Power: The Role of Panegyric in Late Antiquity* (Brill, 1998), and Roger Rees' edited volume *Latin Panegyric* (Oxford, 2012). In my opinion, the best introduction to Latin panegyric as a genre is Sabine MacCormack's 'Latin Prose Panegyrics', in T.A. Dorey's edited volume *Empire and Aftermath: Silver Latin II* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), 143-205.

⁷⁰ Sogno (2006), vii.

⁷¹ For Sogno's belief (2006), viii that the *Orations* remain largely ignored by modern scholars.

on Latin panegyric (2012) has no dedicated section on Symmachus and his *laudationes* to Valentinian and Gratian; in fact, his name is cited no more than a handful of times in an edition which pertains to ‘praise in the Roman Empire and, in particular, praise of the emperor’.⁷² While my primary objective in this chapter is not to self-consciously advance the case for Symmachus as a great Roman literary and political figure, and skilled panegyrist— although he undoubtedly was — I do wish to make it clear that his early proximity to and relationship with the imperial court of Valentinian at Trier should make him a figure of greater interest and his output of greater value to scholars scrutinising the role political panegyrists played in the intricate mechanism of imperial power and the ways by which that power was communicated to subjects across the Empire.⁷³

Although youthful at the times of composition, Symmachus demonstrates great erudition and skill in his panegyrics, showing extensive familiarity with both the traditional texts of the classical corpus (e.g. Cicero, Vergil) and with many of the conventions associated with the panegyric genre including but not limited to vocabulary, themes and structure, many of which are found in other extant Latin panegyrics.⁷⁴ In this respect, Symmachus’ work is hardly unique, and, as previously mentioned, the debt which the panegyrists owed to one another is a topic which has long engaged scholars of the genre. Scholars frequently stress the similarities between the work of the Gallo-Roman panegyrists, dated predominantly from the fourth century AD, and the *Panegyricus* of Pliny the Younger delivered to the emperor Trajan in AD 100, which has been thought of — not unjustifiably — as the model and key inspiration for all subsequent imperial panegyrics in terms of structure, imagery, ideas, vocabulary,

⁷² The book referred to is Roger Rees (ed.), *Latin Panegyric* (Oxford Readings in Classical Studies, Oxford, 2012). The statement in inverted commas is taken from the blurb on the back cover of the book. One recent contribution is Barbara Saylor Rodgers’ translations and commentaries of the speeches (2015), currently only found online in a somewhat unedited form (<https://www.uvm.edu/~bsaylor/>).

⁷³ Arnheim’s claim (1976), 49 that ‘Symmachus’ place in the annals of Latin literature is a very modest one’ is very harsh. Scholarship since this review appears to have rehabilitated Symmachus’ reputation as an important literary figure of the classical world. See, for instance, Cameron (2011), 203.

⁷⁴ Hall (1977), *passim*. Cf. Nixon and Saylor Rodgers (1994), 16-19.

themes etc. For Symmachus' panegyrics, however, the picture is markedly more complicated by the literary connection between Symmachus and Pliny, a topic on which scholars of the period often expatiate. Gavin Kelly has drawn attention to the similarities which have led many scholars to assume that Symmachus was the literary heir to Pliny, with their output (nine books of personal correspondence, one book of imperial correspondence, panegyrics), and their wealthy aristocratic backgrounds having been cited as evidence of a continuity of thought and style between them.⁷⁵ This connection was reinforced by Cardinal Angelo Mai's discovery in 1815 of Symmachus' imperial panegyrics preserved in palimpsest form alongside part of Pliny's *Panegyricus*.⁷⁶ Even in the Late Antique period itself, Symmachus and Pliny had been closely associated; for example, by those epistolographers who viewed them, presumably, as the two exemplary models for the genre of letter-writing. Sidonius Apollonaris, writing in the mid-fifth century, stated in the first letter of his first book of correspondence that he was following 'with presumptuous steps' (*vestigiiis praesumptuosis*) the 'rounded style' (*rotunditatem*) of Quintus Symmachus and the 'method and experience' (*disciplinam maturitatemque*) of Gaius Pliny.⁷⁷ Macrobius too, in his *Saturnalia*, famously had the character Eusebius group Symmachus and Pliny together as the two primary models for the *pingue et floridum* style of oratory.⁷⁸ Kelly argues, however, convincingly, that, whilst the link between Symmachus and Pliny, especially in terms of letter-writing, cannot always be implicitly assumed, there is clear evidence that Symmachus 'knew and used' the *Panegyricus* of Pliny in the composition of his own panegyrics.⁷⁹ This merely affirms the widely held notion that panegyric, as a genre, was one for which imitation was normal, if not expected, and it also shows that Symmachus was no different from the other Latin panegyrists in imitating to some degree Pliny's seminal example.

⁷⁵ Kelly (2013), *passim*.

⁷⁶ Seeck (1883), viii; cf. Sogno (2006), 2.

⁷⁷ Sid. *Ep.* 1.1. Watson (1998), 181. Pliny and Symmachus had the greatest influence on Sidonius' prose.

⁷⁸ *Saturnalia* 5.1.7.

⁷⁹ Kelly (2013), 286.

The Historical Context of Symmachus' Imperial Panegyrics

It seems axiomatic that the appraisal of Roman imperial panegyrics in the third and fourth centuries can only be consistent when each speech is analysed with respect for its political and contextual individuality.⁸⁰ Panegyrics were clearly not only of ceremonial value; nor were they effete works of political propaganda. They were of considerable importance to the imperial institution, and their continued production in the late fourth century, and even into the fifth, points to a markedly more political, or more useful, function for them than simply the ostensible affirmation of an emperor's majesty, or the proclamation of Rome's eternal glories. While these facets of the genre remained important, they constituted merely an element, rather than the singular goal, of imperial Latin panegyric. In the words of Nixon, the Gallic panegyrics had 'an important political and publicizing function'.⁸¹ If, however, panegyric was a political device used to promote the power and legitimacy of the emperor, then it was the specific politico-historical context of the speeches which gave them their relevance and impetus. Without knowledge of this context, the greater effect of these speeches can easily be lost in the details of senatorial sycophancy and literary guile. Recent scholarship, however, is increasingly sensitive to the nuances of the genre. In the introduction to her edited volume on Late Antique Latin panegyric, Mary Whitby noted carefully that each of the contributing scholars had 'without exception stress[ed] the importance of locating panegyrics within their immediate historical setting'.⁸² Identifying the historical context is less difficult for some imperial panegyrics than it is for others. For instance, the agenda of the anonymous *Panegyric of Constantine Augustus* (*Pan. Lat. XII*) is clear, and with Constantine's recent defeat of Maxentius looming large in the background, it is to be expected that the panegyrist will glorify the victorious *Augustus* and underline his legitimacy, whilst simultaneously degrading the dead Maxentius to the status of a bloodthirsty tyrant.⁸³ His lavish praise of Constantine and his victory at

⁸⁰ Cf. MacCormack (1975), 159-66; Rees (1998), 77.

⁸¹ Nixon (1990), 2.

⁸² Whitby (1998), 1.

⁸³ For a commentary of *Pan. Lat. XII*, see Nixon and Saylor Rodgers (1994), 288-333.

the Milvian Bridge adds intensity to the humiliation, even dehumanisation, of Maxentius.⁸⁴ The imagery, vocabulary and structure of the speech are designed, therefore, to convey a political message, which represents a reaction to the political circumstances which confronted the emperor Constantine in the wake of his victory of October 312.

By the time that Symmachus was composing his first panegyric to Valentinian in the winter of 367-8, the socio-political and historical landscape had changed, even if imperial concern with legitimacy and usurpation had not. In the years prior to Valentinian's accession, the internecine conflict between Constantine's son, the emperor Constantius II, and Constantius' cousin, the emperor Julian, had brought the Empire to the brink of civil war.⁸⁵ Although Constantius' sudden death in 361 prevented a military clash, the conflict had engendered a level of political instability which was to be exacerbated by the implementation of Julian's infamous religious policies.⁸⁶ The Empire's security and defences were imperilled further by the emperor's aggressive and idealistic pursuit of ancient glories. His poorly organised Persian campaign of 363 was an unmitigated disaster which resulted in not only his own death, but the loss of thousands of men far outside the boundaries of Roman territory, and the disintegration of the Roman presence in the Near East. The consequences of the defeat were far-ranging, and the humiliating terms of the Roman retreat, negotiated by his successor Jovian, would live long in the Roman memory.⁸⁷ Jovian's repeal of Julian's controversial religious laws returned the Empire to a familiar political footing, and ensured that his successors to the imperial office were likely to be Christian.⁸⁸ Although

⁸⁴ For the account of the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, *Pan. Lat.* XII. 16.2-17.3. For the description of Maxentius' character, see *Pan. Lat.* XII. 3.5-7; 4.3-4. Maxentius is not just a tyrant, but the worst kind of tyrant; cf. Nixon and Saylor Rodgers (1994), 291.

⁸⁵ For the contemporary account, from Julian's unsanctioned elevation to *Augustus* in 360, until the death of Constantius in 361, see *Amm.* 20.4-22.2. For discussion of the conflict, see Matthews (1989), 100-5.

⁸⁶ *Amm.* 22.2.2; cf. Seager (1986), 112-6.

⁸⁷ For analysis of Jovian's peace treaty with the Persians, see Matthews (1989), 185-7.

⁸⁸ *Zos.* 3.36.1-2 and *Zon.* 13.14 both report that Salutius was offered the imperial office after Jovian's death. Ammianus reports that he was offered it after Julian's (*Amm.* 25.5.5). Den Boeft *et al.* (2005),

Jovian continues to be associated with, even deemed culpable for, Rome's humiliation in the east, his reign of less than one year is too brief to allow an accurate assessment of his capability for imperial rule. What is undeniable is that the years 360-364 had proved costly and traumatic for Rome, in every sense. The Empire which Valentinian took control of in February 364 was tainted not only by great political, military and social instability, but also by an absence of frontier security which had prompted the council's selection of an experienced soldier, well-known among the men for his austere approach to military command.

Panegyrics to Valentinian and Gratian (Orations 1 [25th Feb 368] and 3 [18th Apr 369])

In this historical context, Symmachus' first panegyric to Valentinian, and his third panegyric to Gratian find relevance, and, as will be discussed in the forthcoming chapters, their themes of legitimacy, dynasty, imperial activity and military strength can be further tied to the political context of their composition date. Both speeches are unfortunately fragmentary, and what follows is generally reliant on Seeck's assessment of how much survives in the original manuscripts.⁸⁹

Oration 1, delivered on 25th February 368 in Trier on the occasion of Valentinian's *quincennialia*, has twenty-three extant paragraphs:⁹⁰ one *folium* is missing from the beginning, and six *folia* from the end; and one *folium* is missing between paragraphs 3 and 4, and between paragraphs 10 and 11; so a total of nine *folia* have not survived. These missing *folia* have undoubtedly contributed to the dating problem of the speech, as the large section missing from the end would have contained an outline of the emperor's civil accomplishments, by which the speech's date could almost certainly have been confirmed.⁹¹ The extant material begins with the early life of Valentinian

173-6, have argued, unconvincingly in my view, that Zosimus is not mistaken and that Salutius was offered it on both occasions.

⁸⁹ Seeck (1883), v-xv.

⁹⁰ Cf. Callu (2009), xxii.

⁹¹ Saylor Rodgers (2015), *Oration 1*, n. 82.

and Valens, including their education (§§ 1-2), before moving onto the figure of their father Gratian (§ 3), and Valentinian's near-death experience during the reign of Jovian (§§ 4-5); a length section on Valentinian's election by the army ensues (§§ 6-10), and then an unavoidable tribute to the co-emperor Valens (§§ 11-13). This is followed by an unusually short section on Valentinian's character and military campaigns (§§ 14-16), and a considered justification of Valentinian's actions during the rebellion of Procopius (§ 17-22). The panegyric is brought to an abrupt halt in the middle of a paragraph which treats the emperor's civil achievements and his relationship with the senatorial order (§ 23).

As this panegyric will be examined in Chapter Four, it will be sufficient to highlight how the panegyrist's thematic selections aligned with imperial concerns in the first five years of the emperors' reigns. According to Ammianus, the Roman world was in a state of considerable unrest at the time of Valentinian's elevation to the purple, and of particular interest to him, given his Pannonian provenance, would have been the news that the Alamanni were ravaging Gaul and Raetia at the same time as Pannonia was being devastated by the Sarmatians and the Quadi.⁹² It is unsurprising, therefore, that Symmachus' first panegyric promulgated an imperial vision of military enterprise and rigorous standards, in which the themes of strength, security and activity were extremely prominent.⁹³ The emperor's own security, however, must first be assured, and so legitimacy of power (and suitability for it) is also a key theme in *Oration 1*, one which features, to various degrees, in every extant imperial panegyric. That Roman emperors seemed particularly sensitive to such a concern is true. The principate, after all, was an institution founded on a bedrock of illegitimacy, and imperial anxiety in the Late Antique period was heightened by the prevalence of usurpation and assassination. For Valentinian, it was a theme which resonated intensely in the context of 368, given his recent ill health, and the rebellion of the usurper Procopius in the eastern half of the Empire. The rebellion of September 365 – May 366 had presented a direct challenge to

⁹² Amm. 26.4.5-6. Cf. Tomlin's view (1979) that Amm. 26.4.5-6 refers to events over the whole course of Valentinian's reign, not just in 364.

⁹³ E.g. *Or.* 1.9, 14-15.

the brothers' imperial legitimacy. Procopius' claim to be a relative of Julian, who had been appointed successor by the latter on his death-bed, won him the loyalty of three Roman legions, and permitted him to march into the capital city of Constantinople unopposed.⁹⁴ While his ultimate defeat in May 366 nullified the threat of a direct military challenge to the brothers' premiership, the political repercussions of such an event could not be underestimated, particularly so early into their reign. The first *Oration*, however, moved to address such concerns, emphasising the military stock of Valentinian through the career of his soldier-father, whilst simultaneously belittling Procopius' claims and illuminating the true emperor's own military experience and skill.

The legitimacy and health of the new dynasty was further enhanced by Symmachus' panegyric to the young *Augustus* Gratian (*Or.* 3), who is shown to represent the Empire's promising future. *Oration* 3, delivered, as I have proposed, on 18th April 369 before the court in Trier, is less fragmentary than *Oration* 1, and yet just as problematic to date with certainty, given the lost *folia*. This speech is significantly shorter than the first, with only twelve extant paragraphs:⁹⁵ the majority of the first paragraph has been lost, and there are five *folia* missing between paragraphs 6 and 7. The extant material begins with Symmachus' presentation of '*aurea...munuscula*' (§ 1), before broaching the subject of Gratian's elevation at the hands of the soldiers and the Golden Age which has returned as a consequence of this action (§§ 2-6); after a significant lacuna, Symmachus' text resumes with Gratian's military education, and favourable allusions to the youthful careers of both Alexander the Great and Pompey (§§ 7-8); the return of the Golden Age with Gratian's accession is explored in greater detail (§ 9), followed by a discussion of the young boy's military apprenticeship under his father, including another comparison with Alexander the Great. *Oration* 3 concludes with the hope of future military achievement and greatness under the new emperor (§ 12).

⁹⁴ Amm. 26.6.3.

⁹⁵ Cf. Callu (2009), xxiii-xxiv.

It is impossible to know for certain how Symmachus' panegyrics were disseminated after their initial delivery at court, but it is almost certain that he would have delivered some version of his panegyrics to the senate when he returned to Rome. Sogno has suggested that, at the very least, a summary of the speeches must have been delivered by Symmachus upon his return.⁹⁶ It seems improbable, however, given their highly relevant content and the senatorial interest there is likely to have been in an emperor they had never met, that his speeches would have been unavailable in their complete state for Roman senators to consult in one form or another. Of course, the audience for such panegyrics was by tradition limited. As B. H. Warmington warned, 'It is easily forgotten that the panegyrics are not proclamations for empire-wide distribution, but ephemeral formalities, occasions for which would arise several times every year'.⁹⁷ As occasional speeches, they did not have the same universal appeal or reach as the imperial representations found on coinage, statues, and other popular visual iconography. Their elevated language and intricate word play, and addressing of contemporary political issues like the *divisio imperii*, points to an audience of erudite individuals. The notion that Late Antique panegyric was a baseless exercise in imperial flattery can be offset by evidence that these speeches conveyed serious messages about the imperial office.

Second Panegyric to Valentinian (Oration 2 [1st January 370])

The historical context in which Symmachus delivered his second panegyric to Valentinian – almost two years after the first – is well attested both by the ancient sources and by archaeological evidence. This panegyric is different from the first in its focus on Symmachus' own experience (*autopsia*) of being shown around the emperor's fortification building programme.⁹⁸ The speech is also fragmentary, but fairly well-preserved with thirty-two extant paragraphs:⁹⁹ there are several lines missing from the

⁹⁶ Sogno (2006), 11; cf. Humphries (1999), 120.

⁹⁷ Warmington (2012), 341.

⁹⁸ Sogno (2011). In the speech itself, Symmachus uses the first person singular and plural many times (e.g. '*probavi*', 2.3; '*vidi*', 2.6; '*interfui*', 2.18; '*ipse...deprehendi*', 2.22; '*vidimus*', 2.23).

⁹⁹ For another summary of *Oration 2*'s content, cf. Callu (2009), xxii-xxiii.

opening of the speech, one *folium* missing between paragraphs 4 and 5, and a further three *folia* missing between paragraphs 27 and 28. *Oration* 2 begins with Valentinian's consulship and the foundations of the Rhineland (§§ 1-2), and the campaign of 368 on which Symmachus had accompanied the emperor (§§ 3-4); the speech then addresses the crossing of the Rhine (§§ 4-9) and Valentinian's mercy towards the conquered barbarians (§§ 10-16). Following a lengthy section on Valentinian's construction of an outpost on the Neckar river (§§ 17-22), the conquered Rhine is crossed again via a bridge of boats and Valentinian's fortification works are described (§§ 23-28); while the emperor's building projects 'in the innermost parts of foreign lands' are represented as civilising, and indeed 'a triumph of peace' (§ 30). The panegyric concludes with a reference to the emperor Gratian, and Symmachus' claim to have witnessed the achievements he discusses, which were completed at relatively little expense (§§ 31-32). Hall noted that Symmachus' point here was that, while the emperors provide the services of two rulers, they expend the funds for only one, thereby displaying the admirable imperial virtue of frugality.¹⁰⁰

While our knowledge of the precise extent of Valentinian's building programme is fairly limited, it was evidently no mean undertaking: it would have required significant manpower and resources, and its hasty completion and continued expansion are indicative of the importance which Valentinian placed on the western half of the Empire and on safeguarding it against future attacks.¹⁰¹ It was this programme, and

¹⁰⁰ Hall (1977), xxvi.

¹⁰¹ Archaeological research has shown, however, that credit cannot solely be given to Valentinian for the vast fortifications which are continually being uncovered by archaeological excavations in Western Europe. Von Petrikovits, in his article on fortifications in the north-western Empire in the third, fourth and fifth centuries, highlighted the fact that Valentinian's task was not to build an entirely new defensive network [Von Petrikovits (1971), 184]. Previous emperors, particularly Diocletian, Constantine, Constantius II and their co-emperors or Caesars, had already contributed to the fortification of the frontiers, both on the Rhine and on the Danube [Von Petrikovits (1971), 187]. Rather Valentinian's need was only to supplement and improve the existing structures, although there is evidence of much original building work from the period of his reign. One example of an attack is related in Ammianus (29.6.2).

Valentinian's decision to fortify the entire Rhine 'from the beginning of Raetia, as far as the strait of the Ocean with great earthworks' early in 369, which has helped to secure the emperor's reputation among historians as the 'last of the great military rulers of the Roman Empire'.¹⁰² John Matthews maintains that Valentinian thoroughly deserved his reputation, not only because of his successes in warfare and diplomacy against the barbarians, but also because of his 'constant, strenuous activity in the building and restoration of the forts and frontier posts which composed the complex defence system of the late Roman *limes*'.¹⁰³ Indeed, one of the first laws passed under Valentinian in 364, addressed to the *Dux Daciae Ripensis*, ordered the annual construction and repair of towers in his administrative region.¹⁰⁴ This interpretation, however, has been questioned by Drinkwater, who argues that Valentinian's 'subsequent frenzy of fortification-building' (which contradicts the measured approach to the building programme as described in Amm. 28.2) was a means of demonstrating imperial activity, and therefore of justifying his imperial position, given the fact that the Alamannic threat was 'relatively small'.¹⁰⁵ The Alamanni, however, were a highly significant threat throughout the entirety of Valentinian's reign, and their brief subjugation in 369 provided Valentinian with an opportunity to repair and improve the defence system on which the security of the Western provinces and their upper classes depended. Given the scale of the fortification programme in 369, it was an excellent subject for Symmachus' second panegyric, since it demonstrated value for taxpayer's money, provided wealthy aristocratic landowners with a sense of security, and formed an enduring monument capable of eliciting awe from inexperienced and experienced civilian senators alike. It was to be the last programme of its kind by any emperor in

The Quadi were insulted that Valentinian was constructing a garrison-camp in their territory, presumably without their consultation.

¹⁰² Amm. 28.2.1, *Valentinianus...Rhenum omnem a Raetiarum exordio, ad usque fretalem Oceanum, magnis molibus communiebat*. The 'strait of the Ocean' is the ancient name for the location where the Rhine exits into the North Sea (in the Netherlands). Matthews (1975), 34.

¹⁰³ Matthews (1975), 33.

¹⁰⁴ *CTh.* 15.1.13.

¹⁰⁵ Drinkwater (1997), 12.

the western half of the Empire.¹⁰⁶ In a similar manner to *Oration* 1, therefore, *Oration* 2 ‘reacts’ to a unique set of political circumstances, without knowledge of which the speech loses much of its effect.

Imperial Cooperation and ‘Self-Representation’ in Imperial Panegyric

Precisely how this ‘reaction’ was formed and who dictated the agenda advanced by imperial panegyrics has been the subject of scholarly debate. The closest we come to a glimpse of the composition process for panegyric is found in Augustine of Hippo’s *Confessions*, and, as Sabine MacCormack stated, it can hardly be thought of as typical of the experience of other panegyrists, writing under significantly different circumstances.¹⁰⁷ There is, however, still a tendency among modern scholars to assume, to a greater or lesser extent, that imperial panegyrists in the Late Antique period – although their work constituted a literary continuum – fashioned their speeches using an identical process of composition; an assumption which inevitably rules out variation in the *modus operandi* of each respective orator.¹⁰⁸ Scholarly discussion of ‘the Gallic panegyrists’ as a unitary body of connected individuals remains widespread and, although justified in some respects, it nevertheless remains a problematic classification, particularly when the motives of the *Panegyrici Latini* editor, seemingly Pacatus, are obscure. Why were these panegyrics included, and not others? What can be said about the absence of Symmachus’ panegyrics from the collection? If the selections were made on the basis of quality, and were part of a rhetorical exercise, as Nixon and Saylor Rodgers have argued,¹⁰⁹ would the panegyrics of writers as eminent as Symmachus and Ausonius have been omitted?¹¹⁰ Callu’s suggestion that the panegyrics of Valentinian

¹⁰⁶ Hanel (2007), 401.

¹⁰⁷ Augustine, *Confessions*, 6.6.9. MacCormack (1981), 1-2.

¹⁰⁸ Rees (1998), 77.

¹⁰⁹ Nixon and Saylor Rodgers (1994), 7.

¹¹⁰ Callu (2009), vii-viii. Callu is right to query the curious lacuna which exists in the corpus of the *Panegyrici Latini* between 362 and 389. The reasons why the panegyrics of Symmachus, and the *gratiarum actio* of Ausonius, have been omitted from the work is a matter of speculation, with Callu seeing Symmachus’ support of Magnus Maximus as a possible reason.

and Gratian were omitted for historic political reasons during the reign of Theodosius I is speculative at best, and contradicts Nixon and Saylor Rodgers' belief that the collection 'served no political or historical purpose'.¹¹¹ But if panegyric was an effective political device, often with a clear purpose, it is unlikely that variation did not exist in the process of composition, and the questions we must ask, therefore, are: to what extent was the panegyrist an independent force in the composition of a panegyric? And to what degree did the emperor (or, indeed, the imperial office and its sanctioned representatives) influence or contribute directly to his own eulogy?

With respect to the *Panegyrici Latini*, Nixon and Saylor Rodgers took the view that the composition of imperial panegyric was not a 'top-down' process; that is, an official communication channel of the imperial office, which employed the orator as its literal mouthpiece or spin doctor.¹¹² While accepting that each panegyrist would have required 'a minimum of guidance "from above"', they argue that 'there is no need to conclude that there was much direct imperial input into them at all', because these panegyrics 'were certainly not "instruments of propaganda" in any crude sense'.¹¹³ These sentiments may hold true for many of the *Panegyrici Latini*, but it would be dangerous to apply such sweeping generalisations to the genre of imperial panegyric in its entirety, and some scholars have argued that imperial panegyrics were used as channels for official messages on a variety of topics.¹¹⁴ Indeed, the unique and evolving political background to each speech must have complicated the process of composition to some degree, as writers – and emperors – sought to react to a set of circumstances at one specific point in time. The political climate in which the panegyrists of Constantine composed were considerably different from those in which Symmachus wrote his panegyrics several decades later; so too were their respective depictions of the emperor.

¹¹¹ Nixon and Saylor Rodgers (1994), 7.

¹¹² Nixon and Saylor Rodgers (1994), 29-31.

¹¹³ Nixon and Saylor Rodgers (1994), 30-1.

¹¹⁴ MacCormack (1975), (1976); Lomas (1988); Grünwald (1990); Méthy (2000); Warmington (2012). Rees (2012), 40-1, also cites the example of Straub (1939), who argued particularly strongly that panegyrics communicated official messages; although Straub's arguments surely need to be viewed in the context of where they were written: Nazi Germany.

Ruling out imperial input into panegyric entirely, therefore, underestimates the great potential of the panegyric format to influence and to enhance materially the political power of the emperor.

Guy Sabbah, in a 1984 article, suggested a more nuanced answer to the problem of panegyric composition when he proposed his *communication descendante* – *communication ascendante* model.¹¹⁵ This model propounded the idea that imperial panegyrics could function as a two-way communication channel between the emperor, who had a platform on which he could advertise his desired image and ideology ‘vers la classe politique et, au moins dans une faible mesure, vers les soldats et les civils de la base’ (*communication descendante*), and the people – viz. those groups ‘qui n’entretenaient pas ou plus de rapports étroits avec la Cour’ – whose voices were represented and whose concerns were communicated to the emperor via the panegyrist who acted as ‘médiateur’ (*communication ascendante*).¹¹⁶ Rees, accepting Sabbah’s model, noted that ‘on occasion some of what an orator said must have had the emperor’s advance approval’ and he cites the example of Constantine’s lineage from Claudius Gothicus in the panegyric of 310 as the best known instance of *communication descendante* (– transmitting down to the people news which had the emperor’s consent or in this case, had even originated from him’).¹¹⁷

In the case of Symmachus’ three, albeit fragmentary, *Orations* to Valentinian, it is my view that we have strong examples of *communication descendante*. Whilst conclusively proving the presence of the so-called ‘imperial voice’ may be problematic, *loci* at which the panegyrist must surely have interacted with, or been directed by, the imperial institution suggest, in my view, some degree of direct imperial involvement in the construction of these praise speeches to Valentinian. This interaction may have been impelled by Symmachus’ own lack of knowledge, especially when we consider that a

¹¹⁵ Sabbah (1984).

¹¹⁶ Sabbah (1984), 378.

¹¹⁷ Rees (2002), 24. For Constantine’s lineage, *Pan. Lat.* VI. 2.2 with Nixon and Saylor Rogers (1994), 215. Cf. Sabbah (1984), 378.

key aspect of his mission to the court as senatorial ambassador would have been to report back to his peers in Rome on an emperor who was unknown and unfamiliar to them. At certain points within the texts, this interaction between panegyrist and emperor is more visible than at others, with three examples noted below from *Oration* 1, 2 and 3 respectively:

Firstly, in Symmachus' discussion of Valentinian's upbringing with his father Gratianus in the provinces of Africa and Illyricum, where the latter served as a soldier in the 330s.¹¹⁸ As Ammianus Marcellinus highlighted, Valentinian was an emperor quite distinct from the majority of his fourth century predecessors, who, as members of the imperial dynasty, had been raised in the public eye and were naturally figures of great interest to the Roman populace; the early lives of Constantine's sons, for example, were well-documented. Prior to his accession, however, Valentinian, and his brother Valens, had been subject to no such scrutiny. As sons of a farmer and soldier renowned for his physical strength, the Pannonian brothers were more *au fait* with the hard labour of the farm than the elevated ceremony of the imperial court. Their early lives were of no public interest until they were selected for the imperial office, so they were unknown prospects to the political community at the time of their accession. Symmachus' knowledge of Valentinian's tough childhood, shadowing his father in the harsh, polar climates of 'hot' Africa and 'freezing' Illyricum, must, therefore, have been procured from the emperor himself, or from advisors who were close enough to speak on his behalf.

Secondly, the complex relationship between the prepared delivery of a panegyric and the research methods behind its composition is further evident in Symmachus' second *Oration*, which promoted heavily Valentinian's liminal fortification programme, as previously discussed. As impressive as the fortification works may have been, it seems more than coincidental that Symmachus' panegyrics aligned with key priorities of the imperial regime. Although it is impossible to determine how genuine Symmachus' amazement was at what he saw along the frontier, or how impressed he was by

¹¹⁸ *Or.* 1.1-2.

Valentinian's military aptitude, the emperor's guided tour of the fortification works and its subsequent representation in Symmachus' second panegyric would logically suggest that much of what is contained in the speech emanated from Valentinian himself, who probably identified via the senator the opportunity to promote the progress and success of his frontier initiative.

Thirdly, in Symmachus' panegyric to the young emperor Gratian and his focus on the legitimacy of the new dynasty. One element which the story of Eupraxius, recounted in Ammianus, highlighted was Valentinian's desire to establish swiftly dynastic legitimacy.¹¹⁹ Eupraxius' promotion had been achieved with a public exclamation of praise for 'the house of Gratianus', with the good character and reputation of Valentinian's father a bedrock for future dynastic legitimacy. Valentinian's status as a political *novus homo* left him vulnerable; the ennoblement of Gratianus, and the accession of the younger Gratian, were both political tactics which could enhance the legitimacy of Valentinian's power in the early years of his reign.

It seems problematic to argue that the general focus of Symmachus' panegyrics on Valentinian's military style of rule was achieved by the senator independently, without some measure of imperial direction. When these speeches of praise are considered in isolation, it becomes increasingly evident that, although themes may be shared across the genre, their application was intricately linked to the requirements of the imperial office at the time of delivery. In this sense then, searching for the independent spirit of the panegyrist may be a thankless task. Literary flourishes abound, and allusions illustrate the erudition of the author, but these are mere footnotes to a more significant set of political signals.¹²⁰ While Symmachus' panegyrics may not have been officially 'official', there can be little doubt that their message of imperial activity, dynastic legitimacy and military strength emanated from the imperial office, or from its immediate vicinity. This is not to say that Symmachus composed these speeches under duress, or even scribed for the emperor; but the willingness of senators to please and

¹¹⁹ Amm. 27.6.14.

¹²⁰ For rhetoric techniques and allusions in these speeches, see Hall (1977).

compete for imperial patronage in the fourth century cannot be underestimated. Indeed, if Symmachus' correspondence imparts one thing, it is that there is no task which Roman senators would not have undertaken willingly for a glimpse of imperial favour.

Conclusion

Symmachus' panegyrics, which were delivered before the imperial court and in the presence of the emperor himself, represent Valentinian in an unabashedly positive light; while the last six books of Ammianus' history, although the historian often promoted the veracity (*veritas*) of his imperial accounts in line with the historical tradition,¹²¹ were defined by factors including Ammianus' own experience, his audience at Rome (a city which had suffered during the reign of Valentinian and where the work was composed) and his own personal prejudices.¹²² Imperial panegyric was thought to be of little value by modern scholars because of its undisguised flattery, but acceptance of the biases of the genre makes for a more fertile interpretation of the function which these speeches performed in the complex mechanism of fourth century imperial governance. These speeches not only show how emperors were ceremonially – and ideologically – represented before an audience of the Empire's most prominent officials,¹²³ but they also (if they were, as I have argued, self-representative) divulge much about how emperors viewed themselves, and how they desired to be represented to their subjects. A closer analysis of Symmachus' panegyrics to Valentinian will demonstrate how carefully the 'imperial image' was constructed and how closely their content was linked directly to contemporary concerns about imperial legitimacy and the role of the emperor: for Valentinian, and Symmachus, this role was fundamentally military. While much of the imperial representation found in these panegyrics was not unique, thematically at least, their vision of the soldier-emperor was, in the view of both Symmachus and Valentinian, unique to the imperial office and was represented as such to those who were present in Trier when these speeches were delivered.¹²⁴

¹²¹ On Ammianus' frequent declaration of insistence upon the truth of his narrative, see Blockley (1975), 96-101; Matthews (1989), 465. For the historical tradition of the truth, see Sabbah (1978), 19-22, 41-47.

¹²² Humphries (1999), 118.

¹²³ Kelly (2004), 193 on how centralization of government in the later empire drew high-ranking officials to the imperial court.

¹²⁴ Leppin (2007), 33. The panegyric representation of Valentinian did differ from other late antique emperors. For the representation of Valentinian's military character as different, see Symm. *Or.* 1.14.

As I have previously argued, the panegyrics to Valentinian fused traditional forms of imperial representation with elements of imperial self-representation, and took advantage of celebratory occasions to communicate politically loaded messages of dynastic and military significance to a wider audience. The content and *topoi* of Symmachus' panegyrics suggested that these speeches were unlikely to have been the work of an inexperienced and 'decidedly unmilitary' senator,¹²⁵ but were more likely to be the collaborative effort of both the senator and representatives of the imperial office, if not the emperor himself. The panegyrics represented, therefore, a concerted effort to respond to a variety of pressing political questions which found relevance in the political context of their delivery, and although the methods used by the orator may not have been unique to the genre, the final products were well-defined, effective and original pieces of imperial propaganda. An indicator of their success, at least in the view of the panegyrist, may arguably have been the commission of a third panegyric following the delivery of the first two.

¹²⁵ Kelly (2004), 194.

Chapter Three: Valentinian and the Creation of a New Imperial Dynasty

‘Therefore prepare yourself, considering the weight of your urgent duties, to be the colleague of your father and your uncle and accustom yourself fearlessly to make your way with the infantry over the ice of the Danube and the Rhine, to keep your place close to your soldiers, to give your life’s blood, with all thoughtfulness, for those under your command, and to think nothing alien to your duty, which affects the interests of the Roman empire.’

Amm. 27.6.12.¹

Introduction: The Dynastic Principle

The dynastic principle had been vital to the efficacy of the Roman imperial office since its inception under the first emperor Augustus. It is not coincidental that well-planned and peaceful successions were a hallmark of the Nerva-Antonine dynasty in the second century, during which period the Roman Empire was arguably at her apogee; nor is it coincidental that in the following century, the Empire experienced upheaval and instability as established dynasties became increasingly uncommon for emperors who spent the majority of their short reigns fending off usurpers and eluding assassins. At the end of the third century, a measure of stability returned temporarily to the Empire with its division into administrative areas of responsibility ruled by an imperial college and headed by the emperor Diocletian, who acted as its supreme leader. In the face of great internecine conflict, however, this tetrarchic experiment proved an untenable arrangement, and following the disintegration of Diocletian’s innovative system, the Empire returned to the familiar traditional dynastic policy of a single ruling emperor

¹ Amm. 27.6.12, *Accingere igitur pro rerum urgentium pondere, ut patris patruisque collega, et assuesce impavidus penetrare cum agminibus peditum gelu pervios Istrum et Rhenum, armatis tuis proximus stare, sanguinem spiritumque considerate pro his impendere quos regis, nihil alienum putare, quod ad Romani imperii pertinet statum.*

under Constantine.² The relative stability which the Constantinian dynasty brought to the Empire after years of political infighting perhaps proved again the merits of dynastic thinking, even though peace during these years was often little more than carefully disguised conflict.³ The semblance of political stability which had accompanied the Constantinian dynasty, however, was not uninterrupted; it had been challenged following the murder of the emperor Constans and the death of the usurper Magnentius, which left Constantius II as the sole legitimate ruler; and it was to end abruptly with the death of the emperor Julian in Persia in 363.⁴

Following the reign of the emperor Jovian, who himself intended to found a dynasty in order to secure his tenuous grasp on power, the opportunity for the creation of a new dynastic structure at the centre of the Empire arrived with the accession of Valentinian in 364.⁵ Valentinian's dynastic structure, however, differed to the Constantinian one which had preceded it. As Errington observed, the soldiers who elected Valentinian, in insisting that he choose an imperial colleague, 'brought about a practical division of equal responsibility that permanently altered the ethos of the empire and led in due course, through the almost inevitable separate development of the two "*partes imperii*", to its gradual dissolution as a recognisable single unit'.⁶ While these two dynastic systems may have differed in structure, the political contexts from which they had both sprung were comparable, not least because both were filled with great political uncertainty. But Valentinian's creation of a new dynasty, beginning with the selection of his brother Valens as co-emperor and the elevation of his young son Gratian in 367, was not just inspired by the example of Constantine: rather he recognised that, despite

² 'Tetrarchic experiment', Corcoran's phrase (1996), 1. For a concise summary of the reasons for the fall of the 'Tetrarchy', see Corcoran (1996), 5-9. On the dynastic principle in the later Empire, see Errington (2006), 2-3, 13-42. Errington noted that dynasty was the 'inevitable' form of imperial government (p. 13).

³ Errington (2006), 14. Cf. also Jones (1964), 325-6 for the unity and stability that a powerful ruling dynasty could bring to the state.

⁴ Errington (2006), 15.

⁵ On Jovian's attempts to found a dynasty, see Lenski (2002), 90; Errington (2006), 19-20.

⁶ Errington (2006), 3.

clear problems with the dynastic principle, it furnished emperors with the most effective means of securing their power, as it allowed the imperial mantle to be inherited by members of the imperial family, and it imbued these familial successor(s) with innate legitimacy to rule.⁷ The importance and advantages of such (dynastic) legitimacy can hardly be overstated, if we consider Julian's relief on being informed of his own dynastically empowered accession to the imperial office:

‘On learning this [that Constantius had appointed him the successor to his power], and being now saved from the fret of dangers and the throes of war's anxieties, he [Julian] was hugely elated.’

Amm. 22.2.2.⁸

Constantius had not only spared Julian a lengthy and expensive military campaign; he had also guaranteed him the loyalty of the entire Empire, which was now his by right and not through the tenuous validity of a military campaign.⁹ It was this loyalty which made it easier for Julian to rule. As A. H. M. Jones clarified, ‘The dynastic system responded, it would seem, to popular sentiment, in particular to the sentiment of armies, and the successive families which occupied the throne built up a fund of dynastic loyalty which ensured the stability of the empire’.¹⁰

With the importance of ‘dynasty’ to emperors in mind, therefore, this chapter will examine elements of the representation of the emperor Valentinian as the progenitor of a new imperial dynasty in our contemporary and historical sources. Beginning with this strain of representation as found in the contemporary imperial panegyrics of Symmachus, I will consider how the panegyrist's primary purpose in his third *Oration*

⁷ Constantine's example, although obviously the Constantinian dynasty itself was founded by Constantine's father, Constantius I.

⁸ Amm. 22.2.2, *qua re cognita post exemptos periculorum aestus et bellicarum sollicitudinum turbas, in immensum elatus*. Cf. Seager (1986), 112.

⁹ Seager (1986), 112, 116.

¹⁰ Jones (1964), 324.

was to represent Valentinian as a venerable imperial progenitor through the example of his young son Gratian. By reflecting on the capability and imperial qualities of Gratian, Symmachus was reminding his audience of the merits of dynastic rule, and more importantly was enhancing the legitimacy of Valentinian's position and that of his dynasty. As I argued in Chapter Two, the composition process behind Symmachus' panegyrics and the convenience of their message suggested that these panegyrics had, at their core, elements of self-representation. These were, therefore, not only communications from the regime to their original court audience; they were also imperial propaganda produced in close personal collaboration with the emperor himself who, only five years into his reign, hoped to consolidate his grip on power with a clear message of harmony, stability, legitimacy and hope. This message could then be conveyed to the senate when Symmachus arrived back in Rome.

The second, and larger, part of this chapter will turn to the historical representation of Valentinian as dynast in the *Res Gestae* of Ammianus Marcellinus. My discussion will centre on Ammianus' treatment of Gratian and his accession. I will argue that, in an intricately crafted narrative of this accession ceremony, Ammianus sought to challenge the 'official' representation of Valentinian as dynast by undermining the legitimacy of the constituent elements which contributed to this imperial ideal. As Sabbah, and more recently Den Boeft *et al.*, demonstrated, Ammianus was familiar with Symmachus' first (and perhaps second) panegyric to Valentinian, and he alludes to them on a number of occasions in his own account of the emperor.¹¹ This comparative process remains inevitably speculative, however, not least because it is impossible to know what version of Symmachus' speeches Ammianus would have read. Rather than comparing these two different texts (and genres) directly then, I think it is more effective to show that Ammianus was responding to the core message of the 'official' representation, and was attacking elements which would have been present in all the political communications and propaganda which proceeded from the imperial regime.

¹¹ Sabbah (1978), 332-46; Den Boeft *et al.* (2008), 42.

Symmachus, the Third *Oration* and the Representation of Dynastic Hope

Symmachus' panegyric to the young emperor Gratian (*Oration* 3), probably delivered on the same occasion as his panegyric to the boy's father Valentinian (*Oration* 1), was designed to promote the representation of the latter as a successful and venerable dynastic progenitor, one who had imparted his own imperial characteristics and experience to the new *Augustus*.¹² Not only did this transfer of imperial qualities make Gratian precociously worthy to be appointed an *Augustus* at such a young age, it also assured imperial subjects that the future of the Empire was both bright and secure. This, of course, was the ostensible *raison d'être* of any imperial dynasty. Although, therefore, this panegyric is addressed to the enthroned child, both the latter's age and the occasion on which this work was delivered indicate a more significant purpose.¹³ In discussing the imperial qualities of the child, Symmachus explores the imperial nature and the *exemplum* of his father, thereby legitimising both emperors at one and the same time. Similar to other imperial panegyrics, *Oration* 3 also indirectly hints at the political intentions and concerns of the subject in question.¹⁴ In the previous chapter, which contextualised the delivery of these panegyrics, it was clear that Symmachus' status as 'l'orateur officiel' enabled Valentinian to convey an understanding, and indeed the success, of the new dynastic structure to an audience of powerful senators back in Rome.¹⁵ This was necessary given the juvenescence of the new dynasty and the recent circumstances of Valentinian's illness, which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Taken together (as they were delivered together), the purpose of the two panegyrics (1 and 3) was therefore threefold: to augment the legitimacy of the emperor in light of his recent physical weakness; to represent Valentinian as a strong dynast and careful progenitor; and to instate Gratian as a suitable dynastic product and thus a symbol of hope and future stability. These three concerns were not mutually exclusive. Together, they combined to create an 'official' narrative of dynastic harmony which

¹² For *Oration* 3, see Sogno (2006), 17-21.

¹³ The occasion, of course, being Valentinian's *quinquennalia*.

¹⁴ Nixon (1990), 2.

¹⁵ Bruggisser (1987), 139.

served to legitimise and strengthen the position of all the emperors, Valens in the East included. By looking closely and systemically at this panegyric, I will demonstrate how Symmachus' selection of topics was designed to ensure the successful communication of this imperial message.

Meaghan McEvoy has recently shed new light on the intriguing phenomenon of child-emperors in the later Empire. Her study is valuable, not only because scholars have largely passed over the reigns of the child-emperors, but also because of the larger theme which she set out to explore: namely, the transformation of the late Roman imperial institution as a consequence of child-emperor rule.¹⁶ Jan Willem Drijvers observed that, in fact, 'the emperor and the transformation of the imperial office...have never really been a key theme of research'.¹⁷ As McEvoy's intention was to explain the origins, function and acceptance of child-emperor rule, the circumstances surrounding the elevation of Gratian, the first child to be invested with the full authority of an *Augustus*, become extremely important. Beginning with Gratian, therefore, McEvoy was clear that his accession in 367 set a 'vital precedent for the elevation of the child-emperors who would follow'.¹⁸ Although Gratian's elevation to the status of an *Augustus* was a legal anomaly, as Pabst noted, McEvoy has argued that there was in reality little difference between Valentinian's actions and those of the emperor Constantine in raising his sons at an early age, 'except in the significant change to a more exalted title'.¹⁹ McEvoy's conviction that there was a greater motivation behind the accession of these child-emperors than simply 'cleaving to the dynastic principle', is surely true. As will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, the reason behind Valentinian's decision lay in both the protection and the favour which the symbolism of Gratian's accession could accrue for the regime. In this point, I disagree

¹⁶ McEvoy (2013), v.

¹⁷ Jan Willem Drijvers' review for Bryn Mawr, to be found at <http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2014/2014-03-20.html>.

¹⁸ McEvoy (2013), 48. Gratian's accession took place on 24th August 367 (Socr. *HE* 4.11.3; *Cons. Const.* s.a. 364).

¹⁹ Pabst (1986), 94ff.; McEvoy (2013), 50-51.

with Sivan's observation that it could also be interpreted as a sign of Valentinian's insecurity since this, as will become clear, is a notion based purely on the representation of the event in Ammianus' text.²⁰

The Return of the Golden Age

A key theme of Symmachus' third panegyric to Gratian was the return of the 'Golden Age' under the new child-emperor.²¹ Gratian is hailed as the 'longed-for hope of a new age' (*Or.* 3.2), and the one for whom the orator 'like a poet...would write out an entire excursus on the new age of Virgil' (*Or.* 3.9).²² In familiar language, Symmachus claims that, if he were permitted, he would say,

'...that Justice has returned from heaven and that pregnant nature spontaneously promises abundant offspring; now ripe wheat would grow golden by itself in open fields for me, grapes would swell on the brambles, trickling honey would drip from oaken boughs.'

Or. 3.9.²³

This striking description of the Golden Age employs language taken from Vergil's *Fourth Eclogue*, which famously proclaimed the birth of a *puer* and the coming of a new Golden Age. Although ancient commentators could not prove the identity of this mysterious child, some, including Symmachus' contemporary Servius, detected clear allusions to the emperor Augustus in the *Fourth Eclogue*, for example, at 4.10 ('...*tuus iam regnat Apollo*'), and understood Vergil's declaration of Apollo's reign as

²⁰ Sivan (1993), 108.

²¹ *Or.* 3.1, 3.2, 3.9. Cf. Bruggisser (1987), 140; Sogno (2006), 20.

²² *Or.* 3.2, *Salve noui saeculi spes sperata*.... '*sperata*' is Cramer's conjecture, printed by Seeck but rejected by Callu (2009) in favour of '*parta*'. *Or.* 3.9, ...*totum de nouo saeculo Maronis excursum uati similis in tuum nomen excriberem*.

²³ *Or.* 1.9, *Dicerem caelo redisce Iustitiam et ultro uberes fetus iam grauidam spondere naturam. Nunc mihi in patentibus campis sponte seges matura flauesceret, in sentibus uua turgeret, de quernis frondibus rorantia mella sudarent*.

foretelling the Augustan Principate, whilst associating the god with Augustus himself.²⁴ By the fourth century, however, the *Fourth Eclogue* had also been reinterpreted by many Christians, including Augustine of Hippo, as a *bona fide* prophesy of the coming of Christ.²⁵ Symmachus, therefore, in channelling the *Fourth Eclogue*, was able to revere Gratian as the ‘glory of a new age’ in language and imagery which appealed to both Christians and pagans alike, but he was also, more importantly, able to refresh the idea of dynasty itself by reminding the audience of the first Roman imperial dynasty in the hopeful, cornucopian language of Vergil’s poem. Furthermore, Symmachus’ *imitatio* was clearly intended to evoke memories of those concepts which Augustan propaganda had articulated so well: hope and destiny. In a panegyric, therefore, which hailed Gratian’s appointment as a new *Augustus*, Valentinian appears in the role of the new Augustus. By representing Gratian as the true fulfilment of the Messianic prophecy in Vergil’s *Fourth Eclogue* – an image which was echoed on the imperial coinage of the Valentiniani – Symmachus leads the audience into this implied association between the emperor Valentinian and the deified Augustus, both of whom are represented as venerable fathers to ‘messianic’ youths, as instigators of a new age, and as progenitors of enduring imperial dynasties.²⁶ This vision of a ‘new age’ was significant; indeed, the notion of the Golden Age suggested restoration and return to an ideal state after a period of decline, and it marked the beginning of a new era. Thus, while most topics in imperial panegyrics were about past achievements or the present, Symmachus’ use of this theme here ensured that *Oration 3* was firmly about the future.

Allusions to the ‘Golden Age’ and associated imagery were not unfamiliar to Latin imperial panegyric, and descriptions, like Symmachus’ (*Or.* 3.9) above, of the abundant harvests and favourable fortune which accompanied good rulers are also found in the Gallic panegyrics to Constantine and Maximian.²⁷ One of these panegyrics has

²⁴ Serv. *Comm. in Verg. Buc.* 4.10. Cf. Gurval (1998), 107-10 on the *Fourth Eclogue* and Augustus.

²⁵ See Bourne’s well-known article (1916).

²⁶ Indeed, Symmachus’ panegyric presentation of Gratian’s accession truly ‘fulfilled’ Vergil’s prophecy, in that Valentinian’s son Gratian did come to power. Augustus’ son, of course, never did.

²⁷ Nixon and Saylor Rodgers (1994), 410.

attracted significantly more attention than the others: namely, the *Panegyric of Constantine* (VI [VII]) dated to 310, chiefly on account of its description of Constantine's 'pagan vision'. Like Symmachus, the author of this panegyric made use of the *Fourth Eclogue* to promote the divine favour which would accompany the emperor's rule. For the emperor Constantine, this was to be in the form of rule over the whole world:

'For you saw, I believe, O Constantine, your Apollo, accompanied by Victory, offering you laurel wreaths, each one of which carries a portent of thirty years. For this is the number of human ages which are owed to you without fail – beyond the old age of a Nestor. And – now why do I say "I believe"? – you *saw*, and recognised yourself in the likeness of him to whom the divine songs of the bards had prophesied that rule over the whole world was due.'

Pan. Lat. VI. 21.4-6.

In a learned article, Saylor Rodgers argued that Constantine's panegyrist represented the emperor in this passage as 'a new Augustus fulfilling an old prophecy' on the return of the Golden Age.²⁸ It is evident, not least from the portraits found on imperial coinage, that Constantine nurtured this association with Augustus in a quest for enhanced legitimacy.²⁹ In this context, therefore, Symmachus' application of Vergil's 'prophecy' in *Oration* 3 to the young Gratian, and by implication to Valentinian, seems to acquire greater significance, as he represents the new dynasty of emperors not merely as successors to the venerable Constantine, but as equals, since they were all heirs to Augustus' political legacy and divine favour. If anything, Valentinian could be said to surpass Constantine, since he had founded a dynasty with a *nobilissimus puer* who

²⁸ Saylor Rodgers (1980), 276-77. Cf. Nixon and Saylor Rodgers (1994), 248-51.

²⁹ Saylor Rodgers (1980), 274.

possessed ‘the distinct marks of ancient virtues’ (*expressa ueterum signa uirtutem*, *Or.* 3.7) and in doing so had made the Golden Age a reality.³⁰

The Problem of Youth: Countering Criticism

Given the precedent which Gratian’s elevation had set in Roman imperial history, it seems plausible that Valentinian’s decision could have attracted some criticism from senior government officials. The Empire had witnessed stranger developments over the course of its long history, but at an imperial level few developments in living memory were more unusual than the investiture of full powers in an eight-year-old child. In doing so, Valentinian bypassed not only Roman imperial tradition, but also the recent precedent of elevating Caesars.³¹ As McEvoy remarked, the acclamation of Gratian ‘pushed the boundaries of what was previously acceptable in the exercise of the late Roman imperial office’.³² The frequency with which Symmachus addresses the subject of Gratian’s youth in *Oration* 3 suggests then that this was, at least, a concern to his father Valentinian.³³ As imperial panegyrist, Symmachus was compelled to take into account opposing views in order to pre-empt or counter them, and thus a distinctly defensive tone can be discerned in *Oration* 3. Gratian’s age did raise a pertinent question concerning imperial suitability. How could a boy have proven himself worthy of the imperial office? How could he be expected to fulfil the requirements and expectations of imperial rule? The obvious answer to this question is that he could not, so how did Symmachus address such a problem? McEvoy’s claim that there was ‘little else which could be said’ other than for Symmachus to stress the idea of the boy-*Augustus*’ youthful promise is only partially correct.³⁴ Throughout *Oration* 3, there is much discussion of deeds and achievements which Gratian had of course not undertaken. This was to be expected within the hyperbolic realm of panegyric. Poetic

³⁰ For evidence of Gratian’s consulship and the title held before his acclamation as *Augustus*, ‘*nobilissimus puer*’, see Bagnall *et al* (1987), 266-67. Cf. Lenski (2002), 90.

³¹ McEvoy (2013), 3-6.

³² McEvoy (2013), 48.

³³ Cf. Sogno (2006), 18.

³⁴ McEvoy (2013), 51.

license was given free rein; but, while Symmachus did praise the virtues of the boy himself, he also qualified his praise by stressing the considered judgement of Valentinian in elevating his young son:

‘Who would ever dispute with a parent over a child’s talents?’

Or. 3.4.³⁵

The rhetorical question holds more weight when the parent in question is the emperor himself. Valentinian is represented as having the ability to see the future potential of Gratian, potential that not even the inescapable reality of Gratian’s age could hold back, as the orator had already stated in his first panegyric to Valentinian:

‘When the quality of your family allowed the father’s precaution to fear nothing in the case of his son, why would age impede him [Gratian], whom so many familial examples affirmed?’

Or. 1.3.³⁶

In this instance, Symmachus associates Gratian with the ‘familial examples’ of both his father, and his rehabilitated grandfather Gratianus.³⁷ Their imperial qualities are imputed onto the new young emperor. In *Oration* 3, Symmachus also made use of a series of *exempla*, which compared Gratian to a series of Greek Eastern rulers, all of whom had been invested with power at a very young age:

³⁵ *Or.* 3.4., *quis umquam de indole pueri cum parente contenderet?*

³⁶ *Or.* 1.3, *cum familiae uestrae natura permitteret ut cautela patris in puero nil timeret, cur tardaret aetas quem tot exempla generis adserebant?*

³⁷ For Gratianus, see Chapter Four.

‘It was fitting that unanimous opinion favoured the flower of youth... Thus Syria was voluntarily subject to Antiochus, premature fortune chose a Pellaean commander, Rome restored his kingdom to Ptolemy in the earliest stages of his suckling infancy.’

Or. 3.6.³⁸

The use of non-Roman *exempla* here is a little surprising. As Saylor Rodgers observed, however, Roman experience of young rulers did not make for good *exempla* due to their general lack of success, which is presumably why the courtiers, during the period of Valentinian’s illness, did not consider Gratian a viable successor to the emperor.³⁹ An inexperienced boy could not be expected to understand, far less hold together, an Empire of Rome’s magnitude. But, in what was surely a rebuke to the courtiers who sought a successor for Valentinian outwith the imperial family, Symmachus argued that they had underestimated the ability of Gratian:

‘And by Hercules youthful and tender age more firmly grasps the science of empire; valour abides longer when it commences early. To be sure, a master of husbandry inserts a foreign bud into green branches, that the shoots grow in by a bond of bark.’

Or. 3.6.⁴⁰

Symmachus employs a strong dynastic image which represents Valentinian as the main branch and Gratian as the offshoot, thereby skilfully navigating the irregularity of Gratian’s age by affirming the suitability of Valentinian as imperial model and of his son as worthy heir to it. By linking Gratian’s youthful promise to his competency in

³⁸ Antiochus Magnus, Alexander the Great, and Ptolemy Epiphanes. *Or.* 3.6, *Decuit annis florentibus omnium fauere iudicia... Sic Antiocho ante robur aetatis Syria sponte subiacuit, Pellaenum duce praecox fortuna delegit, Ptolomaeo inter prima rudimenta lactantis infantiae regnum Roma reparauit.*

³⁹ Saylor Rodgers notes the possible exception of Alexander Severus.

⁴⁰ *Or.* 3.6, *Et, mehercule, tenacius rapit imperii disciplinas teneritudo primaeva. Virtus, cum cito inchoat, diutius perseuerat. Nempe uirentibus ramis artifex rusticandi alienum germen includit, ut nouella praesegmina coagulo libri uuidioris inolescant.*

‘the science of empire’, and thus by extrapolation the Empire’s future prosperity, Symmachus sought to justify the validity of Valentinian’s dynastic policy.

Fiction and Legitimacy: The Role of the Army in Gratian’s Elevation

One remarkable feature of *Oration 3* is its representation of Gratian’s accession at the hands of the army. Symmachus describes the boy’s election by the ‘uncorrupted votes of the soldiers’.⁴¹ Although they ‘did not yet know’ him, in choosing Gratian, the assembled soldiers had made a ‘happier judgement’.⁴² Symmachus’ depiction is clearly a stylistic reinterpretation of the actual procedure which saw Gratian nominated *Augustus* in 367. It is clear from the information of Ammianus Marcellinus (and is in any case the likelier scenario) that it was Valentinian himself who chose Gratian, and that the army only had the role of demonstrating their approval for his choice.⁴³ In attributing the agency to the army, however, Symmachus represented the accession in its purest traditional form: that is, election to the imperial office on the basis of deeds. As Barnes noted, ‘The Roman Empire was in theory an elective monarchy: the Senate or the preceding emperor would appoint a new emperor solely on the basis of his fitness to rule’.⁴⁴ In Symmachus’ depiction of this event in *Oration 3*, however, there is no mention or reference to the senators whose participation in such acclamations, as Frenkel recently reminded her readers, legitimised imperial rule.⁴⁵ Far from being mere spectators, ‘the living memory and the written representation of the senate’s gaze at rituals in which men became emperors or took part *qua* emperors, displaying their identity, contributed to the construction of imperial identity’.⁴⁶ But the senate was not entirely absent from this panegyric account: in *Oration 1*, delivered to Valentinian on the same day as *Oration 3*, Symmachus had alluded to the army as the ‘senate of the

⁴¹ *Or. 3.4, O militum sincera suffragia!*

⁴² *Or. 3.4, Fortunae publicae fuit ut qui te nouerat parciora promitteret, qui necdum nouerant felicius iudicaret.*

⁴³ As Saylor Rodgers’ online translation and commentary also noted (*Oration 3*, p. 3, n. 17).

⁴⁴ Barnes (1981), 8.

⁴⁵ Frenkel (2017), 199.

⁴⁶ Frenkel (2017), 199-200.

camp' (*senatus castrensis*, § 9), who had 'received a man well worn by wars'.⁴⁷ It seems likely, therefore, that Symmachus' unusual description of the army as a *senatus* who had the power to legitimise imperial rule in *Oration* 1 was an identification which was also germane to *Oration* 3, and the fact that Valentinian's choice of Gratian was received by the army with *unanimitas* highlighted his legitimate *auctoritas*.⁴⁸ In representing Gratian's elevation as military in nature, Symmachus also affirmed the legitimacy of Valentinian's own accession, during which the body of assembled troops had enthusiastically supported their new emperor (*Or.* 1.9). Symmachus' depiction of the soldiers in both panegyrics, therefore, was as a unitary body of 'kingmakers', whose support underpinned the legitimate creation of a new dynasty.

'Ancient Virtues' and Exempla

A major reason for the panegyrist's 'hope' in *Oration* 3 was Gratian's perceived embodiment of traditional values. Symmachus stated that in Gratian he recognised not the 'traced sketchings but the distinct marks of ancient virtues' (§ 7).⁴⁹ Ammianus was also to emphasise these virtues in his own representation of Gratian's accession.⁵⁰ Ultimately, however, Gratian was 'chosen in hope', but also 'proven in deed'.⁵¹ While, as previously mentioned, such 'deeds' were ostensibly mere panegyric hyperbole, it is not inconceivable to imagine, for the purposes of the panegyric, that Symmachus' allusions to such worthy deeds and achievements were actually allusions to those of Valentinian, credit for which was shared with the young emperor. Indeed, Symmachus had already described Gratian and Valentinian in terms of an imperial duality – in 'a curious sort of *recusatio*' in which Valentinian was said to be reluctant on behalf of his son.⁵²

⁴⁷ *Or.* 1.9, *Emeritum bellis uirum castrensis senatus adsciuit*.

⁴⁸ *Or.* 3.6. Cf. Kolb (2001), 214-18.

⁴⁹ *Or.* 3.7, *Agnosco in te non adumbrata uestigiis sed expressa ueterum signa uirtutum*.

⁵⁰ *Amm.* 27.6.15.

⁵¹ *Or.* 3.4, *Spe electus es, re probatus*.

⁵² Saylor Rodgers (*Oration* 3, p. 3, n. 19); cf. Sogno (2006), 19 on this *recusatio*.

‘On this side Augustus, on that the legions and midway between them the youthful candidate for rule; for a long while the strife is undecided on both sides, and while everyone cheers in eager favour the father gives way at a late hour.’

Or. 3.5.⁵³

It was not, however, only imperial ‘deeds’ which recommended Gratian. In passing references to Cn. Pompeius and Alexander the Great, both of whom had achieved much at a young age and were examples of precocious military commanders, Symmachus highlighted the great possibilities which accompanied Gratian’s appointment.⁵⁴ His young age was not a barrier to success, but merely an opportunity for Gratian to achieve even more than was possible for such illustrious ancient figures in their short lives.

Dynastic Harmony and the Representation of Valentinian’s Dynastic Legacy

The most significant theme which emerges from Symmachus’ panegyric, however, is the nature of the relationship between the father and the son. The promotion of dynastic harmony within the imperial family was a key part of Symmachus’ remit as official panegyrist for the dynasty, and the final chapters of *Oration* 3 are particularly concerned with this theme. In the eastern half of the Empire, at the beginning of the brothers’ rule (364), the orator Themistius had similarly praised the harmonious relationship between Valentinian and Valens in his sixth *Oration* ‘On Philanthropia’.⁵⁵ As Heather and Moncur observed, given recent imperial history, this was a particularly pertinent topic, because ‘the overall political history of the Roman Empire in the later third and fourth centuries [was] characterised by a series of failed attempts to find workable methods of sharing imperial power.’⁵⁶ So it was probably with a similar

⁵³ *Or.* 3.5, *Hinc Augustum, inde legiones et inter hos medium regni inpuerem candidatum; turmas supplices, cuneos ambientes; anceps diu utrimque certamen et cunctis alacri fauore plaudentibus patrem sero cedentem.*

⁵⁴ *Or.* 3.7-8.

⁵⁵ For the circumstances of the speech, see Heather and Moncur (2001), 173-79.

⁵⁶ Heather and Moncur (2001), 176.

theme in mind that Symmachus approached this political ideal. The new dynasty, of course, had to appear to be a bedrock of stability and strength, especially in light of the Empire's and the brothers' recent troubles. Only five years earlier, according to Ammianus, the Roman Empire was in a state of considerable unrest at the time of Valentinian's accession in 364: the Alamanni were ravaging Gaul and Raetia at the same time as Pannonia was being devastated by the Sarmatians and the Quadi.⁵⁷ While in the eastern half of the Empire in 365, the usurper Procopius had posed a real and serious danger to the dynasty, having won the loyalty of three Roman legions, marched into the capital city of the Eastern Roman Empire unhindered, and claimed that he was a relative of Julian who had appointed him successor on his death-bed.⁵⁸ Dynastic unity helped to dissuade such challenges – external and internal – to the imperial power, and increased the family's chances of successfully overcoming them when they did inevitably arise. In *Oration 3*, Symmachus noted that dynastic unity and harmony were achieved because Gratian rejoiced in his father's instruction:

‘One campaign belongs to each, and united felicity: you rejoice in your father's instruction, he in the companionship of his junior. By the established rule of nature he who is in harmony never envies.’

*Or. 3.10.*⁵⁹

Indeed, this instruction, and the presence of a role model for the young emperor, were indicative of his *fortuna*, a vital quality which was desired in any future leader:

⁵⁷ Amm. 26.4.5-6.

⁵⁸ Amm. 26.6.3.

⁵⁹ *Or. 3.10, Vna est utriusque militia et coniuncta felicitas: tu gaudes magisterio patris, ille contubernio iunioris. Certa ratione naturae numquam inuidet qui cohaeret.*

‘But if, venerable Gratian, we were to weigh your fortune, which is the first thing to be measured in leaders, in careful examination, what is more felicitous than a prince in command under his parents?’

Or. 3.11.⁶⁰

There is no sense of the familial conflict which was a defining characteristic of the Constantinian dynasty, since the Valentinian dynasty’s harmonious relationship between father and son, like that of brother to brother, was designed to ward off destructive envy and civil conflict. In his *Speech of Thanks to Julian* (*Pan. Lat.* III), the panegyrist Claudius Mamertinus had mused on the glories of his addressee, which had ‘merited the envy of your imperial brother’.⁶¹ With Constantius dead, the panegyrist was free to comment on what had been a volatile familial relationship. Mamertinus ensured that the fault for the damaging ‘envy’ which had brought the ‘imperial brothers’ to the brink of civil war lay with Constantius alone.⁶² In *Oration* 3, however, Symmachus represented Gratian as a loyal and obedient son, but also as a capable and reliable colleague for his father:

‘All praise belongs to both; you show yourself a son in reverence, a colleague in valour.’

Or. 3.10.⁶³

Unlike Alexander the Great under his father Philip of Macedon, Gratian does not require an outlet for his valour, for Valentinian’s conquests and glories are shared with his son:

⁶⁰ *Or.* 3.11, *Quodsi fortunam tuam, Gratiane uenerabilis, quae prima in ducibus aestimatur perpensa examinatione libremus, quid felicius principe sub parentibus imperante?*

⁶¹ *Pan. Lat.* III. 3.1.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Or.* 3.10, *Laus omnis amborum est. Filium te exhibes reuerentia, uirtute collegam.*

‘The king of Macedon used to complain of his father’s glory, because with provinces subjected far and wide he has left nothing for his heir’s valour to conquer. May that complaint be lacking to my young man!’

Or. 3.10.⁶⁴

Symmachus was clear that it was the Empire itself which would, of course, benefit most from the formation of this dynasty. He ends his panegyric with a visual description of the celestial unity of what was shared and which accompanied stable dynastic rule, a trope which was also found in Tetrarchic propaganda.⁶⁵ What is quite clear about the final chapters of Symmachus’ third *Oration* is its expression of Gratian’s potential in military terms. This was an imperial bond which transcended familial ties. Both were (or were envisaged to become) ‘military men’, a role which Symmachus had successfully explored in his first *Oration* to Valentinian, to be discussed in Chapter Four.

Symmachus’ third imperial panegyric to the child-emperor Gratian was a speech designed to enhance the legitimacy of Valentinian’s new dynasty. The elevation of a child to the imperial office was a phenomenon which demanded greater justification from an external observer. Indeed, this was one of the rare cases in which an emperor did something really ‘innovative’, something that broke with expectations and traditions. The emperor, therefore, was required to explain his decision and make it palpable to his subjects, in order to win the elites’ consent. This is reflected in Symmachus’ strategy in *Oration* 3, which countered any concerns regarding the validity of Gratian’s selection by focussing on a number of important themes. Perhaps most significantly was the representation of Valentinian as a wise dynast who had chosen a worthy colleague and successor. His ongoing role as a mentor to Gratian ensured that the boy would become a ‘good’ emperor, who could fulfil the great hope and expectation vested in him. Much of the praise of Gratian reflected back on his

⁶⁴ *Or.* 3.10, *Queri de paterna gloria Macedonum rex solebat quod subactis longe lateque prouinciis nihil ad uictoriam uirtuti reliquisset heredis.*

⁶⁵ Saylor Rodgers (*Oration* 3, p. 6-7, n. 48); Sogno (2006), 21.

father, whose role as a parent to such a precocious child emphasised his suitability as the founder of a new imperial dynasty. The core message, however, of Symmachus' panegyric was the assurance of dynastic harmony, the corollary of which was the stability, security and future prosperity of the Empire at large. The emperor, in his 'official' propaganda, presumably hoped that his appointment of Gratian would also secure his own political legacy.

A Historiographical Response to Symmachus' 'Golden Age' Vision of Dynastic Harmony? Ammianus, the Character of Valentinian and the Accession of Gratian (27.5-7)

Ammianus Marcellinus' historical account of the young Gratian's accession ceremony is one of the most significant moments in Books 26-31 of the *Res Gestae*. Its importance is evident in the entire chapter which Ammianus allows for detailing the ceremony's sequence of events. However, as previously discussed, this episode and the wider phenomenon of child emperors in the late Roman West had received little attention from scholars until the recent publication of Meaghan McEvoy's monograph.⁶⁶ As was argued above, Symmachus' third *Oration* to Gratian was a carefully constructed piece of imperial propaganda, one which was designed to enhance the legitimacy of the new imperial dynasty when it was first delivered in 369. My analysis of this panegyric demonstrated the panegyrist's focus on a number of prominent themes, evidently those which the imperial office considered most important for dissemination. The third panegyric was both defensive and offensive. It was clearly designed to address and counter criticism or discontent surrounding the unprecedented elevation of a child to the imperial office, whilst simultaneously functioning as a vehicle, along with the first *Oration*, for wider imperial praise. In stressing the precocious ability of Gratian, the panegyrist hoped to disguise the irregularity of his accession. Gratian's instruction under his father was also represented as a source of comfort for those who questioned the boy's lofty position. For this to work, however, Valentinian had to be of good character and had to provide a good model of imperial rule in order to serve as an appropriate 'familial example' for the young emperor.

My analysis of this panegyric was thematic as this offered the best means of illustrating the various facets of the representation which it promoted, viz. the representation of the emperor as a legitimate and successful dynast. In turning to the treatment of Gratian's accession in the text of Ammianus, my approach will understandably differ for three

⁶⁶ McEvoy (2013). There is a much earlier study which related to the rule of child emperors; see Hartke (1951), which analysed the hostile treatment of child emperors in the *Historia Augusta*.

reasons: the difference in genre (between Symmachus' panegyric handling of this event and its depiction in Ammianus' history); the difference in proximity to the events, which is a central concern of this thesis; and the difference in authorial perspective (representation versus self-representation). It is my intention in this section to consider not only the representation of Gratian's accession ceremony itself, but also the wider placement of this scene in the *Res Gestae*. In other words, I will suggest that Ammianus' account of Gratian's accession scene was carefully placed within a textual environment which stressed a) the unsuitability of Valentinian as an imperial model for Gratian (as opposed to the clear familial model which Valentinian is shown to be in Symmachus' panegyrics), b) the politically expedient nature of the elevation (thereby undermining Symmachus' claim that it was the result of precocious ability), c) the weakness of the new dynasty; and d) the toxic political milieu from which this dynasty arose (contradicting the notion of a new 'Golden Age' under the dynasty, which Symmachus had heavily promoted). In short, Ammianus' representation of Gratian's accession and its wider context undermined the vision of dynastic stability which was advertised in the 'official' narrative of Symmachus' imperial panegyrics. Prior to my analysis, it will be useful to illustrate the structure of the relevant chapters with a small summary of their content:

Book 26 Chapters 6-10 – Procopius' rebellion.

Book 27 Chapter 1 – Roman defeat by the Alamanni in Gaul (365).

Chapter 5 – Valens goes to war against the Goths who had supported Procopius. 'First Gothic War' concludes with peace, and no significant victory for the emperor.

Chapter 6 – Valentinian's illness and Gratian's accession scene. Valentinian delivers two speeches, one to the army recommending his son and another to his son on his role as emperor.

Chapter 7 – Description of Valentinian’s worst vices.

Chapter 8 – Chaos in Britain.

Chapter 9 – Chaos in Africa.

In the remainder of this chapter, therefore, I will consider the representation of this event in Book 27, contending that, when it is located within its wider context, it can be shown in broad terms to be a self-conscious attempt by the historian to undermine Valentinian’s (dynastic) legitimacy, in response to the favourable representation which the dynasty had received in the panegyrics of Symmachus as discussed above.

In their commentary on Book 27 of the *Res Gestae*, Den Boeft *et al.* drew attention to the book’s ‘triptych’ structure, arguing that at the centre were Chapters 6 and 7, the ‘most striking part of the book’.⁶⁷ It was in these chapters that Valentinian was portrayed ‘with reference to both his avowed principles and his actual conduct’.⁶⁸ On either side of these chapters were detailed accounts of various military operations in both the eastern and western halves of the Empire. According to Den Boeft *et al.*, Ammianus used these descriptions of various military engagements to show that ‘Roman power was still strong and able to cope with all sorts of aggression both inside and outside the Empire, but as soon as the wrong men were in command, failure was inevitable’.⁶⁹ Book 27, therefore, represented an important turning point in Ammianus’ historical narrative. Rather than turning to the *exemplum* of Julian for guidance, Valentinian in Book 27 was depicted as a ruler ‘in the process of becoming the opposite of everything that Julian had stood for’.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Den Boeft *et al.* (2009), ix.

⁶⁸ Den Boeft *et al.* (2009), ix.

⁶⁹ Den Boeft *et al.* (2009), x.

⁷⁰ Den Boeft *et al.* (2009), xii. For Julian as a bona fide *exemplum* to future emperors, see Kelly (2008), 296-317.

Book 27, Chapter 5: Remembering Procopius (26.6-10)

In Chapter 5 of Book 27 (27.5), the subject of the troublesome usurper Procopius is reintroduced into the narrative in the form of Valens' revenge against the Goths who had aided the former in his failed attempt to assume imperial power.⁷¹ According to Ammianus, despite the Goths' admittance of error and request for a pardon (*'venia'*), Valens, 'taking little account of so trivial an excuse', marched against them with several legions in the spring of 367.⁷² Procopius had featured heavily in the second half of Book 26 of the *Res Gestae*, and Ammianus' narrative of his rebellion was intriguing in its representation of its failure, primarily because whilst the usurper had accrued a significant degree of power, he was ultimately unable to convert his 'patina of legitimacy' into fully fledged imperial recognition.⁷³ Procopius' claim to have been a relative and the legitimate successor of Julian had clearly been attractive to the several legions and barbarian allies who rallied to his cause, which highlighted the importance of dynastic power in the fourth century and the sway which it could hold.⁷⁴ What Ammianus' account had also highlighted, however, and made a point of highlighting, was that the new dynasty (Valentinian and Valens) had not yet attained the level of stability which one would customarily have associated with assured dynastic control. With a highly questionable piece of chronological rearrangement, Ammianus captured the mood of uncertainty in the Western imperial court when he stated that Valentinian heard the news of Procopius' rebellion on the same day as he heard about the Alamannic revolt (1st November 365).⁷⁵ Indeed, such was the state of affairs that Valentinian did

⁷¹ For contemporary accounts and references to the revolt, see Amm. 26.6-10; Zos. 4.4.2-8.4; Soz. *HE* 6.8.1-4; Oros. *Hist.* 7.32.4; Socr. *HE* 4.3, 5. For secondary scholarship, see notably Lenski (2002), 68-115; also Blockley (1975), 55-61; Matthews (1989), 191-203. For a philological and historical commentary on Ammianus' account of the rebellion, see Den Boeft *et al.* (2008), 111-305. For Chapter 5 of Book 27, see Den Boeft *et al.* (2009), 103-26. Cf. also Omissi (2018), 228-50.

⁷² Amm. 27.5.2, *Valens parvi ducens excusationem vanissimam, in eos signa commovit.*

⁷³ Lenski (2002), 70.

⁷⁴ Lenski (2002), 69 argued that Procopius was undoubtedly a relative of the emperor Julian.

⁷⁵ Amm. 26.5.8. For a discussion of and perhaps the solution to the chronological problem here, see Den Boeft *et al.* (2008), 111-13.

not even know if his brother was still alive.⁷⁶ Valens, of course, was alive, and he bore much of the responsibility for the current political crisis. It was the cruelty of his actions, according to Ammianus, which had induced Procopius' rebellion and plunged the Eastern court into a period of great political uncertainty:

‘These lamentable occurrences, which under Valens, aided and abetted by Petronius, closed the houses of the poor and the palaces of the rich in great numbers, added to the fear of a still more dreadful future, sank deeply into the minds of the provincials and of the soldiers, who groaned under similar oppression, and with universal sighs everyone prayed (although darkly and in silence) for a change in the present condition of affairs with the help of the supreme deity.’

Amm. 26.6.9.⁷⁷

Ammianus stressed the unity in discontent (*concordi gemitu*) among the army and the provincial aristocrats which had allowed Procopius to accrue the support he needed for his rebellion against the ruling imperial dynasty. Den Boeft *et al.* also noticed how the ‘remarkable sentence pattern’ in this example (*haec lacrimosa, quae incitante Petronio sub Valente clausere multas paupertinas et nobiles domus*) was ‘designed to emphasize the complete upheaval of Constantinople’s society: with Petronius as instigator and Valens as the overall responsible ruler’.⁷⁸ Valens, however, was not *solely* responsible for his actions, according to Ammianus. As Ammianus was to ‘observe’, somewhat anachronistically, in Book 27, Valens acted ‘in accordance with the desire of his brother, whom he consulted and by whose will he was guided’.⁷⁹ Both brothers, therefore, were represented by the historian as culpable for the favourable

⁷⁶ Amm. 26.5.9.

⁷⁷ Amm. 26.6.9, *Haec lacrimosa, quae incitante Petronio sub Valente clausere multas paupertinas et nobiles domos, independentiumque spes atrocior provincialium et militum paria gementium sensibus imis haerebant, et votis licet obscuris et tacitis permutatio status praesentis ope numinis summi concordi gemitu poscebatur.*

⁷⁸ Den Boeft *et al.* (2008), 146.

⁷⁹ Amm. 27.4.1, *Valens enim ut consulto placuerat fratri, cuius regebatur arbitrio...*

circumstances which led to Procopius' usurpation. Despite the harmony of their dynastic image as represented in their official propaganda, not least the first and third panegyrics of Symmachus, Ammianus' account of Procopius' rebellion in Book 26 highlighted the instability which gave succour to rival aspirants to the Roman imperial office, although these rivals did not always enjoy the same level of military support which Procopius had.⁸⁰

In this context, therefore, the mention of Procopius' rebellion of 365 in Chapter 5 of Book 27, served as a reminder to the reader of the significant threat which the usurper had posed to the Valentinianic dynasty:

‘After Procopius had been vanquished in Phrygia, and the source of internal strife lulled to rest, Victor, commander of the cavalry, was sent to the Goths, in order to get clear information why a people friendly to the Romans and bound by the treaties of a long-continued peace had lent support to a usurper who was making war on the legitimate emperors.’

Amm. 27.5.1.⁸¹

If the legitimate position of the imperial dynasty was justified by its ability to successfully fend off challengers to its *auctoritas*, then the dynasty of Valentinian appeared to remain untested since the usurpation failed, not because of the brothers' strength, but because of Procopius' inadequacy. This reappearance of Procopius' rebellion in the form of Valens' revenge against the Goths, and the use of the plural 'legitimate emperors' (*principibus legitimis*) would also have reminded the audience of Valentinian's questionable, but surely practical, decision not to travel east and assist his brother in the midst of the usurpation, an example oft-cited by scholars of the

⁸⁰ Cf. Omissi (2018), 248.

⁸¹ Amm. 27.5.1, *Procopio superato in Phrygia internarumque dissensionum materia consopita, Victor magister equitum ad Gothos est missus cogniturus aperte, quam ob causam gens amica Romanis foederibusque ingenuae pacis obstricta armorum dederat adminicula bellum principibus legitimis inferenti.*

emperor's insecurity and personal ambition.⁸² So controversial was this decision presumably that Symmachus had felt compelled to address it directly in his first panegyric, when he argued that Valentinian, as befitted his role as emperor, had prioritised the safety of the Empire over the potential dilution of his dynasty's power:

‘As soon as swift messengers and trustworthy reports carried the news to you, who did not think it right that you direct your weapons away from the slaughter of savages and toward the source of civil disobedience? But you feared more for the state and when caught between two causes, internal on the one side, external on the other, you preferred that your power have a rival for a time than long-standing impunity as neighbour.’

Or. 1.17-18.⁸³

With respect to the representation of Procopius' rebellion and the imperial reaction, Guy Sabbah argued that ‘l'opposition d'Ammien à la thèse officielle représentée par le panégyriste est profonde’, while Den Boeft *et al.* concluded that Symmachus' and Ammianus' respective treatment of this episode was ‘an enlightening illustration of the differences between panegyric rhetoric and historiography’, and that both individuals ‘did what they ought to do within the rules of their respective professions’.⁸⁴ In returning to the subject of Procopius in Chapter 5 of Book 27 then, Ammianus' concern was not so much Valens himself, who, although unworthy when judged by traditional standards, was legitimately appointed to his role as emperor in the East;⁸⁵ but rather Ammianus lamented the corruption of the imperial ideal, embodied by Valentinian, which had given the internally flawed and inexperienced Valens (*imperator rudis*,

⁸² See, for example, Drinkwater (1997).

⁸³ *Or.* 1.17-18, *Quod cum ad te primum pernices nuntii et fidae litterae pertulerunt, quis non congruum iudicavit ut a caede barbarica in facinus ciuile arma torqueres? At tu rei publicae plus timebas et inter duas causas hinc intestinam, inde finitimam malebas potentia tua interim frui aemulum quam longa impunitate uicinum...*

⁸⁴ Sabbah (1978), 340; Den Boeft *et al.* (2008), 114.

⁸⁵ As Lenski (2002), 1, appropriately describes Valens, ‘He was neither a hero nor a monster, but rather very much an ordinary human faced with a superhuman task.’

27.5.8) supreme power in the first place. For Ammianus, the emperor's catastrophic defeat by the Goths at Adrianople in 378 represented an ineluctable outcome of this corruption: that the weak Valens was 'led astray by the fatal blandishments of his flatterers and inflicted on his country losses ever to be lamented'.⁸⁶

Book 27, Chapter 6: The Corruption of Dynastic Hope

Ammianus opened the following chapter of Book 27 with a description of the escalating internal unrest at the Western court (27.6.1-3) which preceded that of the accession ceremony of the young Gratian (27.6.4-16).⁸⁷ According to the historian, Valentinian had been overcome by illness, and was seemingly at one point on the cusp of death. The severity of the emperor's illness was such that it prompted a battle for succession at the court among the different factions who regarded his death a *fait accompli*. One group, comprised of Gallic court officials, requested the immediate appointment of their candidate, Rusticus Julianus, the incumbent *magister memoriae*; another group, the appointment of Severus, the commander of the infantry division. Although Valentinian recovered with the assistance of numerous remedies (*remediis multiplicibus*), the matter had raised the important question of the emperor's successor. And so Valentinian, resorting to an unorthodox practice, elevated his son Gratian, with the backing of the army, to the Roman imperial office at Amiens on 24th August 367. The young Gratian, only eight years old (although, according to Ammianus, *adulto iam proximum*), whose mother was Valentinian's first wife Marina Severa, was paraded in front of the army, before being brought into the midst of the soldiers (*productumque in*

⁸⁶ Amm. 27.5.8. For another interpretation of how Adrianople fits into a 'grand narrative' in the *Res Gestae*, cf. Kelly (2008), 315-6: 'It may be suggested that a link would have been visible in the *Res Gestae*, when fully extant, between Strasbourg, at the centre, and the two opposite ends of the work, Trajan in Book I and Adrianople in Book 31. Strasbourg is the node of the work, where Julian follows the example of Trajan and offers an example to Valens. Ammianus wrote of Trajan in the knowledge that Julian would come later, and of Julian in the knowledge that Trajan had come before him; the account of Julian has foreknowledge that Valens and Adrianople would follow'. For a discussion of flattery, and its effect on Valens' character, cf. Seager's chapter on 'Adulation' (1986), 97-104.

⁸⁷ On Chapter 6 of Book 27, see Den Boeft *et al.* (2009), 127-59.

medium) and appointed his father's associate in imperial power, a co-*Augustus*. Valentinian addressed the army on their duty of care towards the young emperor. Ammianus proceeded to describe the remainder of the ceremony, relating Valentinian's speech to Gratian on his son's duties and responsibilities as Roman emperor, before ending the chapter with a commendation of Gratian's physical attributes.

In the opening paragraphs of Chapter 6 (§§ 1-3), Ammianus vividly represented Valentinian's weakness, outwardly manifested by poor health which left him unable to protect his position. Despite the fact that Valentinian was still very much alive, the readiness of court factions to lobby for a successor so prematurely reinforced the perception of the emperor's weakness, with his presence shown to command little respect amongst those jostling to advance their own imperial candidates. By mentioning the supporting factions of these candidates (the Gauls), as well as their names (Rusticus Julianus and Severus), Ammianus not only emphasized the 'importance and influence [of these factions] in the emperor's *commilitium*', as Den Boeft *et al.* have argued; he also demonstrated that the court's preparation for a successor was more than just political posturing.⁸⁸ Real candidates had been selected in anticipation of the emperor's death. The overall sense in the opening paragraphs of Chapter 6 which Ammianus was trying to convey was that Valentinian's position as emperor, and his ability to fend off rivals, was maintained, not by any innate virtue or ability to inspire the kind of tenacious personal loyalty witnessed under Julian, but only by the fear which Ammianus argued was a defining characteristic of his reign. Indeed, in these opening paragraphs of Chapter 6, Valentinian cuts an isolated figure, who, shorn of his physical strength, was unable to meet the challenge which these candidates posed. Upon his recovery (§ 4), Valentinian was no doubt well informed concerning the designs of his courtiers, and his decision to make Gratian an *Augustus* may have been a self-conscious blow to those who had schemed for a successor.⁸⁹ Interestingly, in Ammianus' representation of this event, the agency for Gratian's unexpected elevation lay with Valentinian alone. Other accounts of this event proffered a different interpretation. Zosimus believed that it was

⁸⁸ Den Boeft *et al.* (2009), 130.

⁸⁹ Cf. Seager (1986), 116.

Valentinian's courtiers who urged him to name his son as successor so early, while the *Epitome* attributed the unusual step to the influence of Valentinian's mother-in-law and wife.⁹⁰

In terms of the political system, Valentinian's decision to elevate his son was a necessary move. The instability which the sudden deaths of Julian and Jovian, both without a nominated successor, had brought to the Roman state, was widely experienced, not least by the army which was twice deprived of its commander-in-chief. Valentinian's concern, as emperor, that the Roman state would once again be cast into difficulty by his failing health or even death, was the same concern which had prompted the army to take action at his own accession ceremony in 364, when they pushed for the appointment of a co-emperor to ensure a smooth transition of power in the event of such a tragedy.⁹¹ In the political context of 367, however, it is clear how Valentinian's decision to appoint a young child to the imperial office could have been perceived as little more than a poorly conceived, politically expedient *démarche*. As I argued previously, this was an unusual, legally anomalous, step, and Symmachus' persistent justification of Gratian's selection at such a young age in his third panegyric clearly hinted at contemporary concerns that the emperor had done exactly that.⁹² Den Boeft *et al.* argued that "present day readers, who are surprised at the elevation of a young boy as a 'Kindkaiser', will look in vain for any irony in Ammianus' report".⁹³ They also noted that Ammianus 'obviously regards the consolidation of the imperial dynasty as a normal measure, which is beneficial for the stability of the Empire'.⁹⁴ This, however, is not necessarily true. Ammianus may have been compelled to represent this accession ceremony as legitimate, since the emperor Theodosius I, in power when Ammianus was writing the *Res Gestae*, had only recently followed Valentinian's

⁹⁰ Zos. 4.12.2; *Epitome de Caesaribus* 45.4.

⁹¹ Amm. 26.2.3-5.

⁹² As Pabst (1986), 94ff., pointed out, it was a legal anomaly for the boy Gratian to rank alongside his father and uncle as *Augustus*.

⁹³ Den Boeft *et al.* (2009), xi

⁹⁴ Den Boeft *et al.* (2009), xi

precedent and elevated his son Arcadius to the position of *Augustus* at a similarly young age.⁹⁵ Theodosius would repeat the process with his other son Honorius in 393. It is possible, therefore, that Chapter 6 was not only a representation of Valentinian and Gratian; this was a symbolic representation of a Roman emperor appointing a very young child to the throne. As such, Ammianus could not criticise or make overt references to contemporary criticism of this process without his account of the ceremony being construed as a comment upon the recent action of the incumbent emperor. At this point, we are reminded of Ammianus' claim that contemporary history was the preserve of panegyrists.⁹⁶

Despite the expeditious accession of Gratian as it is described by Ammianus in Chapter 6 following Valentinian's near-death experience, his appointment as a successor in the West made political sense. This would, after all, be the next logical step in Valentinian's attempt to stabilise the Empire's power balance, whilst also securing his own hold on imperial power, and ensuring a smooth and peaceful transmission of office. Gratian's appointment can be viewed as effective in three ways: firstly, by assuring the *populus* that there was an established and stable ruling dynasty in power to ensure the continued safety and protection of the Empire and her increasingly endangered frontiers (and indeed, to keep the '*tranquillitas publica*', 27.6.8); secondly, by satisfying the army's desire for stability and loyalty; and thirdly, by safeguarding Valentinian himself, imbuing him with a depth of legitimacy that even military campaigning and success would have been unable to provide. The symbolic significance of Gratian's elevation was evidenced by his age: too young to rule, but old enough to represent a realistic future for a new imperial dynasty. His accession also appears to have been accepted with *unanimitas*, an important concept in imperial ideology, and received with joy by the army, who were represented as being reassured by the internal stability that dynastic succession, traditionally, was accustomed to bring.⁹⁷ Seager's recognition of the role of *fortuna* in Ammianus' representation of Gratian's accession adds a further dimension

⁹⁵ McEvoy (2013), 135ff.

⁹⁶ Amm. 31.16.9.

⁹⁷ Seager (1986), 113. See Amm. 27.6.10 for the army's universally joyful acclaim.

to the scene; both the poor fortune which prompted his accession and the good fortune with which he was adorned by the end of the ceremony.⁹⁸

Mark Humphries argued that a key difference between the representation of Valentinian's character in the panegyrics and that which emerged from the *Res Gestae* was that, in the latter, the emperor 'comes across as more unstable and impetuous'.⁹⁹ In the emperor's *adlocutio* in Chapter 6, however, there is no trace of such characteristics. Ammianus composes a speech for Valentinian which announced the *bona fide* establishment of the Valentinianic dynasty with clarity and brevity.¹⁰⁰ Valentinian is represented as a model emperor, who had enlightened his young son on the requirements of the imperial role. Addressing the army, Valentinian assured them of his unusual choice, claiming that Gratian

'...will weigh with impartial justice the value of right and wrong actions; he will so conduct himself that good men will know that he understands them; he will rush forward to noble deeds and cling close to the military standards and eagles; he will endure sun and snow, frost and thirst, and wakeful hours; he will defend his camp, if necessity ever requires it; he will risk his life for the companions of his dangers; and, what is the first highest duty of loyalty, he will know how to love his country as he loves the home of his father and grandfather.'

Amm. 27.6.9.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Seager (1986), 107.

⁹⁹ Humphries (1999), 122.

¹⁰⁰ Den Boeft *et al.* (2009), 139.

¹⁰¹ Amm. 27.6.9, '...librabit suffragiis puris merita recte secusve factorum: faciet, ut sciant se boni intellegi: in pulchra facinora procursabit signis militaribus et aquilis adhaesurus: solem nivesque et pruinas et sitim perferet et vigiliis: castris, si necessitas adegerit aliquotiens, propugnabit: salutem pro periculis sociis obiectabit: et quod pietatis summum primumque munus est, rem publicam ut domum paternam diligere poterit et avitam.'

The clear military focus of this *adlocutio* echoed that of Symmachus' imperial panegyrics. In *Oration 3*, Symmachus had stressed Gratian's potential in martial terms, while in *Orations 1 and 2*, Valentinian was strongly represented as a 'military man'. Such similarities with the 'official' message of the dynasty hint at the historian's knowledge of Symmachus' panegyrics. For example, the historian's mention of the 'home of his father and grandfather' (*domum paternam...et avitam*) and his allusion to 'the glory of his [Gratian the Younger's] family and the great deed of his forefathers' (*familiae suae laudibus, maiorumque factis praestantibus*, 27.6.8) were statements of dynastic intent which had a clear resemblance to themes which originated in Symmachus' panegyrics. Indeed, Symmachus had claimed that Gratian would succeed because he had good familial models. The inclusion of Gratianus, Valentinian's father, in official propaganda reflected the emperor's desire not only to establish a dynasty in a very real sense, but also to prove that the dynasty and its achievements did not commence with him, thereby increasing the legitimacy of his position. The fact that Valentinian's father, Gratianus, did not obtain the imperial office was insignificant because the emperor's primary concern was to demonstrate a suitability for office, rather than an hereditary right to hold supreme power. As was discussed in the introduction to this thesis, Gratianus was a distinguished military official, whose army career brought numerous successes in the provinces of Africa and Britannia, and popularity with the army. He also enjoyed a good reputation as a private citizen following his retirement in the late 340s.¹⁰² Valentinian's determination to promote the stature of his family is further evidenced by his elevation of Eupraxius, an African from Caesariensis, who upon exclaiming that 'the House of Gratianus is worthy of this' (*Familia Gratiani hoc meretur*), was promoted on the spot from the position of *magister memoriae* to the quaestorship, a detail of Ammianus' creatively reconstructed speech which was likely to have been true.¹⁰³

What Ammianus was representing in this *adlocutio*, therefore, consciously or unconsciously, was Valentinian's appeal to dynastic imagery, and the 'official' view of

¹⁰² Matthews (1989), 75; Drijvers (2015).

¹⁰³ Amm. 27.6.14.

the dynasty. Is it really likely, however, that the historian, so critical of Valentinian elsewhere in his narrative and never more so than in the following chapter, would place such positive speeches into the emperor's mouth? If we assume that the answer to this question is 'unlikely', then we may also discern an irresistible irony in the emperor's words, one which would surely not have escaped his readers. In an interesting article which reassessed the value of *adlocutiones* in terms of imperial representation in the *Res Gestae*, Peter O'Brien, discussing an *adlocutio* of the much-maligned emperor Constantius II, argued that 'readers recognise that the oration is shot through with statements that resonate ironically with those of Ammianus' own critical reportage of Constantius elsewhere.'¹⁰⁴ I would argue that this sentiment can also be transferred to the context of Valentinian's *adlocutio* here. Not only does Ammianus represent Valentinian as having fallen miserably short of his own imperial standards, but it was also widely known in Ammianus' day that Gratian's actions as ruler following his father's death included his recruitment of a regiment of barbarian Alans for his personal service and a questionable decision to appear in public in the garb of a Scythian soldier after the disaster at Adrianople. Such behaviour had aroused great resentment and contempt within the ranks of his army, who ultimately deserted him in Paris prior to his death at the hands of the usurper Magnus Maximus.

Eupraxius' exclamation – which Ammianus presumably heard about from a source who was present at the ceremony itself – reflected the general sentiment amongst the military men who had gathered to watch their future emperor's official accession ceremony. Ammianus states that 'the emperor had not yet ended his address when his words were received with joyful acclaim (*cum assensu laeto*), and the soldiers, each according to his rank and feeling, striving to outdo the others, as though sharers in this prosperity and joy, hailed Gratian as Augustus...'.¹⁰⁵ Their robust celebration was as one of participants (*participes*) in the accession ceremony, not mere viewers. In Gratian, as in Valentinian, the army recognised one of their own number, a boy who had lived 'for a long time among their children' (*diu...inter liberos vestros*, 27.6.8),

¹⁰⁴ O'Brien (2013), 228.

¹⁰⁵ Amm. 27.6.10.

according to Ammianus. But if Valentinian's first address to the army on the qualities of the good emperor represented a clichéd and generic ideal, then his second address directed specifically towards Gratian was more explicative in its representation of the imperial role. Ordering Gratian first to 'prepare himself' (*accingere*), he warned him to prepare himself

'to be the colleague of your father and your uncle and accustom yourself fearlessly to make your way with the infantry over the ice of the Danube and the Rhine, to keep your place close beside your soldiers, and to give your life's blood, with all thoughtfulness, for those under your command, and to think nothing alien to your duty, which affects the interests of the Roman empire.'

Amm. 27.6.12.¹⁰⁶

The starkness of the vision is striking. Its singular focus on the military campaign trail mirrors in a manner the priorities of Valentinian's own reign, but also those of Symmachus in his panegyrics.

Ammianus' representation of the dynasty's future ruler is interesting, most notably for its echo of sentiments expressed in the 'official' third panegyric of Symmachus. This appears to be one of the few instances in which the views of the panegyrist and those of the historian were aligned. As was discussed earlier in this chapter, Symmachus represented Gratian as a boy in whom he recognised 'the distinct marks of ancient virtues' (*expressa ueterum signa uirtutem*). Given the deeply moralising orientation of Ammianus' history, and his belief in the degeneration of character which was endemic in the reigns of the emperors whom he chronicled (albeit with a brief hiatus under Julian), it is surprising that he should single out the infant Gratian for such high, and

¹⁰⁶ Amm. 27.6.12, ...*et adsuesce in pavidus penetrare cum agminibus peditum gelu pervios Histrum et Rhenum, armatis tuis proximus stare, sanguinem spiritumque considerate pro his inpendere, quos regis, nihil alienum putare quod ad Romani imperii pertinet statum.*

perhaps unexpected, praise.¹⁰⁷ In describing him as a boy whose qualities ‘would have completed an emperor fit to be compared with the choicest rulers of the olden time’,¹⁰⁸ Ammianus set Gratian’s character against a traditional standard of rulership which recalled his use of historical *exempla*.¹⁰⁹ But the historian also represented Gratian as a clear example of unfulfilled potential. His use of the subjunctive ‘*implesset*’ indicated that Gratian ‘would’ have been a good emperor, had he not been influenced poorly ‘by the fates and those closest to him’ (*per fata proximosque*). By reminding the reader of his ‘retrospective knowledge’ of the reasons for Gratian’s ultimate failure as Roman emperor, Ammianus made effective use of the historical ‘future’ (as Symmachus had also done) and reinforced the authoritative tone of his narrative by hinting at a sense of perspective and knowledge beyond the reader’s grasp, although they too would obviously have been aware of Gratian’s unfortunate fate. The subjunctive verb here also highlighted the teleological and self-conscious nature of the *Res Gestae*, and the author’s awareness of ‘the bigger picture’ at play.¹¹⁰ At 27.6.15, the link to Ammianus’ ‘bigger picture’ can be uncovered in his use of the substantive ‘*proximos*’.¹¹¹ The individuals to whom the historian refers are not specified in the text; it could refer to the Frankish general Merobaudes or even Ambrose, the bishop of Milan, but it is also possible to view this as a deliberately ambiguous reference to Valentinian himself.

In the Roman mind, the relationship between a father and his eldest son was the closest and most significant of all. Ammianus’ reference to those ‘who had, by their evil

¹⁰⁷ Blockley (1975), 78.

¹⁰⁸ Amm. 27.6.15, *consurrectum est post haec in laudes maioris principis et novelli, maximeque pueri, quem oculorum flagrantior lux commendabat vultusque et reliqui corporis iucundissimus nitor et egregia pectoris indoles: quae imperatorem implesset cum veterum lectissimis comparandum, si per fata proximosque licuisset, qui virtutem eius etiam tum instabilem obnubilarunt actibus pravis*.

¹⁰⁹ For Gratian’s destiny as emperor, see Seager (1986), 112.

¹¹⁰ Blockley (1975), 100 argued that details are rejected as unsuitable, with the bigger picture preferred; and that the judgement upon unsuitability is dictated by the writer’s own prejudices.

¹¹¹ It was also *proximi* whom Ammianus blamed for the downfall of Valens. See Amm. 30.4.1, *at in eo partibus alto externorum silentio, intestina perniciēs augebatur, per Valentis amicos et proximos, apud quos honestate utilitas erat antiquior*.

actions, cast a cloud over his virtue, which was even then not firmly steadfast' is a crucial statement which implies, not only Valentinian's inadequacy as a paternal role model for Gratian and his shortcomings as a Roman male, but also an active role in the corruption of the boy's virtue;¹¹² all of which ultimately constituted a betrayal of the ideal of the *domus paterna*, the sacrosanct familial home, which Valentinian was ironically shown to revere in his speech to Gratian only a few paragraphs earlier, in § 9. Indeed, that place which should have been the safest for the young Gratian is, in Ammianus' hands, the most hazardous of all. And why? Because, in Ammianus' view, Valentinian's lack of virtue, and his eschewing of 'good' men, the '*bene vestitos...et eruditos et opulentos et nobiles et fortibus*' whom Ammianus mentioned at 30.8.10, not only sullied his own reputation and character, but also corrupted the character of those around him; in much the same manner that Julian's great personal qualities were said to have been transmitted onto others, even to the point of making Roman society a better place to live. In other words, just as 'good' emperors were said to have surrounded themselves with good company, in order to cultivate certain virtues (those previously discussed), similarly Ammianus' argument at the conclusion of Gratian's accession scene implies that the young emperor was irrevocably tainted by his absence from an environment in which such virtues were actively promoted. By setting his argument against the backdrop of Roman traditional values as epitomised by the *domus paterna*, Ammianus used an image to which his entire audience could relate, and his concluding allusion in the final paragraph (§ 16) to Marcus Aurelius' appointment of Lucius Verus as co-emperor in 161, functioned as a moral touchstone, a reminder of the virtue which the Empire had experienced under the 'imperial majesty' (*maiestatis imperatoriae*) of Marcus Aurelius, and temporarily regained under his hero Julian.

Book 27, Chapter 7: The Character of Valentinian

It is no mere coincidence that the next chapter of the *Res Gestae* (27.7) following Gratian's accession should list examples of his father's 'propensity to anger, savageness, and cruelty' (*iracundia, feritas, et saevitia*). This digression, and other

¹¹² Amm. 27.6.15, *qui virtutem eius etiam tum instabilem obnubilarunt actibus pravis*.

similar digressions in the *Res Gestae*, constitute a seemingly arbitrary interruption of the historical narrative, which makes the placement and timing of their interruption particularly relevant.¹¹³ In his third *Oration*, via an allusion to Cn. Pompeius who also began his career under his father, Symmachus had advanced the view that Gratian's development under his father was the best course of action for both the young emperor and the Empire.¹¹⁴ The primary reason for this view, according to Symmachus, was that Valentinian furnished a model of imperial rule from which Gratian could learn how to become a good emperor. This peaceful transfer of knowledge from emperor to emperor anticipated the future peaceful transfer of power from emperor to successor, which would in turn maintain the stability of the Empire. As A. H. M. Jones clarified, from an institutional perspective, the elevation of Gratian at such a young age was 'a safer procedure, since the new emperor was already vested with full powers on his predecessor's death and did not require, as did a Caesar, a formal proclamation as *Augustus*, which, however formal, might give an opportunity to rival claimants'.¹¹⁵ As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four of this thesis, this model was first and foremost a military one, as both Ammianus and Symmachus made clear. Ammianus' digression in Chapter 7 of Book 27, immediately following Gratian's accession, buttressed his argument for the acceleration of moral degeneracy under the Valentiniani with more detailed and extensive criticism that would otherwise have looked out-of-place within the main body of his narrative. Following on so quickly from the account of Gratian's accession, Ammianus' attack on what he perceived to be Valentinian's main vices directly contradicted what Symmachus had called Gratian's 'familial example'.¹¹⁶ Although the entirety of Chapter 7 was severely critical of Valentinian's character, as understood by Ammianus, elements of this criticism require discussion in more detail in order to understand how the historian endeavoured to represent the

¹¹³ Den Boeft *et al.* (2009), xi.

¹¹⁴ *Or.* 3.8. Cf. Saylor Rodgers (*Oration* 3, p. 2, n. 9).

¹¹⁵ Jones (1964), 323.

¹¹⁶ *Or.* 1.3, *cum familiae uestrae natura permetteret ut cautela patris in puero nil timeret, cur tardaret aetas quem tot exempla generis adserebant?*

emperor to his contemporary audience; of particular note is the contrast between the *virtus* of Julian and the *mollitia* of Valentinian.

In his *elogium* of the emperor Julian (Book 25, Chapter 4), Ammianus stated what he believed to be the emperor's greatest virtues, observing that 'he [Julian] gave great attention to the administration of justice' (§ 7); 'was free from cruelty' (§ 8); and that 'he was so merciful towards some open enemies who plotted against him, that he corrected the severity of their punishment by his inborn mildness' (§ 9). Ammianus was careful to ensure that the traditional values of justice and clemency, evidence of Roman *virtus*, were appropriately highlighted in his account of the emperor Julian, and he peppered his narrative accordingly with real examples of these virtues.¹¹⁷ It is unsurprising, therefore, that, in an attempt to contrast Valentinian's character with that of Julian, Ammianus reversed the technique and made much of the former's perceived 'anger, savageness, and cruelty' throughout his history. In Chapter 7 of Book 27, examples of the emperor's *saevitia* included the burning to death of the magistrate Diocles for small failures (*ob delicta brevia*), and the execution of three decurions for errors of judgement, all of whom professed to be Christians, a fact to which the historian gave particular attention.¹¹⁸ It was, however, the reasons behind such anger and cruelty which interested Ammianus more. The historian's belief that the emperor's anger was the result of a 'weakness of the mind' (*ex mentis mollitia*) is highly noteworthy.¹¹⁹ Accusations of *mollitia* (softness, effeminacy) directed towards other Romans had a long political and legal history, with one of the most famous examples of its use in Cicero's case against the magistrate Verres in 70 BC. According to Cicero, Verres' behaviour, in particular his partaking of luxurious banquets with married women, showed his *mollitia*, because adultery was closely associated with effeminacy in Roman thinking.¹²⁰ And for the conventional Roman male, the effeminate man epitomised

¹¹⁷ Blockley (1975), 75.

¹¹⁸ For the death of Diocles, see Amm. 27.7.5; for the execution of the decurions, see 27.7.6.

¹¹⁹ Amm. 27.7.4 (*nasci ex mentis mollitia consuetam*) on the reason for Valentinian's anger, itself a distinctly un-Roman quality.

¹²⁰ Frazel (2009), 145.

excess, sexual and otherwise, and explored its various avenues with an insatiable appetite.¹²¹ By employing such a term in the context of what Ammianus viewed as Valentinian's excessive anger in Chapter 7,¹²² not only did the historian cast into stark relief the imperial conduct of Valentinian when contrasted with the *virtus* of Julian, but he also depicted the emperor's actions – and indeed the emperor himself – as being distinctly un-Roman, with connotations of despotism, cowardice,¹²³ and the kind of effeminacy which was often only associated with Oriental rulers.¹²⁴ As Bittarello has argued, with respect to the earlier emperors Otho and Elagabalus, 'allegations of *mollitia*...served to stigmatize both emperors and to cast them as inadequate and inappropriate rulers, as effeminate, loving of *luxus*, sexually passive and generically woman-like...'.¹²⁵ This association of Valentinian with *mollitia* was further strengthened by Ammianus in Book 31, where the implicit comparison of Valentinian with the emperor Marcus Aurelius was employed for maximum literary effect in order to demonstrate the inferiority of the former: Marcus was able to lead the Roman state to recovery only because 'the temperance of old times (*sobria vetustas*) was not yet infected by the effeminacy (*mollitie*) of a more licentious mode of life'.¹²⁶ Interestingly, Ammianus' description of Valentinian as 'excessive' (*nimius*, 27.6.14) was also a reflection of the *mollitia* implied in Chapter 6 of Book 27 and explicitly discussed in Chapter 7. After all, an emperor who exhibited mental weakness or effeminacy could hardly be expected to show any self-control (*temperantia*) when it came to moderation

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Anger as a quality associated more with women than men (Amm. 27.7.4, *et feminae maribus*).

¹²³ On Valentinian's cowardice, cf. Amm. 30.11-12. Interestingly, the only time at which Valentinian's temperance resembled that of a good emperor was when he was at his most terrified.

¹²⁴ Cf. Stewart (2016), 12, 'Certainly many intellectuals in the Later Empire agreed with the time-honoured consensus that Roman pre-eminence had been achieved because its early citizens had avoided the "life of effeminacy" [*vita mollitia*] brought on by wealth and the sedentary life and "fought in fierce wars" which allowed them to "overcome all obstacles by their manliness [*virtute*]"'. Cf. Amm. 31.5.14.

¹²⁵ Bittarello (2011), 100.

¹²⁶ Amm. 31.5.14, *Verum mox post calamitosa dispendia res in integrum sunt restitutae hac gratia, quod nondum solutioris vitae mollitiae sobria vetustas infecta nec ambitiosis mensis nec flagitiosis quaestibus inhiabat, sed unanimanti ardore summi et infimi inter se congruentes ad speciosam pro re publica mortem tamquam ad portum aliquem tranquillum properabant et placidum.*

and justice.¹²⁷ Ammianus' discussion of the emperor's anger in Chapter 7, therefore, immediately after the episode on his illness, was, I would suggest, a calculated attempt to show the emperor as characteristically weak, in both mind and body.

Chapter 6 (Gratian's accession scene) and Chapter 7 (examples of Valentinian's anger/cruelty) of Book 27, however, were linked by more than just general sentiment and subject matter. Ammianus' assertion in Chapter 7 that the emperor Valentinian 'was known to be a cruel man' (*homo ferus*, 27.7.4) was a statement which had been directly substantiated in Chapter 6 by the emperor's treatment of Eupraxius, an African from Caesariensis, who 'remained truer to the side of justice...even when the emperor, becoming arbitrary, assailed him with threats when he gave him good advice'.¹²⁸ His inclusion in Ammianus' narrative in Chapter 6 (as an officer who was elevated to the quaestorship on the spot by Valentinian) seems to function as little more than a foil for another instance of the emperor's injustice, and an excuse, perhaps, for Ammianus to explore these ideas in more detail in the following chapter. What this clearly shows is the design and premeditated sequence of events in the *Res Gestae*, a history which can often seem capricious and digressive in its selection of material; but such juxtaposition was an important instrument for shedding a particular light (favourable or unfavourable) on an episode. It also gave the illusion of a spontaneous narrative, which made the audience more likely to assume that Ammianus' representation of Valentinian was accurate and honest. In this instance, Ammianus' lengthy description of Valentinian's vices highlighted his unsuitability as mentor to the young Gratian, a sentiment which contradicted the favourable treatment of Valentinian's character and example in Symmachus' panegyrics.

¹²⁷ Blockley (1975), 89, 'Temperance is an important quality which is stressed in the panegyrics as it was believed that if an emperor lost his self-control, his rule simply became a general rule of his passions, and he then posed a great danger to his subjects.'

¹²⁸ Amm. 27.6.14, *...qui tunc magis in suscepta parte iustitiae permanebat cum eum recta monentem exagitaret minax imperator et nimius.*

Book 27, Chapters 8 and 9: The Political Situation after Gratian's Accession

Symmachus in his third *Oration* to Gratian had attested to the new 'Golden Age' which would spring from the new dynasty's harmonious relationship. This age would bring peace and prosperity to the Empire, as enemies everywhere were cowed into submission:

'From everywhere and not without reason, they compete in the sending of suppliant delegations.'

Or. 3.12.¹²⁹

In Book 27 of the *Res Gestae*, however, there is little sense of such dynastic peace across the Empire. In a book which began with a heavy Roman defeat at the hands of the Alamanni, Chapters 8 and 9 of Book 27 contribute further to a narrative of political and military chaos. Chapter 8 described the troubles in Britain during the years 367-369, while Chapter 9 gave an account of the troubles in Africa (§ 1-3) and a series of raids by brigands in Isauria (§ 6-7). The new emperor Gratian, of course, was of little use to his father in these troubled years. In Chapter 10 of Book 27, Ammianus, describing Valentinian's campaign against the Alamanni, related how, although both emperors travelled together, Gratian's youth 'was even then unable to endure battles and toils'.¹³⁰ In light of Ammianus' narrative, the grand claims of the regime's panegyrist concerning dynastic harmony and collegiality did not hold true: there was no evidence of the stability and security, military and political, which the establishment of a new dynasty was claimed to engender.

¹²⁹ *Or.* 3.12, *Merito undique certatim supplices misere legatos.*

¹³⁰ *Amm.* 27.10.10.

Conclusion

Valentinian's foundation of a new imperial dynasty was an event which naturally attracted much attention from contemporary and historical observers of his reign alike. The tension between Symmachus' panegyric and Ammianus' history was evident in their respective representations of Valentinian as a dynast. Symmachus' task as an official propagandist for Valentinian's regime was to promote an unequivocally positive representation of this new dynasty and the circumstances surrounding its formation. His panegyrics not only promoted themes the emperor considered important, but countered the voices of critics who found fault with Valentinian's innovation or even the dynasty as a whole. In his third *Oration*, via a number of evocative images and ideas, which included a return to the 'Golden Age', the virtues of Gratian, Valentinian's paternal *exemplum*, dynastic harmony and strength, and military *labor*, Symmachus set forth a vision of imperial stability and hope which served to legitimise and strengthen the position of the emperor(s). Valentinian was represented as a strong dynast and careful progenitor, who had elevated, in the boy Gratian, an emblem of future Roman prosperity to the imperial office. Ammianus, however, responding to this favourable self-representation of the dynasty, challenged many of its core ideas, by situating Gratian's accession scene in a historical context and narrative which depicted Valentinian's regime as lacking in stability, characteristically flawed, cruel, and a major cause of political and military chaos throughout the Roman world in those years. Ammianus' representation of Gratian's accession scene itself was a silent ascent, an acquiescence to a political reality. However, as was argued above, the general contextual and literary setting of Chapter 6's dynastic episode contributed to an generally unfavourable representation of Valentinian's dynastic ambition. Writing with the advantage of hindsight, Ammianus ended his description of Gratian's accession scene with an allusion to the boy's corruption at the hands of certain *proximi*, which also served as a historical acknowledgement of his failure, and by extrapolation, the failure of Valentinian's political ambition.

Chapter Four: Valentinian as a Military Emperor

Introduction: The Age of 'Military Men'

The ascendancy of Valentinian to the imperial office in February 364 brought in its wake a radical change in the composition of the Empire's ruling elite.¹ The majority of those who served under Julian were removed, and supporters of the new emperor installed. These changes seem to have been achieved with the utmost speed. The province of North Africa, for example, received a new civil and military administration within only a few months of the emperor's accession.² Valentinian, in order to consolidate his position, was shrewd to actively draw upon the support of his countrymen and to avail himself of this resource when furnishing his own court with officers and officials. Apart from the obvious advantage of mutually protecting each other's positions, it would also have provided the provincial emperor with a body of functionaries on whom he could reasonably rely and trust. It was hardly an innovation, and we do not have to look far for other examples of imperial discrimination in the selection of officials: in Julian's preference for pagans, Gratian's for Aquitanians, and the proliferation of Spaniards at the court of Theodosius I.³ But the common misconception that Valentinian selected Pannonians, many of humble origin, at the expense of all others, particularly Roman senators, is unfounded, with Lenski arguing that their numbers and influence have often been exaggerated.⁴ Vulcacius Rufinus, a Roman senator, and Petronius Probus, a highly esteemed member of the Roman nobility, both held the vast praetorian prefecture of Italy, Africa and Illyricum successively during the period of Valentinian's reign.⁵ A similar theme was also evident in Valentinian's choice of generals: Equitius (Pannonian), Theodosius the Elder

¹ On the changeover of officials at the beginning of Valentinian's reign, see Matthews (1975), 35-39.

² Matthews (1975), 36.

³ Elton (1996), 144; Jones (1964), 390.

⁴ Lenski (2002), 10. On the brothers' choice of officials more generally, see also 56-67.

⁵ *PLRE* I 1090-3.

(Spaniard), Jovinus and Severus (Roman), Dagalaifus (German), and Merobaudes (Frank).⁶

It is quite clear, however, from an analysis of the changeover that Valentinian's new administration did favour so-called 'military men'.⁷ Their prominence in fact is highlighted in the *fasti consulares*, where no less than six of the eight consuls, who were not from the imperial family, are shown to have been generals or *magistri* during Valentinian's reign.⁸ The rise of this 'military aristocracy', however, was not solely concomitant upon Valentinian's accession and subsequent preferment of army officials. During the course of the third century, the senatorial aristocracy had experienced significant changes which included the loss of some administrative and all military duties, although it had retained its role as the social and economic elite.⁹ Under the emperor Constantine, more extensive reforms to the senate and the senatorial order ensued.¹⁰ As Salzman observed, the number of men in the senate swelled from 600 members at the end of the third century, to approximately 2,000 by 359.¹¹ This was the result of an increase in the opportunities for advancement into the senatorial order: Constantine increased the number of administrative positions available, but also upgraded many of the highest positions traditionally occupied by equestrians into senatorial positions. Constantine's changes modified the composition of the senatorial order by encouraging the entry of new men in the form of equestrians, provincial elites, and military men. While the latter group therefore may not have been disproportionately favoured by Constantine, he was not unwilling to promote them to posts of senatorial standing. As Salzman argued, it was in fact Constantine's reforms

⁶ Jones (1964), 142.

⁷ On the militarisation of the Empire under Valentinian, see Lee (2015).

⁸ Namely, Dagalaifus (366), Jovinus (367), and Equitius (374) in the West; and Lupicinus (367), Victor (369), and Arintheus (372) in the East. See *PLRE* I 1044-5, with Lee (2015), who observes that this pattern of raising military men to the consulship continued under Gratian and Theodosius I.

⁹ This first section owes much to the excellent work of Michele Renee Salzman (2002). On the senatorial aristocracy in the third century, see Salzman (2002), 29-31.

¹⁰ On Constantine and the senatorial aristocracy, see Salzman (2002), 31-35.

¹¹ Salzman (2002), 31.

to the senatorial order which ‘contributed towards the growth of a military elite distinct from those who pursued careers at the imperial court or in the imperial bureaucracy or via the traditional senatorial *cursus*’.¹²

Following a period of relative inactivity under Constantine’s successors, the senatorial order experienced further major reform under Valentinian which consolidated the development of a ruling military elite.¹³ In a law of 372 which John Matthews has called ‘meticulously detailed’, Valentinian enhanced the official ranking of court and military posts in relation to the offices of the senatorial *cursus*, making them comparable in standing.¹⁴ Salzman observed that these changes to the system of senatorial precedence ‘formally incorporated new career paths and gave senatorial standing to men in important military and court posts’.¹⁵ In enhancing the status of the military and court positions, Valentinian assumed a stance which alienated his administration from the Roman senatorial aristocracy, but no doubt endeared him to the military careerists who supported his candidacy.¹⁶ Salzman, however, also argued that Valentinian’s reforms were not ‘essentially antisenatorial’, but were rather intended ‘to ensure a more professional, loyal governing class over which the emperor could exercise greater control’.¹⁷ This was evidenced by the fact that the highest offices in Valentinian’s administration were occupied by experienced military leaders or imperial bureaucrats, and many came from non-senatorial families.¹⁸

The centrality of the military elite to any late Roman emperor’s rule was underlined ‘by the simple fact that the imperial dynasties of the fourth century – those of Constantine, Valentinian I, and Theodosius I – all came from military backgrounds and acquired

¹² Salzman (2002), 35.

¹³ On Constantine’s successors and the senatorial aristocracy, see Salzman (2002), 35-39.

¹⁴ Matthews (1975), 39-40.

¹⁵ Salzman (2002), 37.

¹⁶ See Alföldi (1952) on Valentinian’s engagement with the senatorial aristocracy.

¹⁷ Salzman (2002), 38.

¹⁸ Ibid.

power through the support of the military'.¹⁹ It is clear, therefore, that, while the relationship between the emperor and the military in the later Empire was a reciprocal one, the Empire itself benefitted too. In the mid-fourth century, recent military failures and disturbances on the frontiers served as reminders that the Empire still required a military emperor or, as Errington thought, 'an active military man who was prepared to travel, show himself, and if necessary lead his army in the fight'.²⁰ With the accession of Valentinian in 364, the Empire seemed to gain an emperor who fulfilled this precise criterion. In the words of Ammianus Marcellinus:

'In wars both offensive and defensive, he was very skilled and prudent, hardened by the heat and dust of battle.'

Amm. 30.9.4.²¹

Valentinian, of course, was not the first emperor who had military skills commensurate with the requirements of his office. Julian had also shown himself to be a highly effective military operator when he defeated the Alamanni, most notably at the Battle of Strasbourg in 357. In the context of fourth century history, however, Valentinian's background, lack of political experience and his primary occupation as a soldier did make him a somewhat unusual choice for the imperial office.

Modern commentators have generally conformed with Ammianus' description of Valentinian's military prowess. A. H. M. Jones, in his magisterial *Later Roman Empire: 284-602*, noted that Valentinian was 'an able soldier'.²² This statement finds corroboration not only in the *Res Gestae*, but also in the *Orations* of Symmachus. Following his journey to the imperial court in Trier in the winter of 368-9, Symmachus represented the emperor in his panegyrics first and foremost as a soldier, one to whom

¹⁹ Salzman (2002), 193.

²⁰ Errington (2006), 15.

²¹ Slightly modified Rolfe translation. Amm. 30.9.4, *Ad inferenda propulsandaque bella sollertissimus, cautus, aestu Martii pulveris induratus*. See Den Boeft *et al.* (2015), 190.

²² Jones (1964), 139.

the rigours of military campaigning were second nature, and who excelled in the ‘military zone’ of the imperial capital:²³

‘When you were made *princeps*, you returned to hard military duty. At once there were marches, at once there were battles and he who wore the purple was first in the line.’

Or. 1.14.²⁴

This military representation of Valentinian is a prominent feature in Symmachus’ first and second *Orations*. *Oration* 3, discussed in the previous chapter, had also defined the young Gratian’s imperial potential in military terms, and had concluded with the hopeful expectation that he would lead the army in his father’s lifetime.²⁵ In my analysis of *Oration* 1, I will consider how Symmachus’ primary concern was to represent Valentinian as ‘a military man’, who enjoyed the favour of the officers and the common soldiers alike. By exploring Valentinian’s upbringing under his military father and the rigour which this had instilled in the young boy, Symmachus explained and justified the latter’s imperial capabilities and qualities. In a considered representation of Valentinian’s accession in the midst of the army and the process behind the event, Symmachus affirmed the legitimacy of the emperor’s coming to power, and validated the role of the army itself, who Symmachus portrays as the new legitimisers of imperial rule. Depicting Valentinian as a military emperor capable of returning Rome to former glories, Symmachus also emphasised the military function and power of the emperor, which naturally anticipated the description of Valentinian’s fortification construction project in *Oration* 2. Indeed, these works were an expression of military power and purpose in terms which could be understood by all.

²³ Matthews’ phrase (1975), 33. For the representation of Valentinian as soldier-emperor, see Humphries (1999), 117-126; Sogno (2006), 15-17; Matthews (1975), 33-35.

²⁴ *Or.* 1.14, *princeps creatus ad difficilem militiam reuertisti. statim itinera, statim proelia et primus in acie purpuratus.*

²⁵ *Or.* 3.12, *quantum gloriae consequeris olim patre incolumi ducturus exercitum, qui quacumque duceris iam rogaris!*

The second half of this chapter will turn to the historical representation of Valentinian as a military emperor in the *Res Gestae*. Unsurprisingly, in a history dominated by military and political events, Ammianus considered many of the same issues, but in a very different manner. Valentinian's relationship with the military was represented as a major source for concern, and a primary reason for the decline of political culture during the reign of Valentinian. Ammianus also impugned Valentinian's reputation as 'an able soldier' by relating a series of events which not only contrasted him unfavourably with Julian, but which showed him to be an ineffective military operator, whose victories were often the sole achievements of skilful generals. In his portrayal of Valentinian's military accession, it was also evident that Ammianus was contradicting the exemplary nature of Valentinian's candidacy as described in the official narrative, and the wisdom of his decision to elevate Valens to the Empire's highest office. Indeed, the *Res Gestae* depicted the accessions of Valentinian and Valens in terms of hasty responses to specific situations of political necessity, rather than appointments emanating from genuine personal merit or ability. As in Chapter Three, Chapter Four will begin with Symmachus' *Orations*, before proceeding to the text of Ammianus.

The Representation of Valentinian as Soldier-Emperor in the Panegyrics of Symmachus

The Military Context of Symmachus' Panegyrical Delivery

Born *circa* 340, and therefore only in his late twenties when he made the journey to the Roman imperial capital, Symmachus, like the majority of his social class, had no experience of military service or command, so it is likely that the military protocol of a frontier citadel like Trier was unfamiliar to the young Roman aristocrat.²⁶ Fortunately, many of the topographical features which would have defined the urban landscape that Symmachus first sighted in the winter of 368-9 remain intact, to differing degrees, and the Moselle River continues to serve as the city's life force. While the survival of many key Roman structures may not reflect Trier's turbulent past, they do attest to the continuous appreciation of the city as one of strategic military importance and functional value, strengthened by its excellent trade routes and accessibility.²⁷ By the time of Valentinian, Trier's proximity to the Empire's northern Rhine frontier (approximately only sixty miles), and hence to 'barbarian' territory, justified the city's military character, and the formidable set of fortifications and gateways which encompassed it. In a military sense, Trier had evolved considerably from its humble origins as a legionary camp in the Augustan period.²⁸ Wightman and Von Elbe both addressed the importance and scale of Trier's military character, with the city's

²⁶ Cf. Sogno (2011), 138, 'Military service was not part of the realm of experience of a Late Roman senator...Symmachus was well acquainted with the staged violence of gladiatorial games, but had no direct experience of the battlefield.' Symmachus had probably never met an emperor prior to his trip to Trier, although he had probably glimpsed the opulent ceremonial associated with the imperial office when the emperor Constantius II made an official visit to Rome in 357. Constantius' *adventus* into the city is described in vivid detail by Ammianus Marcellinus (*Cons. Const.* s.a. 357; cf. *Amm.* 16.10). See also Humphries (2003) for the phenomenon of absent emperors in Late Antiquity.

²⁷ For the imperial city of Trier, see E. M. Wightman's still relevant study *Roman Trier and the Treveri* (1970); J. Von Elbe's work on Roman Germany (1975); and now C. R. Davison's doctoral thesis 'Late Antique Cities in the Rhineland: A Comparative Study of Trier and Cologne in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries' (2013).

²⁸ Wightman (1970), 35-9.

protective wall, constructed sometime in the third century, boasting forty-seven round towers and four gate fortresses.²⁹ Constantius I's selection of the city as his imperial capital following his elevation by Diocletian to one of the tetrarchs in 293, made Trier arguably the most important city in the west; under his son Constantine, in the early fourth century, the city continued to serve as a major military and administrative centre for the western half of the Empire, enjoying a mutually beneficial relationship with the army who provided both a market for manufactured goods, but who also relied heavily on the city as a source of supplies. The city's development, however, did not cease with Constantine, and for the majority of the fourth century, Trier continued to enjoy the prosperity associated with the Roman imperial presence. Ironically, the most imposing structure in Trier and the highest standing Roman building north of the Alps, the famous Porta Nigra, a major symbol of Roman military strength on the frontier, has usually been associated with Valentinian, whose subsequent departure from the city in 375 precipitated the beginning of its decline as the foremost military stronghold in the west.³⁰ As early as perhaps 407, the Honorian administration abandoned Trier as the seat of the Gallic prefecture and moved to Arles, in what was considered a great tactical and military loss for the Empire.³¹

Valentinian's own extensive programme of fortification works along the frontier, which was probably under way by the time of Symmachus' arrival and was to become the focus of his second panegyric in 370,³² and the emperor's soldierly demeanour and entourage, must have only reinforced Symmachus' impression, to be conveyed in his first *Oration*, that the Empire under Valentinian was becoming increasingly militarised and that it was moving in a different direction from that of his imperial predecessors.³³ Unlike other cities on the frontier, however, Trier had little requirement to adjust to this

²⁹ Wightman (1970), 92-8; Von Elbe (1975), 392.

³⁰ Cf. Matthews (1975), 33 on the image of the city personified as an Amazonian warrior clutching a defeated barbarian. See also Brown (2012), 187.

³¹ Matthews (1975), 333-5 on the abandonment of Trier and its consequences for the empire in the west. The date is disputed, but Chastagnol (1973), 29 argued that this took place in 407. Cf. Drinkwater (1998).

³² Amm. 28.2.1.

³³ Symm. *Or.* 1.14, *haec imperio quidem noua sed tibi cognita*.

new programme of military improvement and consolidation which the emperor had initiated along the Rhine, since its natural location had for a long time rendered it strategically important that the city project an image of Roman power and act as a deterrent to those people who resided outwith the imperial territory.³⁴ Trier's defensive design and proximity to the *limes* did not preclude the city from enjoying the comforts and entertainments associated with the Roman way of life. The city boasted a twenty thousand capacity amphitheatre, several temple complexes dedicated to traditional and native deities, the cavernous Basilika of Constantine and a large forum, as well as one, or perhaps two, magnificent public bath complexes erected by the emperor Constantine, the largest outside those in Rome.³⁵ The splendour of Trier's villas was also widely known, and the city quickly acquired a reputation for wealthy Gallo-Roman residents and magnificent art and mosaics.³⁶ Even as early as the first century AD, long before it gained newfound status as the imperial capital under Constantius I, the first century geographer Pomponius Mela, in his *De Chorographia*, had designated Trier an '*urbs opulentissima*'.³⁷ One of its most famous residents, of course, was the poet and rhetorician Ausonius, whom Valentinian appointed as tutor to Gratian in 366-367.³⁸ In his most famous work *Mosella*, Ausonius had also depicted Trier as a learned city, which in its eloquence could compete even with Rome: 'Your eloquence, rival of the Latin tongue, is an adornment to you'.³⁹ Trier was, therefore, primarily by circumstance, a city which fused the rigours of a military existence with the indispensable pleasures that had defined the Roman way of life for centuries.

³⁴ Von Elbe (1975), 392.

³⁵ Wightman (1970), 98-123. There is uncertainty whether or not the Kaiserthermen ever actually functioned as a bathing complex. No evidence of marble tiling or lead pipes has ever been found.

³⁶ Wightman (1970), *passim*.

³⁷ Pomponius Mela, *De Chorographia* 3.15.

³⁸ Salzman (2011), 36, with n. 4, thinks Ausonius was appointed in the summer of 368. I tend to agree more with Sivan (2003), 101, n. 3, who dates his appointment to 366-367.

³⁹ *Mosella* 383, *Aemula te Latiae decorat facundia linguae*.

For Valentinian, however, the decision to move to Trier was motivated by a desire to monitor closely and personally one of the Empire's most active frontiers.⁴⁰ Symmachus' first panegyric captures the resolute mood of an emperor determined to restore Rome's military advantage in the face of increased barbarian activity and a defence system which had been weakened by his predecessors' mismanagement.⁴¹ Symmachus' claims are supported by Ammianus, who also noted an increase in such barbarian activity in his *Res Gestae*.⁴² Although the rationale for Valentinian's choice may be readily explained, the emperor's decision to spurn the governance of the Greek East for that of the traditional Latin West was a surprise to many, a decision which Symmachus capitalised upon in his first panegyric, when he unfavourably compared Gaul with the luxury of the Eastern provinces, and thereby drew attention to the emperor's abstemious tendencies.⁴³ The image of the ruler who sacrificed his own comfort to ensure the safety and security of his subjects was a popular imperial trope; but, even allowing for the nature of the genre and the exaggerated polarity of the examples – Gaul had already been beautified to some degree, in fact, under Julian⁴⁴ – the fact that Valentinian had chosen the less desirable part of the Empire is surely important, and Symmachus' amazement at Valentinian's decision must have reflected the sentiments of many of his fellow aristocrats.

Trier, where Symmachus' three imperial panegyrics were delivered, offered the ideal performative context for the speeches because its military character complemented their military focus. The Basilika – the cavernous imperial throne-room built by Constantine and still standing today – seems the most likely place in which the young senator would have delivered his speeches to the imperial court.⁴⁵ The Kaiserthermen may also have

⁴⁰ Matthews (1975), 33.

⁴¹ Symm. *Or.* 1.14.

⁴² Amm. 27.1.1.

⁴³ Symm. *Or.* 1.15.

⁴⁴ On the poor condition of Gaul when Julian arrived, see Athanassiadi (1992), 54-5, and on its brief renaissance, see *ibid.*, 59-60. Cf. also Rike (1987), 109-10, for Ammianus' representation of Julian as possessing *reparatio*, by which the cities of Gaul were shown to thrive again.

⁴⁵ On the Basilika, see Wightman (1970), 102-9.

been used. Archaeological surveys have shown that the Basilika was austere decorated when it was originally constructed, the simplicity of its design perhaps intended to enhance the majesty of the emperor who was seated in its apse.⁴⁶ In the Basilika of Constantine, the delivery of panegyric would have resonated to great stylistic effect, as the praise of a powerful Roman *Augustus* resounded in the ears of the officials who would have been seated on either side. As Wightman mused, ‘Ausonius’ description of the awe and veneration felt by him when he stood within it seems for once no mere rhetorical exaggeration’.⁴⁷ Trier itself was not a city unfamiliar with imperial panegyric; several surviving imperial panegyrics had been delivered in the city some years earlier with great success.⁴⁸ Such continuity with the actions of previous emperors underpinned Symmachus’ message of imperial stability. The fact that this impressive city formed the backdrop to Symmachus’ panegyrics is therefore important to our understanding of the speeches, since MacCormack proved that the ceremonial and contextual aspects of panegyric were as vital as the words themselves.⁴⁹ The praise of a military emperor within his natural context added to the efficacy of the panegyric by appealing to a range of visual and sensory stimuli.

A Born Soldier (Or. 1.1-3)

Symmachus’ characterisation of Valentinian as a military emperor, whose frugal temperament had been forged in the inhospitable climates of Africa and Illyricum, is evident in the language and the imagery at the beginning of his first imperial panegyric. Born in Illyricum, where snow had covered his cradle (*Or.* 1.1), and where he had drunk ‘hewn ice’ (*caesam glaciem*, § 1), the young Valentinian accompanied his father Gratianus (*in contubernio parentis*, § 1) when the latter served as military governor of Africa.⁵⁰ There, in ‘arid Libya’ (*arentis Libyae*, § 1), the nature of the climate is credited

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ausonius, *Gratiarum actio* 1.1, ‘...in sacrario imperialis oraculi, qui locus horrore tranquillo et pavore venerabili raro eundem animum praestat et vultum tui...’. Wightman (1970), 108-9.

⁴⁸ *Pan. Lat.* V, VI, VII, VIII, X, XI, XII. Cf. Nixon and Saylor Rodgers (1994), 4-5.

⁴⁹ MacCormack (1981).

⁵⁰ *Amm.* 30.7.3. On Gratianus Maior, see Drijvers (2015); Lenski (2002), 36-41.

with instilling in the future emperor (*futurus Augustus*, § 1) a soldier's ability to endure hardship (*patientia*).⁵¹ His exposure to testing conditions from such a young age (*tenera aetas*, § 1), and to the hardy example set by his father (§ 3), whose reputation had been rehabilitated at least as early as Gratian's accession in 367,⁵² emphasised the rigour of the military education which had inculcated in Valentinian soldierly values. Cristiana Sogno has suggested a connection between the prominence of Gratianus in the early chapters of this panegyric, and the story of Eupraxius' promotion, as related by Ammianus.⁵³ As discussed previously, Eupraxius, an African from Caesariensis, upon exclaiming that 'the House of Gratianus is worthy of this', was promoted by Valentinian on the spot from the position of record-keeper to the quaestorship during the accession ceremony of Gratian the Younger in August 367.⁵⁴ The story is often cited as an example of the emperor's determination to promote the stature of his family. Eupraxius' words, which were in turn chanted by the assembled body of soldiers, expressed succinctly his endorsement of Gratian the Younger as emperor and his recognition of the new dynasty's legitimacy, with Gratianus as revered progenitor.

Sogno's argument that Symmachus would only have heard about this incident when he arrived in Trier is a fair assessment, but that it was the sole motivation behind Symmachus' inclusion of Gratianus in this panegyric seems too weak an interpretation of the panegyrist's purpose.⁵⁵ Valentinian's elevation from military officer to emperor had naturally raised questions of legitimacy, of which the new emperor was undoubtedly cognisant. The prominence of Gratianus in the early chapters of *Oration* 1 demonstrates a more considered and coherent response to these imperial concerns, where Gratianus is represented not only as a good father, but as a good teacher who imparted through 'private training' (*institutio priuata*, § 3) the benefit of his extensive experience and wisdom to his sons. His role in this first panegyric, therefore, was more

⁵¹ Sogno (2006), 10.

⁵² See note 49 above.

⁵³ Sogno (2006), 10-11.

⁵⁴ Amm. 27.6.14, *familia Gratiani hoc meretur*.

⁵⁵ Sogno (2006), 11.

than just liminal; rather it was fundamental to the military foundations on which Valentinian's legitimacy, both as an emperor and as a soldier, rested. This emphasis of panegyrists on the eminence of *patres* is also found elsewhere in the genre. Themistius, in his fifth *Oration* to the emperor Jovian, had stressed the reputation of his subject's father, claiming that the kingship was owed to Jovian 'because of your father's virtue'.⁵⁶ Pacatus, in his *Panegyric of Theodosius* (389), also gave prominence to the stature of his addressee's father, and was able to go further by proclaiming the glories of the famous *comes* Theodosius the Elder's triumphs across the Empire; in recollecting the victories of the father, Pacatus was actually underlining the legitimacy of the son and the prestige of the new imperial dynasty:

'It were time, by way of just compensation...for me to linger at rather greater length in praising the virtues at least of your father...I have exposed myself to a new difficulty, as it were, because of their number...For he himself would be called Saxonicus, Sarmaticus and Alamannicus, and the one family would boast as many triumphs as the whole State has enemies.'

Pan. Lat. II. 5.1-2, 5.⁵⁷

While Gratianus may not have been able to claim *comes* Theodosius' military successes, the strong role model of the soldier-father is nevertheless presented by Symmachus to his audience as a major source of Valentinian's aptitude for military endeavour, and hence imperial suitability.

⁵⁶ Them. *Or.* 5.65b; Cf. Amm. 25.5.4. On *Oration* 5, see Vanderspoel (1995), 137-54; Heather and Moncur (2001), 137-73; Kahlos (2009), 82-86.

⁵⁷ All translations of the *Panegyrici Latini* are taken from Nixon and Saylor Rodgers (1994). *Pan. Lat.* II. 5.1-2, 5, *Erat iustae compensationis occasio...patris saltem uirtutibus praedicandis prolixius immorarer...Nouam quondam patior ex copia difficultatem...cum ipse Saxonicus, ipse Sarmaticus, ipse Alamannicus diceretur et, quantum tota res publica habet hostium, tantum una familia ostenderet et triumphorum.* See also Nixon and Saylor Rodgers (1994), 453-54.

The self-conscious exaggeration in Symmachus' representation of Valentinian's military character was, to some extent, typical of the genre of imperial panegyric.⁵⁸ Symmachus' remit as a panegyrist was to represent the emperor as the emperor desired, and to aid in the construction of an impenetrable imperial aura which was commensurate with the visual splendour and courtly ceremonial of Late Antique rulers, and which complemented other channels of imperial representation and self-representation, particularly those depictions found in contemporary coinage and artistic impressions.⁵⁹ Indeed, the delivery of panegyric itself, in the words of Sabine MacCormack, was 'one of the accompaniments of legitimate rule, a form of consent'.⁶⁰ Symmachus' panegyric would no doubt have been of interest to the curious, but would have been of far greater interest to the ambitious *proximi*, namely the high ranking office-holders, military commanders, and influential members of the imperial household.⁶¹ For those aware of imperial ceremonial, having experienced the reigns of Valentinian's predecessors, there may have been a degree of silent scepticism towards Symmachus' account of the emperor's early career. For the majority, however, the unfamiliarity and separation – both literal and metaphorical – which existed between the emperor and his subjects ensured that the imperial presence inspired both fear and awe. In this respect, Symmachus, and his fellow Roman senators, were no different in their unfamiliarity with the emperor Valentinian, and it was only during the process of composition that the senator would have acquired knowledge of the emperor, either through the process of interaction with the emperor himself, or with his closest representatives; knowledge which he was obliged to report back to the senatorial elites in Rome.

Another source of imperial suitability was the emperor's own experience of various locations across the Empire (*Or.* 1.2), which was connected to his early life with his

⁵⁸ For other examples of exaggeration in imperial prose panegyric, see Nixon and Saylor Rodgers (1994), 126, 283, 409.

⁵⁹ On the artistic representation of the praised emperor, see MacCormack (1975), 156-9.

⁶⁰ MacCormack (1975), 155.

⁶¹ Kelly (2004), 193.

father. Valentinian is said to have acquired ‘examples of the whole world’ (*totius mundi exempla*, § 2), and the imperial brothers are addressed as ‘natives of the whole world’ (*totius orbis indigenae*, § 1). Symmachus exploited the geographical distance between Illyricum and Africa to imbue Valentinian with a ‘cosmopolitanism’ which, in the context of imperial rule, equated to god-like power and authority:

‘A *princeps* who knows every part of the empire is like a god who perceives the whole world at the same time.’

Or. 1.1.⁶²

Similar imagery can be found in the Gallic panegyrics, like the *Panegyric of Maximian* (X), in which the emperor is said to ‘gaze down...on every land and sea...[and] to worry about so many cities and nations and provinces...in perpetual concern for the safety of all’.⁶³ In the *Genethliacus of Maximian Augustus* (XI) too, the panegyrist claimed that ‘your divinity abides everywhere, all lands and all seas are filled with you’.⁶⁴ Sven Greinke, in a recent thesis on the relationship between the emperor and natural space in panegyric, argued for the significance of such representations of imperial ubiquity: ‘Mittels dieser Omnipräsenz als rhetorischem Topos gelten die Kaiser als Garanten für die Sicherheit des Reiches’.⁶⁵ In Symmachus’ panegyric, however, the emperor’s birth in Illyricum and his experience of living in Africa with his father lend this *topos* even greater resonance. As one who had ‘learnt to be patient of heat and dust’, whom ‘Gaetolian heat had taught to be accustomed to summer [and] Illyrian frosts to endure winter chill’, and who had been ‘born in a cold climate [but] raised in a hot one’ (§ 1-2), Symmachus evocatively depicted Valentinian as an emperor for all seasons, literally and figuratively. He was an emperor who was uniquely prepared for the challenges of imperial rule, and his knowledge of ‘every part of the

⁶² *Or.* 1.1, *similis est princeps deo pariter uniuersa cernenti, qui cunctas partes nouit imperii.*

⁶³ *Pan. Lat.* X. 3.3-4. On the relationship between the emperor and natural space in the panegyrics, see Sven Greinke’s recent PhD thesis (2017).

⁶⁴ *Pan. Lat.* XI. 14.3-4.

⁶⁵ Greinke (2017), 134; see also 132-40.

empire' not only ensured its security, but also allowed for its future expansion to even the most inhospitable places, as far as India and Ethiopia, if the emperor so desired, since these places were protected 'against foreign armies' by the heat alone (§ 1). Valentinian's experience as a soldier, therefore, is somewhat conversely the mechanism through which the civilising power of the imperial office could be realised to its fullest extent. Much of Symmachus' ideology may be regarded as conventional hyperbole; but the notion that Valentinian's military upbringing brought something unique to the principate is a motif which permeates the entirety of the first *Oration*.

The traditional structure of *Oration* 1, beginning with the birth of the emperor, is also found in other panegyrics; for example, in Pacatus' *Panegyric of Theodosius*, who described the emperor's birth in Spain.⁶⁶ Of course, as previously discussed, the imitation of ideas, imagery and phraseology from predecessors was a traditional part of the genre, and every panegyrist was considerably indebted in some way to his forebears. Pacatus, unsurprisingly given that his work is the latest, is often cited as perhaps the heaviest borrower of ideas from other texts in the corpus.⁶⁷ Symmachus' adherence, however, to the conventions, structure and imagery associated with panegyric in § 1 and § 2 is more than just mere literary convention: it is a necessary part of the textual structure because familiarity with these conventions permitted Symmachus to tell the audience why and how Valentinian's experience differed from that of other emperors. Valentinian *was* an emperor who had experienced 'every part of the empire' (§ 1) through his rugged upbringing in the harsh climate of Illyricum and Africa and his extensive military career prior to his elevation. He was *not* raised like Theodosius, 'neither exposed to the heat of the south nor subject to arctic cold', in 'a land blessed above all other lands'.⁶⁸ If Symmachus disregarded the structural formalities of panegyric speeches, he risked alienating an audience who were primed to understand Valentinian's suitability for imperial office, an audience who would have had experience of a number of other panegyrics with which to compare Symmachus'.

⁶⁶ For Pacatus and *Pan. Lat.* II, see Nixon and Saylor Rodgers (1994), 437ff.

⁶⁷ Nixon and Saylor Rodgers (1994), 6.

⁶⁸ *Pan. Lat.* II. 4.2-3.

The emperors of the fourth century were continually engaged in exercises intended to reduce the frontier threat on all sides and the possibility of a barbarian invasion, at least prior to Valentinian, was ever-present; however, the ideal of an expansionist, proactive emperor clearly still appealed to a Roman audience. In light of Julian's recent disaster in Persia, this would surely have been understood by all as an unlikely development.⁶⁹ Indeed, the new reality in which the Empire operated after the catastrophe of 363 called for an emperor who had experience and martial prowess, and this is why Symmachus is keen to stress such a quality in his panegyric. The focus of Symmachus' first panegyric on the early life of the emperor Valentinian is, therefore, not at all unsurprising, and although the subject of an emperor's family and birth was a standard *topos* of imperial panegyric, its incorporation into *Oration* 1 was still significant, and carefully designed to enhance the emperor's military standing before the court audience.

*The Representation of Valentinian's Military Acclamation and his Elevation of Valens
(Or. 1.8-12)*

As was discussed in Chapter Three, Symmachus in his third panegyric represented the accession of Valentinian's son Gratian in terms which suggested that the boy had been elected by the soldiers themselves.⁷⁰ While this was unlikely to be factually accurate, Symmachus understood the advantages of such a representation. Military acclamations suggested achievement, legitimacy through *unanimitas*, and the power to command, all desirable characteristics in a future Roman emperor. The military acclamation of Valentinian in Symmachus' first panegyric similarly aligned the emperor with these desirable characteristics. His account of Valentinian's accession and subsequent preferment of his inexperienced brother Valens (*Or.* 1.8-12) can also be closely linked to imperial concerns regarding legitimacy and the validity of military acclamations in the mid-fourth century. The strong representation of these accessions as being

⁶⁹ Cf. Matthews (1989), 239. Julian's disastrous Persian campaign left Valentinian short of troops and the money to recruit and pay them.

⁷⁰ *Or.* 3.3-4. See Chapter Three above.

unequivocally legitimate would certainly have been well-received by the emperor, although it is unclear if Symmachus' account was a direct response to political factions displeased at the nature of the process, or at the rejection of their own candidate. Certainly Symmachus' considered justification of the army's role in the accession ceremony hints at a deeper sensitivity towards the unusual circumstances of Valentinian's coming to power. Symmachus' prolonged discourse on the army's approval of Valentinian in his first panegyric suggests, however, that imperial legitimacy could be further established *post factum*, through the justification of the circumstances and the agents involved in the conferral of supreme power. This idea was also clear in my analysis of Symmachus' panegyric to Gratian. The *Res Gestae*, as will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter, was to depict the accessions of Valentinian and Valens as hasty responses to specific situations of political necessity, rather than appointments emanating from genuine personal merit or imperial suitability. The fact that a Pannonian soldier of only moderate standing succeeded so quickly to the imperial throne left vacant by another Pannonian, could seem to be more than just coincidental. This has led some scholars to argue for the existence of a Pannonian 'pressure group' at the imperial court, which attained high positions of power under Jovian, and on his death pressed for the appointment of their chosen candidate.⁷¹

Symmachus' panegyric was careful to counter any notion of hastiness in Valentinian's elevation. The emperor's preferment was not reactionist in nature, nor was he a 'compromise candidate', as Matthews noted.⁷² Rather he was elected by men 'who deliberated' (*qui deliberarunt*, § 8) for a long period of time (*longiori*, § 8), and who only conferred the title of *Augustus* on Valentinian when 'no worthier man was found' (§ 8). Not only does this show an awareness of the import of legitimate selection, but it also demonstrates an awareness of the taint of illegitimacy, even if this was the result of unsubstantiated gossip. As Symmachus states, 'no one could whisper that you had snatched at a decision made in advance by a few men' (§ 8). Valentinian's accession to the imperial office was decided by free men (*liberi*, § 9), who evaluated the body of

⁷¹ Olariu (2005), 351-52.

⁷² Matthews (1975), 35.

evidence before them (*testimonio*, § 9). In *Oration* 1, those who confirm Valentinian's accession were 'chosen from the flower of Roman youth' (§ 9), and are represented as the bright, but martial, future of the Empire, whose selection of Valentinian, 'a man well known by wars' (§ 9), was justified by the political reality of the day. Their vocal acceptance of the new emperor was not the culmination of a constitutional process, therefore, but the manifestation of a political art (*ars*, § 9), one in which those who bore arms were the only natural arbiters of imperial suitability and legitimacy. The panegyrist's claim that 'ambitious campaigning ceased because a worthy man stood forth' (*cessabat ambitus quia dignus extabat*, § 8) was a direct comment on the validity and *unanimitas* of the tribunal's decision. Although the emperor did rely on factional support to ensure his success, Symmachus' representation of the event as passing without opposition, of any kind, was congruent with the exemplary nature of Valentinian's candidacy.⁷³ Naturally, there is no mention of the council's discussion of the other candidates, Aequitius and Januarius, who feature prominently in Ammianus Marcellinus' version of events, and who were apparently considered for the imperial office ahead of Valentinian.⁷⁴ Symmachus' overriding concerns then in § 8-10 were fivefold: to demonstrate that Valentinian's accession had been realised with *unanimitas*, an important concept in imperial ideology; to vindicate the right of the army to appoint their own leader (thereby reinforcing Valentinian's military connection); to indicate the intelligent rationale which culminated in Valentinian's selection; to discredit suggestions that the process had been precipitous; and finally, to illustrate that the emperor's election was based on martial merit, rather than political favour.

Symmachus' representation of this accession has attracted attention from scholars, not least for his intriguing description of the assembled body of soldiers as a '*castrensis senatus*' in § 9. Symmachus also designated the army a '*concilium*' and a '*comitia*', the

⁷³ *Or.* 1.8, ...*nec ulla, ut adsolet, murmura factionum*. For the Pannonian intimates of Valentinian and Valens, see Matthews (1975), 38, 45, 47-48; Lenski (2002), ch. 1. Cf. also Olariu (2005), 351-54.

⁷⁴ *Amm.* 26.1.4-5.

technical terms for the different types of Republican general assembly.⁷⁵ Callu noted that this ‘Republican’ theme ‘se renouvelle dans l’*Or.* IV, 7, où le système républicain des centuries et des tribus est décrié au profit de choix conjoint de l’armée et du Sénat’, but that in the first *Oration*, ‘loin de Rome, la première absorbe complètement la seconde, car l’envoyé de la Curie se fixe sur l’acception militaire d’*imperator*’.⁷⁶ Pabst, with reference to Symmachus’ use of this terminology in *Oration* 1 (including the mention of ‘*electio*’ and ‘*suffragia*’), argued that what the panegyrist had represented here was a genuine *electio*, via the submission of votes.⁷⁷ Frank Kolb, however, in opposition to Pabst’s interpretation, argued that Symmachus’ description could not be interpreted so literally. Symmachus was indeed inconsistent with his terminology, but his final designation of the army assembly as a ‘senate of the camp’ made it clear that the ‘*comitia*’ of the panegyric corresponded to the senate’s former function as the legitimiser of imperial rule: ‘Er kommt mit der Formulierung *castrensis senatus* zu dem Schluß, daß die von den republikanischen *comitia* deutlich zu unterscheidenden ‚wahren‘ *comitia* der Heeresversammlung eigentlich eher der (früheren) Funktion des Senats bei der Kaiserwahl entsprechen’.⁷⁸

There can be no doubt that this representation of the army’s role came at the behest of the emperor. As I previously argued in the context of Symmachus’ panegyric to Gratian, this legitimisation of the army as the new legitimisers of imperial rule served the emperor very well, since it demonstrated that the senate and their former important function in imperial accession ceremonies had not been technically ‘discarded’, but merely updated. Philippe Bruggisser, drawing upon the conclusions of Johannes Straub, argued that, in his first *Oration*, Symmachus had designated the senate deprived of their rights in the election of Valentinian (‘*otiosi*’), and that while he had attempted ‘à légitimer le principe de l’élection du nouvel Auguste par les soldats’, he envisaged the reclamation of senatorial privileges and authority in his second *Oration*, as a civilising

⁷⁵ Kolb (2001), 217.

⁷⁶ Callu (2009), 45.

⁷⁷ Pabst (1997), 23.

⁷⁸ Kolb (2001), 218.

force who would be called upon once regions had been militarily subdued: ‘La sujétion des nations barbares au *ius Romanum* est une mission que l'empereur est appelé à réaliser, mais qui exige le respect des principes fondamentaux de la juridiction romaine et, en conséquence, de l'autorité imprescriptible du Sénat’.⁷⁹ While Bruggisser correctly noticed the use of senatorial authority in these imperial panegyrics to further justify the increased militarisation of imperial government, he exaggerates, in my view at least, the extent to which it was a motivational factor in Symmachus’ panegyrics, since *Oration 1* was not a lament on the deprivation of senatorial rights, but a celebration of their justifiable transfer to the military camp. In § 8-9, Symmachus made an attempt to legitimise the role of the army in Valentinian’s accession, and to validate the military nature of Valentinian’s rule, not only in a manner acceptable to his own understanding, as Saylor Rodgers argued, but also to that of the senatorial elites back in Rome.⁸⁰

Following the accession of Valentinian (*Or.* 1.8-10), Symmachus turns to the emperor’s elevation of his brother Valens to the office of co-emperor in the East (*Or.* 1.10-12), although Valens was not present in Trier for the delivery of this panegyric in 369.⁸¹ As will be discussed later in this chapter, in Ammianus’ view, Valentinian’s unorthodox decision to elevate a subordinate sibling, rather than an experienced commander, to ‘the most important job in the world’ reflected his weakness and selfish ambition, and Ammianus was to depict the circumstances surrounding Valens’ elevation as far from laudable.⁸² While Symmachus does neatly avoid overplaying the talents of Valens in *Oration 1*, the focus of his approach differs from Ammianus Marcellinus, in that praise is primarily given to Valentinian’s intentions, turning what the historian portrayed as selfish ambition into an altruistic desire to maintain imperial stability. Despite Valens’ obvious lack of qualifications for the role of emperor, Valentinian’s decision to confer on him the full power of an *Augustus* proves Valens’ worth in the eyes of the panegyrist, and by bestowing upon him an ‘equal rank’ (§ 11), and therefore giving him no reason

⁷⁹ Bruggisser (1987), 140.

⁸⁰ Saylor Rodgers’ online commentary and translation of *Oration 1*, p.7, n. 36.

⁸¹ Saylor Rodgers (*Oration 1*, p. 1, n. 1).

⁸² Lenski’s phrase (2002).

for envy, Valentinian had wisely ensured that there was no repeat of the civil conflict which the Empire had recently witnessed under Julian and Constantius II.⁸³

The Military Role of the Emperor

The clearest representation of Valentinian as a military emperor can be found in the second half of the first *Oration*, which delves further into the symbolism of military rule. It is in this ‘deeds’ section that Symmachus’ attempt to distinguish Valentinian from his predecessors is most evident. The panegyric’s audience back in Rome, still as yet unfamiliar with this new emperor, may have been anxious to hear what the emperor had achieved; for those present at the court in Trier, it is likely that this was simply intended to reinforce what they had already witnessed around them in terms of fortification building and campaigning, a subject which was to become the explicit focus of Symmachus’ second *Oration*. The senators back in Rome may also have been anxious to hear how their taxes were being expended, but also curious about those activities which the emperor was performing in order to defend their interests, both politically and militarily.⁸⁴ If, however, the senators were seeking answers to political questions, then the emperor, and Symmachus, had few to give them in this speech. With the legitimacy of Valentinian’s military character established, it is the themes of military strength and imperial activity which predominate in the remainder of this panegyric.

John Drinkwater has argued that Valentinian’s decision to eschew governance of the more desirable eastern half of the Empire was not motivated by the selfless considerations which were keenly advertised in *Oration 1*.⁸⁵ Using the emperor Jovian as a comparison, Drinkwater finds a more plausible reason for Valentinian’s decision in ‘the brittleness of internal Roman politics and in the need for all emperors to secure

⁸³ *Or.* 1.12, *Hinc plerique principum quos secundos creauerant quasi aemulos mox timebant. Vrget enim potissimos expectatio proximorum semperque similis inuidenti est cui superest quod requirat.*

⁸⁴ For this view, see Drinkwater (1997) and Matthews (1975), 32-3.

⁸⁵ *Or.* 1.16. Drinkwater (1997), 9, with his n. 50.

the loyalty of the western armies'.⁸⁶ Symmachus' panegyric, however, 'observed' that the emperor's only concern was to 'speedily' secure the territories on the frontier which had been jeopardised by the extravagance (*luxus*) of Valentinian's predecessors:

'...you yourself speedily set your standards over the semi-barbarous banks of the unquiet Rhine, and defend out of shame for ancient cowardice provinces given over by the extravagance of your predecessors.'

Or. 1.14.⁸⁷

Symmachus makes a break with Valentinian's predecessors in office, whose unspecified actions and 'cowardice' are blamed – in true panegyric tradition – for the perilous state of the Rhine frontiers, and by implication, for endangering the safety of the audience who were listening to the panegyric in Trier, one of the cities closest to the frontier. Presumably their reaction was supposed to be one of gratitude to their industrious emperor. This rich vein of imperial propaganda was not limited to the senior officials of the court, but was disseminated across the Empire via the medium of coinage, and reflected in other literature which was issued from the vicinity of the imperial court.⁸⁸ As one scholar noted, 'The images of the emperor projected by the coinage and panegyrics converged on the presentation of Valentinian as an energetic soldier emperor'.⁸⁹ Coins struck from Rome to Trier to Constantinople, as early as 364, depicted the emperor in full military attire, with barbarians trodden under foot and proclaimed SECURITAS REIPUBLICAE ('safety of the state')⁹⁰ and RESTITUTOR REIPUBLICAE ('restorer of the state')⁹¹ to citizens across the Empire. These tokens

⁸⁶ Drinkwater (1997), 9.

⁸⁷ *Or.* 1.14, ...*ipsa supra inpacati Rheni semibarbaras ripas raptim uexilla constituens et prouincias luxu superiorum deditas ueteris ignauiae pudore defendens.*

⁸⁸ Humphries (1999), 119-20 observes 'the same image of Valentinian's energy' in Ausonius' *Mosella* (*Mos.* 422).

⁸⁹ Humphries (1999), 120.

⁹⁰ RIC IX Thessalonica 18a/27a, type i.

⁹¹ RIC IX Trier 5a, type iii(a).

were not only mundane representations of imperial majesty, but powerful daily reminders of the military *labor* of absent emperors.⁹²

The image of the *castrensis senatus* which was a key element of § 9 was extended into § 14, as Symmachus continued to associate Valentinian with imperial activity, in an attempt to further imbue his rule with military legitimacy. The royal court is now located ‘in the camp’, ‘the tribunal...in the field’ and ‘the purple [is] first in the line’ (§ 14). The role of the emperor is one of example, discipline and steady command. Symmachus’ emperor has little time for philosophy and philosophising: his only concern is for the ‘hard military duty’ which he has always known (*ad difficilem militiam reuertisti*, § 14). The enthusiasm and boldness of Symmachus’ vision is particularly striking here. Julian had also been depicted as a military emperor by Claudius Mamertinus in his *Speech of Thanks to Julian* (362), one who stayed awake ‘day and night’ so that ‘everyone else can rest’ (*Pan. Lat.* III. 13.3), and who ‘took upon himself the harshest of labours that we might spend our time in quiet pursuits’ (*Pan. Lat.* III. 12.1).⁹³ Valentinian, however, is not represented as a successor to Julian, nor even to the famous emperors of old. Conversely, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius are dismissed as ‘indulgent’ (*remissior*, § 16), and engaged in the distinctly un-Roman pursuit of leisure (*otia*, § 16). They are shown to be more comfortable in the cultural institutions of Athens and in their rural villas than in the military camps on the frontier, performing the role of Symmachus’ emperor. As a proud Roman and an erudite man, Symmachus would no doubt have known that what he was saying was patently untrue: Marcus Aurelius had personally directed the Marcomannic Wars and died on the front.⁹⁴ The comments are, however, intended to elicit a memorable comparison with Valentinian, in justification of a claim to novelty which set Valentinian apart from those who had preceded him, as an example of strength to all men:

⁹² Humphries (1999), 119-20. For imperial representations on coinage in general, see MacCormack (1981); for Valentinian and Valens more specifically, 202-5.

⁹³ For *Pan. Lat.* III, see Nixon and Saylor Rodgers (1994), 386ff.

⁹⁴ Cass. Dio 72.33; *Epitome de Caesaribus* 16.2.

‘These things may be new to the supreme command but they are well known to you. You rather taught the royal estate what a man ought to do, than learnt from it what emperors had done before.’

Or. 1.14.⁹⁵

Although *Oration* 1 commemorated Valentinian’s *quinquennalia*, the passing of a significant period time, the panegyrist is still focused on promoting Valentinian’s suitability for the imperial office, as well as reminding the audience of the legitimacy of his power. Aware of Procopius’ rebellion, perhaps Symmachus also had in mind the emperor’s more recent period of poor health, which culminated in the unconventional elevation of his infant son Gratian to the status of an *Augustus*. Rival aspirants to the Roman imperial office were still as yet an occupational hazard for the Pannonian emperors, and not always one which presented itself with military force. Ammianus’ account, at the beginning of Book 27 of his *Res Gestae*, of escalating internal unrest at the Western imperial court (Amm. 27.6.1-3) during the period of Valentinian’s illness, and prior to Gratian’s accession in 367, had demonstrated the readiness of political factions at the emperor’s court to lobby for a successor, despite the emperor still being very much alive. In this context, we can arguably read *Oration* 1 as an imperial response to such concerns: Valentinian’s experience is noted, experience which has ‘surpassed [that] of individual men’; his diligence has ‘made [him] worthy of the principate’ (§ 2); he is addressed by his royal title of ‘*Augustus*’ (§ 4); and despite ‘ambitious campaigning’ by other political players, Valentinian had become emperor in 364 because he was a ‘worthy man’, who had earned ‘the reward of gold by the work of iron’ (§ 7).

⁹⁵ *Or.* 1.14, *Haec imperio quidem noua sed tibi cognita. Docuisti magis fortunam regiam quid uirum facere conueniret quam didicisti ab ea quid imperatores ante fecissent.*

*Separating Roman from Barbarian: Valentinian and his Fortification-Building
Programme in Symmachus' Second Oration*

As was discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis, in the third panegyric, Symmachus had described Gratian as the 'joy of the present' and the 'security of the future'.⁹⁶ Given his young age, however, Gratian was not the 'security of the present'. The 'security of the present' was Valentinian, and in his second panegyric, Symmachus outlined in some detail the kind of imperial activity which ensured that the Empire was protected from barbarians beyond the frontier.⁹⁷ This imperial activity, in particular the construction and renovation of large scale fortification works along the Rhine frontier, had become increasingly uncommon in the course of the fourth century.⁹⁸ Indeed, not only was Valentinian's fortification project the last of its kind in the western half of the Empire, but Wightman also noted that the expedition on which Symmachus and Ausonius accompanied Valentinian, and which was to become the focus of Symmachus' second panegyric, was the last occasion on which a Roman emperor crossed the Rhine.⁹⁹ Noel Lenski has argued that Themistius' tenth *Oration* and Symmachus' second *Oration* 'were clearly both part of a pre-planned propaganda effort to advertise the building campaign in both halves of the Empire at precisely the period when it was being pursued most intensely'.¹⁰⁰ If this is true, and it does seem likely, it highlights the confidence which Valentinian (and Valens) placed in these panegyrics to communicate important messages of imperial activity and stability to a wider political audience.

While the second *Oration* was delivered a year later and in a different political context from *Orations* 1 and 3, there is a clear continuity with some of the themes which had been stressed in the earlier speeches. In particular, Symmachus was keen to represent the progress of the emperor's fortification project, which was itself evidence of the 'hard military duty' discussed in *Oration* 1 (*ad difficilem militiam reuertisti*, 1.14):

⁹⁶ *Or.* 3.2, *laetitia praesentium, securitas posterorum*.

⁹⁷ Sogno (2011).

⁹⁸ On Valentinian's fortifications, see Lenski (2002), 130-31, 375-79; Petrikovits (1971).

⁹⁹ Wightman (1970), 64.

¹⁰⁰ Lenski (2002), 376.

‘Let the rest of the cities, which private hands have marked out, envy the new ramparts...I was present, venerable Augustus, when you set aside your arms and traced out the foundations, occupying your fortunate right hands with builders’ lines...Those who watch over cities establish them more skilfully.’

Or. 2.18.¹⁰¹

It was not, however, simply military defence which occupied the panegyrist in *Oration* 2. Sogno observed another interesting development in Symmachus’ military representation of Valentinian, namely the emperor’s *clementia* as an act of conquest in disguise.¹⁰² Not only did Symmachus predict the triumphal extension of the Empire and creation of a province of Alamannia through the exercise of this imperial *clementia*,¹⁰³ but he also noted the civilising effect that it had on barbarians whom the emperor had spared.¹⁰⁴ In some ways, this was an extension of what had been mentioned in the first panegyric, in which Valentinian’s experience as a soldier was depicted as the mechanism through which the civilising power of the imperial office could be fully realised.

¹⁰¹ *Or.* 2.18, *Inuideant nouis moenibus ceterae ciuitates quas manus designauere priuatae...Interfui, Auguste uenerabilis, cum positis armis fundamenta describeres, felicem dexteram fabrilibus lineis occupares...Peritius urbes constituunt qui tuentur.*

¹⁰² Sogno (2011), 138.

¹⁰³ *Or.* 2.31. Sogno (2011), 138.

¹⁰⁴ *Or.* 2.12. Sogno (2011), 138.

Valentinian and the Military: Ammianus' Reaction to Symmachus' Portrayal of the 'Soldier-Emperor'

Valentinian and his Relationship with the Military

In *Oration* 1, Symmachus' representation of Valentinian was that of a natural soldier who benefitted from the favour of both the military officials and the common soldiers. That this favour was mutually enjoyed was manifest in the number of military officials who came to power at the beginning of Valentinian's reign, as Matthews and Salzman have both argued.¹⁰⁵ In Book 27 of the *Res Gestae*, however, Ammianus succinctly summarised his dislike for the military aristocracy, whose 'rank and power' under Valentinian was raised to a level beyond what the historian deemed acceptable:

'But since I have a free opportunity of saying what I think, I shall declare openly that Valentinian was the first of all emperors to increase the arrogance of the military [officials], to the injury of the state, by raising their rank and power to excess; moreover (a thing equally to be deplored, both publicly and privately), he punished the peccadilloes of the common soldiers with unbending severity, while sparing those of higher rank; so that these assumed that they had complete licence for their sins, and were aroused to shameful and monstrous crimes. In consequence, they are so arrogant as to believe that the fortunes of all without distinction are dependent on their nod.'

Amm. 27.9.4.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ See the introduction to this chapter.

¹⁰⁶ Slightly modified Rolfe translation. Amm. 27.9.4, *Et quoniam adest liber locus dicendi quae sentimus, aperte loquimur: hunc imperatorem omnium primum in maius militares fastus ad damna rerum auxisse communium, dignitates opesque eorum sublimius erigentem, et quod erat publice privatimque dolendum, inflexa saevitia punientem gregariorum errata, parcentem potioribus, qui tamquam peccatis indulta licentia ad labes delictorum inmanium consurgebant; qui ex eo anhelantes ex nutu suo indistanter putant omnium pendere fortunas.*

In Chapter Three, I argued that Ammianus was unable to comment upon or criticise Valentinian's elevation of Gratian, because in the contemporary political context in which he was composing his history, the reigning emperor Theodosius had followed a similar course of action with his own sons. It is evident, however, from this passage that Ammianus had no such concerns about voicing other criticisms of Valentinian's reign. The blunt tone of Ammianus' criticism in this example is striking, as is the contrast which he draws between the emperor's relationship with the high ranking military officials and his strict discipline of ordinary soldiers.

It was evident from other episodes in Books 26-31 that the prominence of military officials under Valentinian irked Ammianus. The problems that their aggrandisement could cause was demonstrated, for example, in the revolt of Firmus, which was depicted as a symptom of the rapacity and hubris of military officials:¹⁰⁷

‘Next, he saved Africa from great dangers, when that country was in the throes of an unexpected disaster; for Firmus was unable to endure the greed and arrogance of the military officials and had aroused the Moorish tribes, whose ardour can always easily be fanned to any plan of dissension.’

Amm. 30.7.10.¹⁰⁸

Indeed, it was Valentinian's choice of uncivilised, uncultured military officials which had precipitated the Empire's descent into barbarism. This was emphasised by the imagery and feral vocabulary which was to become an increasingly common feature in the final hexad of the *Res Gestae*. As Drijvers argued, ‘the use by Ammianus of animal imagery and comparing the behaviour of men with that of animals underlines excessiveness and irrationality and is clearly a sign of growing inhumanity and

¹⁰⁷ For the revolt of Firmus, see Amm. 29.5.2ff.

¹⁰⁸ Amm. 30.7.10, *Africam deinde malo repentino percussam, discriminibus magnis exemit, cum voracis militarium fastus ferre nequiens Firmus, ad omnes dissensionum motus perflabiles gentes Mauricas concitasset.*

irrationality under the reigns of Valentinian and Valens'.¹⁰⁹ One does not have to look far for a suitable example of this inhumanity: the severe punishments inflicted on the ordinary soldiers for small crimes (*errata*). This representation was quite at odds with the impression given in the *adlocutiones* that Valentinian delivered to the army in the *Res Gestae*, but also with the general representation of the emperor in Symmachus' panegyrics, in which Valentinian was shown to enjoy a close relationship with 'the flower of Roman youth', not least because he was – in essence and in truth – one of them.¹¹⁰ In the historian's representation, Alföldi observed 'the malice of Ammianus' and convincingly argued that 'the charge that Valentinian reserved this terrifying severity for the small man and shut his eyes to the sins of the great cannot be sustained'.¹¹¹ Den Boeft *et al.* also noted that, in this example, Ammianus was clearly blackening Valentinian more than the reality allowed for.¹¹² Ammianus' description in 27.9.4, therefore, was a response to elements of official imperial propaganda which glorified Valentinian's relationship with the army and its benefits to the Empire. It is a direct narrative intervention, through which Ammianus communicated in strong terms his own view, and one which he clearly expected his readers to accept at face value.

The Representation of Valentinian's Military Incompetence and his Reliance on Generals

Given the unrest beyond the frontiers, the increased militarisation of the imperial office in the fourth century was a political necessity, one which explains both the accession of a soldier-emperor like Valentinian and the greater focus which the emperor himself placed on the military aspect of imperial rule, as was clear from Symmachus' first and second *Orations*. Symmachus had highlighted Valentinian's military credentials through a description of his early life under his officer father Gratianus. As had been clear in *Oration 1*, this description of the emperor's early life was part of a wider effort

¹⁰⁹ Drijvers (2012), 91.

¹¹⁰ *Or.* 1.9.

¹¹¹ Alföldi (1952), 44-7.

¹¹² Den Boeft *et al.* (2009), 208-9.

to show his familiarity with military command, which was itself unique among emperors:

‘When you were made prince you returned to hard military duty. At once there were marches, at once there were battles and he who wore the purple was first in the line; and the royal court was in the camp, sleep was beneath heaven, drink was taken from a river, the tribunal was in the field. These things may be new to the supreme command but they are well known to you. You rather taught the royal estate what a man ought to do, than learnt from it what emperors had done before.’

Or. 1.14.

John Drinkwater, who has questioned in a number of works the extent of the Rhine military threat in the reign of Valentinian, especially that of the Alamanni, observed that ‘to survive, an emperor had to have a respectable reputation as a general. Emperors therefore needed to maintain strong armies and to win victories with them over foreign enemies’.¹¹³ This certainly accords with the message of Symmachus’ panegyrics, in which it was claimed frequently that Valentinian would subdue enemies and even lead the civilising power of Rome into new, unconquered territories.

In the *Res Gestae*, however, despite Ammianus’ assertion that Valentinian was a ‘*dux cunctator et tutus*’, he represented the emperor as far from competent in matters of military command.¹¹⁴ Indeed, military successes in Books 26-30 of the *Res Gestae* are often the result of brilliant individual generalship, with Theodosius the Elder, Theodosius I’s father, singled out for particularly fulsome, and not entirely unexpected, praise.¹¹⁵ Ammianus portrayed the latter’s campaign in Britain as an overwhelming success, and by the end of summer 368, he had restored order throughout the whole

¹¹³ Drinkwater (1996), 26.

¹¹⁴ Amm. 27.10.10.

¹¹⁵ Thompson (1947), 89-92, and Sabbah (1978), 172-73 both argued that Ammianus was compelled to eulogise Theodosius.

province. Much more impressive was his defeat of the rebel Firmus in Africa, who was driven to suicide by Theodosius' persistent campaigning strategy. Ammianus refers to Theodosius as '*amplissimus ductor*', and described how, upon his return to Sitifis in 374, 'in the guise of a triumphing general...he was received with applause and commendation by all, of every age and rank'.¹¹⁶ The general Jovinus, '*rector eximius*', also saved imperial blushes with several notable victories over the Alamanni, which avenged the defeat and deaths of the Roman generals Charietto and Severianus.¹¹⁷ When the emperor himself took to the field, however, Ammianus rendered the outcome not quite so successful. The assassination of the Alamannic king Vithicabius by one of his own men assisted by Roman spies (*arcani*) was a minor success for Valentinian, although it was clear that Ammianus disapproved of the moral depths to which Roman military tactics had fallen.¹¹⁸ This gambit, however, only temporarily disabled the Alamanni and to prevent any resurgence of the threat, in the summer of 368, Valentinian, accompanied by the young emperor Gratian, his generals Severus and Jovinus, and a large army gathered from across the western Empire, crossed the Mainz River and pushed deep into Alamannic territory.¹¹⁹ Ammianus described in detail how the emperor Valentinian, having branched out from the main body of the army for the purpose of scouting, was ambushed in a particularly marshy area at Solicinum, and only marginally escaped, fleeing and taking refuge 'in the bosom of his legions' (*legionum se gremiis immersisset*, 27.10.8). The inclusion of an intriguing detail by Ammianus adds to the perilous nature of the episode: the disappearance of his attendant who was carrying his jewel-encrusted gold helmet.¹²⁰ This episode hardly represented Valentinian's widely-advertised military skills in the best light. John Matthews noted how, in this episode, Ammianus had 'transformed an originally favourable reference to Valentinian's personal role in the engagement to criticism of the emperor's almost fatal

¹¹⁶ Amm. 29.5.45; 29.5.56, *Qui convocatis armatis simul atque plebeiis, interrogatisque an agnoscerent vultum, cum eiusdem esse sine ulla didicisset ambage, ibi paulisper moratus, Sitifim triumphanti similis redit, aetatum ordinumque omnium celebrabili favore susceptus.*

¹¹⁷ For the Roman defeat by the Alamanni, see Amm. 27.1.1-6. For Jovinus' victories, Amm. 27.2.1-11.

¹¹⁸ Elton (1996), 242; with Amm. 27.10.3.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Amm. 27.10.9.

over-estimation of his own abilities'.¹²¹ Indeed, Ammianus' representation of Valentinian in terms of his military skills was quite different from the depiction of the 'born soldier' which had featured in Symmachus' *Oration* 1.

Valentinian's military skills against the Alamanni also had to endure a contrast with those of the emperor Julian. In Book 26, Valentinian's decision not to rush to Illyricum in the wake of Procopius' rebellion, an action supposedly taken when he remembered the incredible speed with which Julian, 'contrary to all hope and expectation', had travelled from city to city when fighting Constantius,¹²² is noteworthy because Ammianus attributes Valentinian's shrewd manoeuvre here to his recollection of an *exemplum* from Julian's early career. As Den Boeft *et al.* argued, with reference to Book 27, 'Julian is the implicit standard of correct ruling, but he is also explicitly introduced as an outstanding commander. At the beginning of chapters 1 and 12 he is mentioned as the man who truly knew how to deal with the Alamans and the Persians. Indeed, it is clearly implied that, had he lived, the Alamans would not have shown any aggression nor would the Persian king have dared to claim Armenia'.¹²³ As one whose qualities and characteristics matched the emperors of old, Julian's *exempla* were more than viable for imitation and didactic training. The image of the battle-hardened Valentinian recalling an experience from the life of his philosopher predecessor is certainly a curious one, but it is effective in its emphasis on Valentinian's limitations as a military emperor. The fact that Julian still played an important role in the narrative after his death, demonstrated Ammianus' desire to promote the reputation and legacy of his hero, not only passively, as a great emperor of the past, but also to represent other emperors as learning from and admiring his example.

¹²¹ Matthews (1989), 377.

¹²² Amm. 26.5.11.

¹²³ Den Boeft *et al.* (2009), x-xi.

Ammianus' historical account of Valentinian's accession ceremony in February 364 differed considerably from the version which was depicted in the first panegyric of Symmachus. In the historian's account, following the emperor Jovian's unexpected death at Dadastana in early 364, the principal civil and military leaders sought a ruler who had 'long' (*diu*) been proven and who possessed dignity.¹²⁴ The names of two officials were suggested: Equitius, tribune of the first division of the *schola scutariorum prima*; and Januarius, a relative of Jovian who was in charge of a military department in Illyricum.¹²⁵ Both suggestions were dismissed: the first because he was considered too boorish, the second because he was too far away.¹²⁶ Valentinian was then appointed emperor and a herald was dispatched to inform him of his imminent election.¹²⁷ Symmachus, of course, stressing the singularity of Valentinian's candidacy in line with the conventions of panegyric, made no mention of rivals for the imperial succession in his first *Oration*.¹²⁸

Ammianus' account of the rejection of two named potential rivals to Valentinian's candidacy is an interesting opportunity to consider his representation of Pannonians more generally in the *Res Gestae*. The characterisation of Equitius, a Pannonian and the future *magister militum per Illyricum* under Valentinian, reaffirmed a frequent stereotype of Pannonians in the *Res Gestae* as brutish and military by nature. Ammianus included in his narrative several examples of Pannonian cruelty, which were not limited

¹²⁴ Amm. 26.1.3.

¹²⁵ Amm. 26.1.4-5. For tribunes of the *scholae*, see Woods (1997).

¹²⁶ Amm. 26.1.4-5.

¹²⁷ Amm. 26.1.5.

¹²⁸ Zos. 3.36.1-2 and Zon. 13.14 both report that Salutius was offered the imperial office after Jovian's death. Ammianus reports that he was offered it after Julian's (Amm. 25.5.5). Den Boeft *et al.* (2005), 173-76, have argued, unconvincingly in my view, that Zosimus is not mistaken and that Salutius was offered it on both occasions.

to the emperors Valentinian and Valens.¹²⁹ As Lenski observed, however, this representation was not exclusive to Ammianus, as ‘a Syrian like Ammianus, an African like Aurelius Victor, and even a man of Illyrian background, Julian, all readily accepted the assumption that Illyrians were savage brutes’.¹³⁰ In Books 26-31, it is undeniable that Ammianus used this stereotype to depict Valentinian, his brother and their compatriots in an extremely negative light. Indeed, the prominence of Pannonian military officials in Valentinian’s administration contributed to Ammianus’ presentation of the Roman Empire after Julian as a society of disorder, injustice and repression. Jan Willem Drijvers pointed out the proliferation of feral and animal imagery in the *Res Gestae*’s last hexad; he also argued that Ammianus was ‘outspoken in his negative judgement of the leading men serving the Valentiniani’, and that the historian regarded the moral deprivation and corruption of these officials as characterising the rule of the Pannonian emperors more generally.¹³¹ Ammianus’ characterisation was indicative of the disdain which many aristocrats would have felt towards such men, whose elevation into the upper echelons of Roman civic society granted them access to offices and titles traditionally reserved for Roman noblemen. His xenophobic dislike of individuals whom he deemed un-Roman precluded his capacity to recognise the changeable world in which he was living.¹³² What it meant to be a Roman emperor had altered significantly since the time of Marcus Aurelius, and even since the reign of Constantine; but what it meant to be a Roman citizen had also changed, with the late fourth century representing a zenith for the incorporation and inclusion of peoples into the Empire who would, only a century earlier, have been deemed the barbarian ‘other’.¹³³ This is both a political and social evolution that Ammianus both disapproves of and struggles to accept throughout the course of his *Res Gestae*. The continual depiction of ‘other’ peoples as savages and bloodthirsty – Roman

¹²⁹ Amm. 26.6.8 (Petronius); 26.10.2 (Serenianus); 28.1.12 (Leo); 28.1.38 (Maximinus). Cf. Den Boeft *et al.* (2008), 19.

¹³⁰ Lenski (2002), 86-8.

¹³¹ Drijvers (2012), 91.

¹³² Cf. Seager (1986), 131, ‘Ammianus saw barbarism in all its manifestations, both internal and external, as the ultimate threat to the Roman way of life.’

¹³³ For a case study analysis of immigration in the city of Rome in the fourth century, see Noy (2000).

citizens or not – is a common motif, with the Pannonian emperors finding themselves frequently at the centre of Ammianus’ feral imagery.¹³⁴

Following a short digression on the origins of the ‘bissextile day’¹³⁵ – one which John Matthews perceptively argued was intended to reproduce the actual day that Valentinian refused to appear in public – Ammianus proceeded to describe the accession ceremony itself.¹³⁶ The interpretation of this scene has attracted some debate. Den Boeft *et al.*, in their commentary on Book 26, argued that, while ‘Ammianus may have been critical of Valentinian in many respects...he describes his election as emperor in the most positive terms’.¹³⁷ This argument to a large extent is based on Hans Teitler’s reassessment of the evidence for Ammianus’ representation of this scene, which directly contradicted the opinion of François Paschoud, who, in a well-known article entitled ‘Valentinien travesti, ou: De la malignité d’Ammien’ (1992), argued that Ammianus had deliberately set out to depict the Pannonian emperor’s accession negatively.¹³⁸ Paschoud’s argument was to a large extent based on a close reading of the text. For example, he claimed that, ‘Son mérite le plus grand – suggéré, non énoncé – semble de ne pas s’être alors trouvé trop loin de Nicée - où se déroule la scène de l’élection’;¹³⁹ although it was also his belief that ‘avant même d’entrer personnellement en scène, Valentinien est déjà victime d’un de ces célèbres “silences du colonel Ammien”’.¹⁴⁰ In the style of Andreas Alföldi, Paschoud was confident that Ammianus’ representation of Valentinian’s election was one part of a bigger literary plan to self-consciously tarnish his reputation. Leppin, in a similar vein, argued that Ammianus’ version of the accession scene was laced with ironic elements which were contrary to

¹³⁴ Jan Willem Drijvers’ article (2012) on such imagery and its associated vocabulary contributes some particularly interesting points to this theme which almost certainly require further exploration. See, in particular, 90-91 for an analysis of this ‘animal imagery’.

¹³⁵ Amm. 26.1.8-14.

¹³⁶ Amm. 26.2.1-11.

¹³⁷ Den Boeft *et al.* (2008), 20.

¹³⁸ Teitler (2007) responding to Paschoud (1992).

¹³⁹ Paschoud (1992), 70

¹⁴⁰ Paschoud (1992), 70, quoting Fontaine (1978), 50.

the account given by Valens' Eastern panegyrist: 'Die ist ganz im Gegenteil zu dem, was Themistios schildert, die Schilderung einer verzögerten Ausrufung, die, wie mir scheint, mit vielen ironischen Elementen gewürzt ist'.¹⁴¹ Teitler, however, disagreed, arguing that, 'in his sections on the election of Valentinian in Book 26, Ammianus gives brief, matter-of-fact and, at least in my opinion, objective information'.¹⁴² In agreement with Leppin and, to a large extent, Paschoud, I will make two observations which will support the essence of their view.

Firstly, it is clear from Ammianus' subtle description of Valentinian's accession ceremony that the emperor was not only a 'compromise candidate', but a hastily appointed one. This representation of the emperor's candidacy certainly undermined the official version which had been proffered in the imperial panegyrics of Symmachus. He had stressed the considered nature of Valentinian's elevation, by focussing on the role of the army and their legitimacy as 'kingmakers'. In Book 26, however, Valentinian's military accession is represented as a speedily arranged affair, defined by various unimpressive practicalities, firstly of character (Valentinian being less boorish than the other candidate), and secondly of location (Valentinian being more proximate to the council's location in Nicaea). Secondly, Ammianus contrasted Valentinian's elevation with that of his hero Julian, to the detriment of the former. Indeed, the historian made little attempt to disguise his distaste for the kind of improvised military tribunal which had elevated Valentinian to the imperial office, and for the baying crowd of soldiers who had voiced their approval at the council's selection of one of their own.¹⁴³ Addressing the men following his accession, the new emperor, in the fictitious words of Ammianus, had claimed:

¹⁴¹ Leppin (2007), 38.

¹⁴² Teitler (2007), 59.

¹⁴³ Cf. Matthews (1989), 254. Ammianus believed that Valentinian, first of all emperors, raised the military to a point beyond what was good for the public interest.

‘...and I maintain and always shall maintain that it is your services that have bestowed on me, rather than another, the rule of the Roman world, which I neither hoped for nor desired.’

Amm. 26.2.6.¹⁴⁴

What is evident from this *adlocutio* is that it was the army (*vestras...virtutes*) who had ‘bestowed’ (*defero*) on Valentinian the rule of the Roman world. It was they who had raised him to the office of emperor, following the sudden death of his predecessor Jovian at Dadastana in early 364. However, Ammianus’ venal, rebarbative throng, who were predisposed towards outbreaks of violence, was a far cry from the intelligent group of young men whom the panegyrist had described.¹⁴⁵ Such a swiftly performed, and poorly organised affair, did not have the support of Ammianus, who thought it was unbecoming of the same imperial office held by the emperor Julian. Julian’s military record as *Caesar* in the West and his official recognition as sole emperor by Constantius on his death-bed afforded him the legitimacy that Valentinian apparently lacked, because of the purported nature of his elevation. The nature of Valentinian’s accession in Ammianus can clearly be contrasted with the process of Julian’s succession to the throne. Ammianus depicts Julian as having had the imperial power (*principatum*, 22.2.5) ‘finally bestowed’ upon him (*denique deferente*, 22.2.5) ‘by the nod of heaven’ (*nutu caelesti*, 22.2.5). The purpose of this association with the divine was to imbue Julian’s reign with an increased sense of legitimacy, which was unattainable for Valentinian, even with the unanimous support of the army. The latter’s location in the midst of a rabble-rousing crowd of earthy soldiers was quite distinctive from the celestial peace which encompassed Julian and furnished him with a remarkable aura. The implied comparison through the use of mirroring scenes and phrases illustrated here is an effective literary device frequently employed by Ammianus, and I would argue that the subtle integration of such internal parallels not only exposes the

¹⁴⁴ Amm. 26.2.6, ‘...et prae me fero semperque laturus sum, nec speranti nec appetenti moderamina orbis Romani, mihi ut potissimo omnium, vestras detulisse virtutes.’

¹⁴⁵ Amm. 26.2.3-4.

historian's partiality, but also indicates a high level of authorial intention in terms of his representation of Valentinian.

Book 26, Chapter 3: Bridging Accessions

The interruption of the historical narrative in the following chapter to include a digression on the city prefecture of Apronianus at Rome ostensibly appears to have little relation both to what precedes it and to what follows it. But Ammianus' discussion of Apronianus' term of office is not strange *per se*; as Den Boeft *et al.* pointed out, Ammianus' record of the urban prefecture was one of the ways in which he expressed his respect for the city of Rome, and each of the urban prefectures from 353 to 372 were individually reviewed in the *Res Gestae*.¹⁴⁶ Den Boeft *et al.* also admitted, however, that they were at a loss to explain the placement of this particular description in Book 26, not least because the official in question had been appointed by the emperor Julian.¹⁴⁷ Their suggestion that Ammianus may have included it here, directly after his account of Valentinian's accession, to avoid breaking up his account of the Persian campaign seems entirely unconvincing.¹⁴⁸ Rather I would argue that, in situating his account of Apronianus' prefecture between his descriptions of Valentinian's accession (Chapter 2) and Valens' accession (Chapter 4), Ammianus used the elements of corruption and repression in this digression, although it pertained little to Valentinian, to contribute to the uncomfortable tone of the reigns of the emperors which he was about to discuss.

Book 26, Chapter 4: The Selection of Valens As Co-Emperor

Den Boeft *et al.* have called Valentinian's elevation of Valens one of the two 'momentous decisions' of Book 26. The other, of course, was the *divisio imperii*.¹⁴⁹ Both had a major impact on the Empire's political future, and both would have no doubt

¹⁴⁶ Den Boeft *et al.* (2008), 59-60.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Den Boeft *et al.* (2008), x.

divided the political opinion of contemporaries. Despite Valens' appointment to the office of co-*Augustus* in March 364, it would be assuming too much to think that Valentinian viewed his brother as a long-term solution to the Empire's military and structural problems, although it would seem that he trusted him to be a capable, competent and, most importantly, loyal administrator for the eastern half of the Empire. Lenski's analysis of Valens' reign in the East has proven quite conclusively that this was, on the whole, true.¹⁵⁰ The appointment of Valens, however, was more than just mere self-preservation on Valentinian's behalf. Valens' brotherly compliance was imperative in order for imperial stability. The kind of inaction, unrest and distraction which had ensued from the fractious relationship between the egotistical Julian and the proud Constantius (to the point of civil war),¹⁵¹ was not what the Empire needed at a time when the 'trumpets were sounding the war-note throughout the whole Roman world'.¹⁵²

As 'l'orateur officiel', Symmachus, as was argued previously, depicted the accession of Valens in terms of a politically shrewd decision in his first *Oration*, but one which also reflected the imperial qualities and security of Valentinian himself:

'And you did this without any excessive haste to gain favour or popularity, as you had long since made trial in your brother's case of everything which requires lengthy examination in a Caesar. There would have been doubt about your judgement unless you had begun with extravagance. We perceived at once what sort of prince you chose after we recognised that you kept back nothing for yourself as an anxious man would.'

Or. 1.12.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Lenski (2002), 286-307.

¹⁵¹ For an account of the civil war and its consequences, see Matthews (1989), 100-5.

¹⁵² Amm. 26.4.5

¹⁵³ *Or.* 1.12, *Nec istud nimium gratiosa aut populari festinatione fecisti iamdudum cuncta expertus in fratre quae diu explorantur in Caesare. Dubitaretur de iudicio tuo, nisi ab immodicis inchoasses. Statim perspeximus qualem principem legeres, postquam cognouimus quod nihil tibi quasi sollicitus reseruares.*

The notion that Valentinian had ‘tested’ his brother prior to elevating him was echoed in Ammianus’ *Res Gestae*. Following his account of Valentinian’s elevation, Ammianus represented the emperor’s concern to select an imperial colleague of equal power (*socia potestate*) who had been adequately tested and approved as suitable for the position he was to hold:

‘For as the philosophers teach us, not only in royal power, where the greatest and most numerous dangers are found, but also in the relations of private and everyday life, a stranger ought to be admitted to friendship by a prudent man only after he has first tested him; not tested after he has been admitted to friendship.’

Amm. 26.2.9.¹⁵⁴

This statement forms part of Valentinian’s *adlocutio* at the end of Chapter 2, which Ammianus infuses with clear dramatic irony. By depicting the emperor as aware of the instruction of philosophers (*sapientes*), Ammianus reminded his readers of Julian’s strict adherence to the teachings and kingship theory of the ancient Greek philosophers.¹⁵⁵ But this reference is not mere literary *hommage* on Ammianus’ part. Julian’s celebrated aspiration to embody the values of the philosophical writings he read, threw into stark relief Valentinian’s imprudence, when he was represented as having ignored his own philosophical sentiment by selecting Valens – an untested officer – as his imperial colleague. Such nepotism was not only unjustified, but it also represented a fundamental corruption of the rulership ideal, and given Valens’s military experience, endangered the Empire. Ammianus was clearly not in agreement with the official view of the regime that Valens’ accession made the Empire safer and more secure.

¹⁵⁴ Amm. 26.2.9, *ut enim sapientes definiunt, non modo in imperio, ubi pericula maxima sunt et creberrima, verum etiam in privatis cottidianisque rationibus, alienum ad amicitiam, cum iudicaverit quisquam prudens, adiungere sibi debet, non cum adiunxerit, iudicare.*

¹⁵⁵ For further discussion of Julian, his love of philosophy and his vision of the ideal philosopher-king, see Athanassiadi (1992), 161-91.

One of the main problems which Ammianus explored through the accession of Valens was the reluctance of Valentinian to take counsel on the vital matter of an imperial colleague. Prior to the army's first march under the rule of Valentinian, the emperor consulted them on 'who ought to be chosen as partner in his rule'; yet the historian implies that the gesture was nothing more than a political pretence via his use of the word *quasi*: '...*quasi tuta consilia, quam sibi placentia, secuturus...*'.¹⁵⁶ Valentinian's disregard for the counsel of experienced generals like Dagalaifus (26.4.1-2) demonstrated that, in Ammianus' view, the former, either due to his ignorance or ruthless ambition, was incapable of listening to respected advisors. This, of course, was in addition to the fact that the new emperor was deemed to have broken the promise he made to the common soldiers in his fictitious accession speech, by not appointing an experienced and tested colleague, but a weak subordinate. Indeed, Valentinian's decision to take 'much counsel with himself' (26.4.3) made him solely responsible for his brother's ultimate failure, and although there was assumed *unanimitas* among the army in favour of Valens' appointment, such *unanimitas* had been created only because no-one dared to oppose the emperor, who was, by this point, '*iam terribilem*' (26.2.11).

That Ammianus believed Valentinian's appointment of his brother Valens to be little more than coy political manoeuvring is hard to misinterpret, when he described Valens as 'one who was as compliant as a subordinate'.¹⁵⁷ In order to preserve a veneer of critical impartiality, the historian has Dagalaifus, Valentinian's respected general, echo his own concerns for Valens' suitability for the role of co-emperor in the East.¹⁵⁸ Ammianus' unease with Valens' appointment, however, did not solely lie in the latter's lack of experience or military skill, but also in his lack of the traditional virtues which were manifestly realised in the emperor Julian and which were understood by Ammianus as *temperantia*, *prudentia*, *iustitia*, and *fortitudo*.¹⁵⁹ Just as their profusion in Julian made him the ideal emperor, so their scarcity in Valens made him a 'bad'

¹⁵⁶ Amm. 26.4.1.

¹⁵⁷ Amm. 26.4.3.

¹⁵⁸ Amm. 26.4.1.

¹⁵⁹ Amm. 25.4.1. For a clear explanation of each of these virtues and others, see Blockley (1975), 91-3.

emperor. Indeed, a robust attitude towards maintaining a morally high standard of imperial governance, in particular by the removal of corrupt and morally base officials, was a notable characteristic of Julian's reign and an important part of the historian's kingship theory.¹⁶⁰ In Ammianus' view, Valentinian's approach to the same issue was too lax: his preferment of 'military men', and Valens' appointment represented clear evidence, literally and symbolically, of the 'disorder, corruption and repression' which gripped Roman society in the wake of Julian's untimely death.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ Amm. 22.3.1-2. The commission held at Chalcedon is the best-known example, but there were other measures put in place to hinder the activities of corrupt officials.

¹⁶¹ Barnes' phrase (1998), 181.

Conclusion

Symmachus' first imperial panegyric to Valentinian strongly promoted the representation of the latter as a soldier-emperor. Valentinian's upbringing under his father in Africa, and the military character of his birthplace had uniquely prepared him for a life on the frontiers of the Empire. These qualities were represented as proof of Valentinian's suitability for office. Clearly aware of the circumstances of his accession and the military nature of his regime, Valentinian used this celebratory panegyric to respond to contemporary concerns about his elevation, but also to stress the imperial *labor* which increased the glory of Rome and ensured that imperial subjects were both safe and free. In the second panegyric, the panegyrist expounded on this idea, in a manner which was comprehensible to all. In the *Res Gestae*, Ammianus engaged with this official narrative and the military themes which it promoted. Valentinian's preferment of military officials was strongly criticised, while Ammianus also depicted the emperor's military competence as far below the levels which his official propaganda had suggested. Valentinian was also contrasted unfavourably with the emperor Julian in military terms. In his representation of Valentinian's elevation, it was evident that Ammianus was countering the exemplary nature of Valentinian's candidacy as described in Symmachus' *Oration 1*, and the wisdom of his decision to elevate Valens to the imperial office. Indeed, the *Res Gestae* depicted the accessions of Valentinian and Valens in terms of hasty responses to specific situations of political necessity, rather than appointments emanating from genuine personal merit or ability. It was clear from his representation of Valentinian as a military emperor that Ammianus despaired at what he perceived as the decline of the Roman world. In the last chapter of Book 26, he expressed his horror at the world of injustice and death which was enclosing around him, stating that, 'The emperor, rather inclined himself to do injury, lent his ear to accusers, listening to death-dealing denunciations, and took unbridled joy in various kinds of executions; unaware of that saying of Cicero's which asserts that those are unlucky who think that they have power to do anything they wish'.¹⁶²

¹⁶² Amm. 26.10.12.

Chapter Five: Valentinian as a Christian Emperor

Introduction

‘Finally, his reign was distinguished by toleration, in that he remained neutral in religious differences neither troubling anyone on that ground nor ordering him to reverence this or that. He did not bend the necks of his subjects to his own belief by threatening edicts, but left such matters undisturbed as he found them.’

Amm. 30.9.5.¹

With these famous words, Ammianus Marcellinus concluded his summation of the virtues which he believed could be fairly attributed to his imperial subject, Valentinian. His representation of the Pannonian emperor’s measured approach to religious affairs was at variance with the portrait of the emperor which had emerged from the rest of his account.² Notwithstanding the paradoxes of Ammianus’ historiographical method, his verdict on Valentinian’s religious policy in the *Res Gestae* has proved to be an enduring one.³ Between the reigns of Late Antiquity’s most renowned polytheist – Julian ‘the Apostate’ – and the emperor who, ceremonially at least, established Christianity as the new *religio Romana* – Theodosius ‘the Great’ – the seemingly mundane representation of the emperor Valentinian as ‘notoriously the most impartial of the Christian emperors in religious affairs’ certainly stands out.⁴

¹ Amm. 30.9.5, *Postremo hoc moderamine principatus inclaruit quod inter religionum diversitates medius stetit nec quemquam inquietavit neque, ut hoc coleretur, imperavit aut illud: nec interdictis minacibus subiectorum cervicem ad id, quod ipse coluit, inclinabat, sed intemeratas reliquit has partes ut repperit.*

² As discussed previously, Ammianus’ account of Valentinian depicts an emperor with a violent and arbitrary temperament, notable examples of which included the accommodation of two she-bears that feasted on human flesh (Amm. 29.3.9), and the execution of blacksmiths for substandard handiwork (Amm. 29.3.4).

³ Matthews (1975), 203 cites Ammianus alone for the emperor’s ‘cautious neutrality’.

⁴ Cameron’s phrase (2011), 182. Cf. Jones (1964), 139.

Unlike Chapters Three and Four, Symmachus' imperial panegyrics will not furnish the 'official' view in this chapter. They have little to say on religious matters or the emperor's religion, although the absence of Christian elements in these works could be said to have reinforced the well-publicised 'neutrality' of the imperial position. As I have already demonstrated, Symmachus' speeches were far more preoccupied with a series of other important themes. In the area of religion, however, there exists another contemporary 'official' source – namely, imperial legislation – which promoted a representation of the emperor Valentinian that is worth considering. Although very different from the contemporary representation of Symmachus' panegyrics in a number of areas including genre, language, and style, the representation of the emperor in the extant laws of the *Theodosian Code* was of a ruler engaged with the religious affairs of his reign. Via an analysis of a selection of Valentinian's laws from the *Theodosian Code*, I will argue that elements of this source can be viewed as self-representative in their promotion of a religious policy which advocated general toleration for the Empire's many religions. This chapter, therefore, will begin with a contextualisation of imperial legislation, in particular its intersection with religious belief, before proceeding to consider a selection of the laws pertaining to religion which were passed in the reign of Valentinian, and subsequently preserved for posterity in the *Theodosian Code*. I will argue that these laws clearly demonstrate, even in the emperor's own 'voice', that Valentinian sought to represent himself to his subjects as a tolerant emperor in religious affairs, but nevertheless as unequivocally Christian. In the political context of Valentinian's reign, which followed religious prejudice under Constantius and Julian, but perhaps also tolerance under the Christian emperor Jovian, Valentinian's imperial image had greater contemporary impact, and was in turn more likely to be remembered by historians.⁵

In the second part of this chapter, I will explore the reception of this official representation of the emperor in the later historiographical sources, and will demonstrate how these sources received, adapted or ignored the official message of the

⁵ Cf. Kahlos (2007), 4, 'I am inclined to argue that both Constantius II and Julian are symptoms or catalysts of the beginning polarization rather than causes.'

emperor's religious legislation. Beginning with the *Res Gestae*, I will argue that Ammianus' representation of Valentinian's religious policy generally accords with that which we find in the official imperial legislation, although the reason for this similarity may be rooted in the political context of the *Res Gestae*'s composition. Moving onto our Christian histories, I will turn to the western ecclesiastical history of Tyrannius Rufinus, but only after a discussion of the Christian model of imperial rule which was first introduced in the work of Eusebius. In the history of Rufinus, it will be argued that the historian sought to represent Valentinian as an earnest and orthodox Christian, who was willingly to intervene in church affairs, but there is no mention of the imperial tolerance which was a hallmark of the official legislation, and Ammianus' portrayal. In his history of the world, the Spanish presbyter Orosius attempted to break out of the conventions of Christian history, by writing a work which omitted ecclesiastical affairs and focussed on secular and military events viewed from a Christian perspective. While, therefore, there is more information on the secular elements of Valentinian's rule, the central theme of Orosius' account is that of persecution, with the emperor represented both as a persecuted orthodox believer, but also as a ruler who is able to curb the suffering of God's people. Again, there is no mention of Valentinian as 'the tolerant emperor'. Finally, in the Eastern church histories, I will consider how these later writers returned to the message of the official legislation and Ammianus' account by highlighting the religious tolerance and even neutrality of Valentinian's religious policy. And yet, the sincerity of Valentinian's faith is keenly stressed, and contrasted with the heretical beliefs of his Arian sibling Valens.

Valentinian, Religious Legislation and the Image of the Tolerant Emperor

Emperors, Religion and the Law

When Ammianus Marcellinus commented in Book 30 of the *Res Gestae* on Valentinian's religious tolerance, what he was unintentionally recognising was the complex three-way relationship between emperors, religious belief and the law. That Valentinian did not 'trouble anyone', pointed towards the capability of emperors to 'trouble' religious sects with intrusive legislative action and discriminatory policies, as Julian had attempted to do; while the absence of 'threatening edicts' against non-Christians surely alluded to those issued under Valentinian's semi-Arian predecessor Constantius II, and his own Arian brother Valens.⁶ As Fergus Millar authoritatively argued in *The Emperor in the Roman World*, however, it was rarely in the interest of emperors to issue these kinds of 'threatening edicts'.⁷ While emperors were imbued with supreme authority in a system of absolute monarchy, they relied on the cooperation and support of a complex network, comprising imperial officials and advisors, senatorial and military elites, provincial governors and local landowning aristocrats.⁸ Not only were such policies and laws negative political capital, but they also exposed the emperor to unwanted political liabilities. Such were the risks involved that the emperor Trajan, for example, had avoided issuing rescripts in order to avoid setting legal precedents over which he had little control.⁹

Control over the law had always been an important facet of imperial rule. Under the reign of Augustus, emperors assumed the power of the *populus* to issue *leges*, and legal

⁶ Thompson (1947), 116; Hunt (2007), 91-3. See also note 29 below.

⁷ Millar (1977).

⁸ Kelly (2004).

⁹ Tuori (2016), 210-1, 'Because petitioning an emperor was comparably easier than having the emperor adjudicate in your case, and the emperors were willing to answer them, the rescript system became a central part of the way the emperor exercised his influence in legal proceedings. The change may be seen as brought about by Hadrian, as Trajan was consciously reluctant to issue rescripts in order to avoid setting legal precedents.'

adjudication became a central part of the imperial remit. The importance of this duty was not lost on many imperial historians and biographers, and their representation of an emperor as either ‘good’ or ‘bad’ was often confirmed by his perceived attitude towards legal adjudication.¹⁰ It was not, however, until the Antonine Period that, as Kaius Tuori has observed, the process of petitioning and appealing to the emperor, and seeking rescripts and other help, became ‘a central feature of the interaction between the emperor and the people’.¹¹ Hadrian was idealised as the model legal emperor because of his enlightened adjudication and his far-ranging legal reforms, which brought ‘imperial administration in line with the demands of the era’.¹² Other emperors were not represented so favourably. The historian Cassius Dio depicted the emperor Commodus as unwilling to assign an appropriate proportion of his time to legal adjudication.¹³ His dereliction of this key imperial duty was indicative of his unsuitability for power, and duly functioned as proof of his ineptitude.

In the hands of unpredictable emperors like Commodus, therefore, the law was a blunt instrument and not a force for good. Emperors, however, like Hadrian or Marcus Aurelius, whose reputations as enlightened and reasonable rulers endured in ancient sources, spent much of their time deliberating on all manner of legal queries from across the breadth of the Empire. The uniqueness of this system, which in theory granted every Roman subject access to the emperor, was not lost on contemporary observers. Via their imperial rescripts, emperors could appear as omnipresent adjudicators, whose words and judgements materially affected, for better or worse, the lives of the citizen body at large.¹⁴ As Matthews argued, however, the efficacy of imperial legislation was as reliant on cooperation as general imperial governance: ‘The impact of Roman legislation owed its force – and the legislation its validity – to its promulgation and

¹⁰ Tuori (2016) makes this point with reference to the *Lives* of Suetonius.

¹¹ Tuori (2016), 239.

¹² Tuori (2016), 198.

¹³ Cass. Dio. 72(73).9.1, 72(73).10.2. Cf. Tuori (2016), 222; Honoré (1994), 16-19.

¹⁴ Tuori (2016), 198, ‘From these responses, the figure of the emperor judge appears as an omnipresent adjudicator.’

display in the communities to which it was sent'.¹⁵ On a practical level, emperors could not hope to personally respond to the volume of petitions which they received; as Tuori has proposed, it is likely that in a large number of cases petitioners were either referred to other sources of legal adjudication at a local level, or were furnished with a reply by juristic scholars.¹⁶ Notwithstanding its obvious problems, the rescript system developed into an essential tool by which emperors could exert influence in legal proceedings. The centripetal flow of petitions reflected the power which accrued to the imperial office as citizens trusted the emperor to deliver meaningful answers to their calls for adjudication at the highest level.

It was ineluctable, at some point, that two great spheres of imperial interest – law and religion – should have overlapped. As the Roman state remained consistently and officially pagan, the law too was assumed, and designed to be, pagan in its religious outlook. The majority of polytheistic practises were universally accepted and endorsed in the legislation and adjudications which emerged from the imperial office. The result of this harmony between the law and the official state religion was that, as Hahn observed, 'for centuries, the phenomenon of religious violence was virtually unknown to the Roman empire'.¹⁷ Certain practices such as black magic were banned, but only because they were traditionally considered a threat to those who held imperial power. As Kahlos noted, even the first Christian emperor, Constantine, 'distinguished good and public magic from harmful and private magic, as had been done by emperors for centuries before him'.¹⁸ State persecution of other religions and beliefs was not an infrequent phenomenon, especially when those religions were perceived to have had a detrimental effect on the fortune of the Empire itself. Roman officials, therefore, understood that the persecution and condemnation of Christianity was necessary for

¹⁵ Matthews (2000), 187.

¹⁶ Tuori (2016), 212.

¹⁷ Hahn (2015), 379.

¹⁸ Kahlos (2009), 59.

maintaining law and order.¹⁹ Perhaps most importantly, however, religious tolerance was not a quality with which emperors themselves were expected to be imbued. Imperial subjects were clear where the emperor stood on matters of religious dispute, and it was only with the advent of Christianity that this balance was upset. Constantine ostensibly sought to maintain peaceful relations with other cults and belief systems, although some scholars have argued that the emperor was firmly anti-pagan in his outlook.²⁰ Kahlos, however, in her study on imperial forbearance, highlighted that, while Constantine used ‘callous language’ and ‘did not conceal his personal antipathy towards some traditional practices, particularly blood sacrifice’, it is ‘useful to distinguish his anti-pagan rhetoric from the actual orders issued’.²¹ She concludes that his legislation was not intolerant, or any more intolerant, than the pagan legislation which preceded it.²²

Since the reign of the first emperor Augustus, the actions of emperors within the religious sphere were perceived to affect the Empire as a whole. Imperial *pietas*, therefore, towards the gods was especially important, and emperors keenly represented themselves as religiously engaged, and by extension, pious in their devotion to the classical pantheon.²³ Augustus, famously, demonstrated this religious piety through a highly sophisticated and innovative propaganda programme, which represented him in various forms as the divinely ordained saviour of Rome.²⁴ This affinity with the deities of the state religion set Augustus apart from those around him, even though the emperor made every attempt to disguise what was, in reality, an absolute monarchy. Augustus’ example paved the way for those who succeeded to the imperial office, and the emperor was to remain officially *pontifex maximus* for centuries to come, a title lost only when

¹⁹ Hahn (2015), 379. There are many examples of state persecutions against Christians, most notably under the emperors Decius and Diocletian.

²⁰ For Constantine as an anti-pagan Christian, see, for example, Barnes (1981), and Odahl (2004).

²¹ Kahlos (2009), 58-59.

²² Kahlos (2009), 59. For Constantine as a tolerant consensus-builder, see Drake (2000).

²³ Noreña (2011), 74, n. 126. For the importance of the virtue of imperial *pietas*, see also Noreña (2011), 71-77.

²⁴ See Zanker’s seminal study (1990).

Christian emperors felt confident enough to discard the pagan traditions of their office.²⁵

Since Augustus, therefore, the law itself had been inextricably linked to the representation or self-representation of an emperor. After the conversion of Constantine, however, the dynamic of the relationship between the emperor and the law altered, as the former, imbued with the supreme authority of the law, employed it henceforth as a tool with which they could influence the Empire's religious landscape. Indeed, the reigns of Constantius II, Julian and Valens were all testament to the fact that emperors could choose to make life difficult for those whom they regarded as unbelievers, heretics, or atheists. The law was an instrument for discrimination towards religious groups, as it always had been, but on a far greater scale. Nevertheless, for an emperor to use such power was morally unjustifiable. Such action was not in keeping with what had, for centuries, provided the groundwork for the model of the ideal emperor. That emperors were not, however, technically, wrong to do so is justified by the understanding that the emperor was both the supreme authority within the law, and that his words and adjudications were, for the most part, recognised as possessing *bona fide* legal authority.

Julian and the Context of Valentinian's Religious Legislation

The renaissance which paganism had experienced under the short reign of the emperor Julian must have convinced many of its more credulous adherents that the religious tide had truly turned back in their favour.²⁶ Although he was raised a Christian (the first emperor to be so), Julian had departed from the religion which condemned his Hellenic passions as 'sinful vanities',²⁷ but had concealed his desire to reinstate popular worship of the traditional gods during his rise to power under the Christian emperors of the mid-

²⁵ On Gratian's renunciation of the title of *pontifex maximus*, see Cameron (1968).

²⁶ For religion and the state in the reigns of Jovian, Valentinian and Valens, see Errington (2006), 171-92.

²⁷ Jones (1964), 120.

fourth century.²⁸ Exactly when Julian abandoned his Christian faith in favour of the teachings of the Neo-Platonists is unclear. For Christians across the Empire, Julian's promotion to sole *Augustus* in late 361, following the emperor Constantius' sudden death in Cilicia, heralded the beginning of a difficult, albeit brief, period of intolerance for Christianity and its adherents. His reign was one of persecution (generally non-violent) and political difficulty, as the new emperor implemented measures which were designed to limit avenues for Christian proselytization and to reverse the momentum of Christianity as the Empire's dominant religious force.²⁹ One of the most notorious of these measures was his much-criticised law forbidding Christian rhetoricians and grammarians from teaching the corpus of classical literature, which Maijastina Kahlos has argued was a 'catalyst' for the polarisation of Christians and pagans in the fourth century.³⁰

Julian's untimely death in the disastrous Persian campaign of 363, however, and the election of the Christian emperor Jovian quickly re-established Christianity as the Empire's principal religion.³¹ Some anti-Christian laws were quickly rescinded by the new emperor, but his death at Dadastana came before he was fully able to formulate his own imperial policies.³² As will be discussed later in this chapter, Jovian appears to have implemented a policy of religious tolerance, although Lenski has presumed that

²⁸ On Julian's paganism, see Athanassiadi (1992), Smith (1995), Stenger (2009), Elm (2015).

²⁹ There were many violent exceptions which challenge the validity of this generalisation; see Brennecke (1984), 114-57, for a complete list of martyrs. Cf. also Lenski (2002), 214, 'While the Apostate claimed to refrain from open persecution, he happily turned a blind eye to violence wreaked by his co-religionists on Christians, and himself succumbed to torturing and even executing several Christians under the guise of suppressing treason.' Teitler (2017), however, has convincingly challenged this view, arguing that many stories of Julianic persecution were embellished or simply falsified by later Christian authors.

³⁰ Julian's law was widely criticised, even by his biggest supporters like Ammianus Marcellinus (25.4.20; cf. 22.10.7). Kahlos (2007), 4.

³¹ On the reign of the emperor Jovian in Ammianus, see Matthews (1989), 183-88, and Barnes (1998), 138-42. On his religious policies, see Errington (2006), 173-75; Heather (1999), 112-16; Heather and Moncur (2001), 154-58.

³² Jones (1964), 138. Barnes (1998), 138, 'Ammianus' verdict on Jovian is simple: he was never really emperor at all.'

‘Christians openly attacking pagans under imperial sanction’ in the aftermath of Julian’s death would have been an expected occurrence.³³ The fact that Jovian – and then Valentinian – did not brutally suppress the remnants of pagan culture probably says more about the testing political circumstances of the period than the magnanimity of Christian emperors. Kate Cooper, however, in her recent review of Alan Cameron’s *The Last Pagans of Rome* and Peter Brown’s *Through the Eye of a Needle*, seemed to overstate the case when she argued, citing Brown, that it was only ‘certain Christian monks and bishops’ who stoked the religious hostility Julian’s actions had no doubt engendered.³⁴ While Cooper’s claim is too sweeping in its reach to be logically accurate, the argument that many Christians, a majority even, in the fourth and fifth centuries ‘pursued a policy of placid cohabitation’ with pagans – an idea at the heart of Peter Brown’s book – can help to frame our understanding of the relationships between Christian emperors and prominent pagans.³⁵ The successful working relationship of Symmachus and Valentinian, for instance, during a period of religious tension across the Empire, reflected what we know about Valentinian as a Christian emperor, and Symmachus as one of the most prominent traditionalists of his day.

The Theodosian Code, and the Character of Valentinian’s Religious Legislation

The imperial constitutions which have survived in the transmitted text of the *Theodosian Code* function not only as prescriptive legal formulas, but offer a unique insight into the ideological and moral principles of the emperors under whose authority the laws were enacted.³⁶ In the view of A. H. M. Jones, these laws acted as ‘clues to the difficulties of the empire, and records of the aspirations of government and not its

³³ On Jovian’s religious tolerance, see Them. Or. 5. Lenski (2002), 214.

³⁴ Cooper (2014), 228.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Jones (1964), viii. For the cultural and religious context of the *Code*, see F. Millar, *A Greek Roman Empire: Power and Belief under Theodosius II (408-450)* (University of California Press, 2006); and for the political context, see J. Matthews, *Laying Down the Law: A Study of the Theodosian Code* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2000), 1-9.

achievement'.³⁷ As Jones also highlighted in the preface to his *LRE*, the legal material, abundant though it may be, presents many difficulties of interpretation, from the inaccurate dating of laws, to the absence of contextual information.³⁸ Jones' observations, and uncertainty as to whether the laws in the *Theodosian Code* represented general statements of imperial policy or responses to particular scandals, and whether they were enforced or remained 'a pious aspiration', have loomed large in the study of late Roman legislation ever since.³⁹ With the publication of Fergus Millar's *The Emperor in the Roman World*, however, it became widely accepted that imperial rescripts, letters and decrees were generally issued in response to questions and problems raised by other parties, a mechanism which he termed 'petition and response'.⁴⁰ Emperors themselves too, for the most part, 'reacted' to a wide variety of political, social and military stimuli. What Millar's argument was unequivocally rebutting was the notion that emperors had absolute control over their own absolute power; rather they were harnessed by a variety of powerful political players, whose mutual approval and legitimation was designed to ensure the stability of the imperial institution.

The importance of the legal compilation we have come to know as the *Theodosian Code*, started in March 429 and published in the autumn of 437, lay in both its complexity and scope (encompassing the reign of Constantine to Theodosius II), but also in its originality and the precedent it formed to the famous legal *codices* of the sixth-century Byzantine emperor Justinian.⁴¹ The *Code*'s content and context have been greatly elucidated by a flurry of interest in the work at the turn of the century and, building on the innovation of Jones, the subsequent publication of several works of

³⁷ Jones (1964), viii.

³⁸ Jones (1964), viii; cf. Kelly (2004), 38, 'Regrettably, for the most part, the circumstances surrounding the issuing of any one law or its subsequent inclusion in the Codes are unknown. (Where the text contained such information, it was routinely edited out as part of the process of codification.)'

³⁹ Jones (1964), viii.

⁴⁰ Millar (1977).

⁴¹ Matthews (2000), vii: 'Remarkably, it is the first fully official collection of such legislation ever made...'. Cf. also Kelly (2004), 119.

important scholarship.⁴² Most recently, John Matthews, whose study of the text analyses the process of its compilation and its *raison d'être*, has issued the caveat that 'it is critical that the historians approach the book with an understanding of how it was made and published, and why it takes the form it does'.⁴³ He has also stressed the 'goldmine of information for historians' which is contained within its complex structure.⁴⁴ This complexity is somewhat exacerbated by the nature of the material which the *Code* has preserved, and the distinction which the Romans made between *leges*, the primary legislation, and *ius*, the interpretation of the primary legislation. The *Theodosian Code* contains only primary legislation (*leges*), and although the project was intended to enter a second phase in which the new *codex* would be fused with those of the Roman jurists Gregorius and Hermogenianus, and would in turn contribute to a new comprehensive manual of law, this was never realised, leaving an extensive volume of imperial *leges* without any interpretative or expository guide.⁴⁵ Without the luxury of thematic legal asides to contextualise these laws, therefore, it is imperative that we acknowledge certain restrictions on our ability to understand Valentinian's imperial policy from legislation which is often truncated, edited and/or selectively chosen.⁴⁶

Schmidt-Hofner has recently demonstrated that Valentinian and Valens were not unfamiliar with the propagandistic benefits of legislative activity.⁴⁷ With relation to 364-365, during which years the emperors released an extraordinary volume of legislation, Schmidt-Hofner convincingly argued that the brothers issued imperial constitutions 'as part of a deliberate strategy...to use legislation as a medium of propaganda in order to consolidate and promote their rule at a moment of political

⁴² Predominantly, T. Honoré, *Law in the Crisis of Empire 379–455 AD* (Oxford, 1998); J. Harries, *Law and Empire in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 1999); J. Matthews, *Laying Down the Law: A Study of the Theodosian Code* (Yale University Press, 2000).

⁴³ Matthews (2000), 11.

⁴⁴ Matthews (2000), 11.

⁴⁵ Matthews (2000), 10.

⁴⁶ Matthews (2000), 10.

⁴⁷ Schmidt-Hofner (2015).

crisis'.⁴⁸ Moreover, he demonstrated how the emperors made a concerted effort to appease those groups whose loyalty they most relied upon to remain in power – including the army and military elite, the urban plebs and, most of all, the landed senatorial aristocracy – by issuing ‘a multitude of largely superfluous decrees – superfluous, that is, in legal terms – [which] conveyed the accessibility, authority, and care of the new rulers, and above all their constant, tireless concern for people and empire’.⁴⁹ Schmidt-Hofner’s view, that the emperors were using legislation above all else as a medium of political communication, accords well with Lenski’s observation that Valentinian sought to guarantee legislative harmony between the western and eastern halves of the Empire by issuing identical laws on a range of issues, including family law, weights and measures, education and entertainments.⁵⁰ With respect to more substantial issues, Lenski argued that the brothers’ joint legislative agenda focussed on four key areas: the eradication of official corruption; the streamlining of civic administration; the protection of the welfare of the masses; and the improvement of agricultural efficiency.⁵¹ Valentinian and Valens’ cooperation on these far-ranging legislative and administrative problems helped to promote the bigger notion of imperial unity (*concordia*), which several scholars have argued was a cornerstone of Valentinian and Valens’ shared rule.⁵² Among the extensive material evidence for this policy, particularly visual representations on coinage, there survives literary evidence which supports this argument.⁵³ For example, as has been discussed in previous chapters, harmony among the imperial family was heavily promoted by Symmachus in his panegyrics to Valentinian and Gratian.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Schmidt-Hofner (2015), 68.

⁴⁹ Schmidt-Hofner (2015), 89.

⁵⁰ Schmidt-Hofner (2015), 75; Lenski (2002), 267ff.

⁵¹ Lenski (2002), 267ff.

⁵² On *concordia* in the reign of Valentinian and Valens, see Lenski (2002), 29-30; Tomlin (1973), ch. 4; Pabst (1986), 83-89.

⁵³ Lenski (2002), 29.

⁵⁴ E.g. Amm. 26.5.1, *concordissimi principes*; 30.7.4, *ut germanitate ita concordia sibi iunctissimum*. See also Them. Or. 6.77b, 82a.

It is a striking paradox, therefore, that Valentinian and Valens should have exhibited far more divergence in their personal religious doctrines, with Valens not only affirming Arian beliefs, but persecuting fellow Christians of a Nicene persuasion. The orator Themistius, in a lost speech, even urged the emperor to abandon his attacks and to display a greater degree of toleration.⁵⁵ In some aspects, however, the official religious policy of the brothers could be said to have advanced the idea of unity. They both forbade magical practices, nefarious prayers and nocturnal sacrifices (with the exception of the Eleusinian Mysteries);⁵⁶ and as we shall see in more detail, they also represented themselves as tolerant of paganism, although, as Roger Tomlin has noted, this tolerance was eroded by their ministers' savage persecution of magical practices, of which pagans were *prima facie* suspect.⁵⁷ Both emperors also continued to hold the pagan title of *pontifex maximus*. By analysing elements of Valentinian's religious laws for their content and context, I will argue that the emperor, learning from the examples of his predecessors, had sought to represent himself in the 'imperial voice' of his legislation as a tolerant and therefore stable ruler, who had unambiguously been opposed to religious conflict from the beginning of his reign.

From the period of the brothers' separation in August 364, there remain extant in the *Theodosian Code* 277 laws of Valentinian, and 62 of Valens, with other individual laws attested in other sources.⁵⁸ Of these laws, there are twenty from the reign of Valentinian which can be categorised as pertaining to religion and the exercise of religious belief by citizens of the Roman Empire. Fifteen of these laws relate to Christianity and the Church; two to heresy and heretics; one to Christian-pagan relations; one to the practices of divination and astrology; and one to the 'compulsory quartering' of

⁵⁵ Socr. *HE* 4.32.1-5; cf. Soz. 6.36.6-37.1. See also Vanderspoel (1995), 178-79; Errington (2006), 187; Swain (2013), 37-38. Lenski (2002), 213 has labelled Valens 'without question, a religious persecutor'.

⁵⁶ *CTh.* 9.16.7 (in 364), 9.16.8 for the laws concerning nocturnal sacrifices and magical practices. Cf. Zos. 4.3.2-3.

⁵⁷ Tomlin (1973), 22.

⁵⁸ For these figures, see Mommsen's catalogue in the preface to his edition of the *Theodosian Code*. For examples of individual laws of Valentinian and Valens preserved elsewhere, see Lenski (2002), 266, n. 14.

individuals in Jewish synagogues.⁵⁹ The number of laws is surprisingly small, and we can safely assume that the *Code* preserves only a percentage of those issued during the reign of Valentinian I. As well as the small number, there seems to be little pattern to the laws which the compilers of the *Code* have included, although their imperial patron's interest in theological matters no doubt influenced their selection of laws. No religious legislation at all survives from certain years (366, 369, 374), and although this evidently does not reflect the sum total of religious laws and rescripts issued in these years, it may be evidence that there was no legislation significant enough or sufficiently precedential to merit inclusion in the *Code*. The absence of laws from these years also attested to the unreliability of the *Theodosian Code* as a historical source, for without knowledge of the compilers' motives and of the laws omitted, Valentinian's approach to religious affairs can appear piecemeal to modern scholars.

The quantity, wording and addressees of religious legislation from the reign of Valentinian favour the argument that the expression of clear and considered policy was a less common occurrence than extemporary imperial responses to circumstance, or 'scandal', as Jones had phrased it.⁶⁰ One particular law, however, which addressed the concerns of non-Christians for whom divination remained a key ritual of their belief, stands out from the rest of the extant legislation:

⁵⁹ Christianity and the Church: *CTh.* 16.2.17 of 10 September 364; 12.1.59 of 12 September 364; 9.40.8 of 15 January 365; 14.3.11 of 27 September 365; 15.7.1 of 11 February 367; 9.38.3 of 5 May 367; 8.8.1 of 21 April 368, 370, 373; 11.36.20 of 8 July 369; 13.10.4 of 22 November 368; 16.2.18 of 17 February 370; 13.10.6 of 30 March 370; 9.38.4 of 6 June 370; 16.2.20 of 30 July 370; 16.2.21 of 17 May 371; 16.2.22 of 1 December 372.

Heresy and Heretics: *CTh.* 16.5.3 of 2 March 372; 16.6.1 of 20 February 373.

Christian-pagan relations: *CTh.* 16.1.1 of 17 November 364.

Divination: *CTh.* 9.16.9 of 29 May 371.

Law relating to Jewish synagogues: *CTh.* 7.8.2 of 6 May 368, 370, 373.

⁶⁰ Jones (1964), viii.

Emperors Valentinian, Valens, and Gratian Augustuses to the Senate.

I judge that divination has no connection with cases of magic, and I do not consider this superstition, or any other that was allowed by our elders, to be a kind of crime. Of this opinion the laws given by Me in the beginning of My reign are witnesses, in which free opportunity was granted to everyone to cultivate that which he had conceived in his mind. We do not condemn divination, but We do forbid it to be practiced harmfully.

CTh. 9.16.9, issued at Trier on 29th May 371.⁶¹

There are two distinct elements to this law, both of which merit further analysis: firstly, the actual law on the practice of legitimate and harmful divination; and secondly, the other ‘laws’ of religious toleration to which this law clearly refers.⁶²

Under Valentinian and Valens, the Empire’s polytheists were generally left to conduct their own affairs in peace. As Lenski observed, temples continued to be constructed and restored, pagan priests continued to be initiated into the mystery cults, and pagan officials continued to serve in the administration of the new Christian emperors.⁶³ Valentinian’s decision to retain the traditional pagan title of *pontifex maximus* and his refusal to remove the altar of Victory from the Roman Senate, in the face of Christian

⁶¹ *CTh.* 9.16.9, *Imppp. Valentinianus, Valens et Gratianus aaa. ad senatum. Haruspicinam ego nullum cum maleficiorum causis habere consortium iudico neque ipsam aut aliquam praeterea concessam a maioribus religionem genus esse arbitror criminis. Testes sunt leges a me in exordio imperii mei datae, quibus unicuique, quod animo inbibisset, colendi libera facultas tributa est. Nec haruspicinam reprehendimus, sed nocenter exerceri vetamus. Dat. IIII kal. iun. Treviris Gratiano a. II et Probo cons.* (371 mai. 29). Schmidt-Hofner (2008), 536, accepted the original date of the law, stating: ‘Es gibt kein zwingendes inhaltliches Argument für Seecks These (S. 240), dass diese Konstitution und CTh 9,38,5 vom selben Original stammen.’ For the revised dating of this law to 19th May 371, see firstly Seeck, *Reg.* 240; cf. Lizzi Testa (2004), 231-32, accepted by Den Boeft *et al.* (2013), xiv. All translations of the *Theodosian Code* are taken from Pharr’s edition, unless otherwise stated.

⁶² For this law, see also Hunt (1993), 145-46.

⁶³ Lenski (2002), 215-16.

opposition, could even be construed as attempts to appease the Roman senatorial aristocracy.⁶⁴ This is, of course, in addition to the ‘ostentatious legislation’ which Valentinian and Valens passed in the first two years of their reign, which Schmidt-Hofner has convincingly argued was designed to appease the landed senatorial aristocracy. This tolerant approach may seem somewhat surprising, however, in light of the language of two laws dated to the beginning and middle of Valentinian’s reign respectively, which appear extremely hostile to pagan religious practice:

Emperors Valentinian and Valens Augustuses to Symmachus, Prefect of the City.

Any judge or apparitor who appoints men of the Christian religion as custodians of temples must know that neither his life nor his goods will be spared.

CTh. 16.1.1, given at Milan on 17th November 364.⁶⁵

The same Augustuses to Claudius, Proconsul of Africa.

The regulations of the sainted Constantius which clearly existed at the end of his life shall be valid, and whatever was done or decreed when the minds of the pagans were aroused against the most holy law by any depravity shall not acquire validity under any pretext.

CTh. 16.2.18, given at Trier on 17th February 370.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Cameron (2011), 34.

⁶⁵ Pharr’s translation with some changes. *CTh.* 16.1.1, *Impp. Valentinianus et Valens aa. ad Symmachum praefectum Urbi. Quisquis seu iudex seu apparitor ad custodiam templorum homines christianae religionis adposuerit sciat non saluti suae, non fortunae esse parcendum. Dat. XV kal. decemb. Mediolano, Valentiniano et Valente aa. cons. (365 nov. [?] 17).* Mommsen favoured 365 rather than 364 as the correct date for this law based on the accepted dates for Avianus Symmachus’ urban prefecture. Seeck, *Reg.*, 218, corrected the date to 364. Cf. Schmidt-Hofner (2008), 571, and 589, who highlights that Valentinian was in Paris, not Milan, during November 365. Amm. 26.5.8 also states that Valentinian was heading to Paris when he heard the news of Procopius’ rebellion on 1st November 365.

⁶⁶ *CTh.* 16.2.18, *Idem aa. ad Claudium proconsulem Africae. Quam ultimo tempore divi Constantii sententiam fuisse claruerit, valeat, nec ea in adsimulatione aliqua convalescant, quae tunc decreta vel*

In his doctoral thesis on religious intolerance in the later Roman Empire, Philip Tilden argued that ‘the unique and specific severity of this law [*CTh.* 16.1.1] may be related to the revolt of Procopius, the situation on the Rhine frontier and Valentinian’s response to the revolt’; by situating Valentinian’s law within the volatile political context of 365, Tilden propounded the view that such a ‘robust assertion of the emperor’s authority in Rome’ was necessary to discourage potential supporters of Procopius from rebelling against the legitimate emperors.⁶⁷ Tilden’s view clearly assumes imperial agency of some description, as the emperor used the tone of his language to represent himself in an authoritative fashion which could communicate far more to imperial subjects than simply a legal point: in the case of this law, Tilden argues that the obvious subtext was a stern warning not to legitimise the usurper Procopius. Lenski, too, cited this law as an example of the imperial brothers’ ‘distaste for paganism’.⁶⁸

While there can be little doubt that this law (*CTh.* 16.1.1) pertains to Christian-pagan relations, Tilden’s argument here is, self-evidently, invalidated by the law’s revised date of 364, given that Procopius’ rebellion did not begin until September 365. Indeed, in my view, the central concern of this law is not the injustice of forcing ‘men of the Christian religion’ to guard the temples of pagans, but rather the injustice which could be committed against the pagans themselves by assigning Christians to protect their temples.⁶⁹ In the context of Schmidt-Hofner’s observations discussed above concerning Valentinian and Valens’ ‘unusually intense legislative activity’ during 364-365, and their ‘intention...to signal that they personally identified with the values and traditions of the senatorial elite’ back in Rome, this law also appears to be part of that deliberate political strategy employed by the emperors in the first few years of their reign.⁷⁰ The content and tone of *CTh.* 16.1.1 was designed, therefore, not only to assuage the fears

facta sunt, cum paganorum animi contra sanctissimam legem quibusdam sunt depravationibus excitati. Dat. XIII kal. mart. Treviris Valentiniano et Valente aa. conss. (370 febr. 17). For the date, see Seeck, *Reg.*, 238; Schmidt-Hofner (2008), 571.

⁶⁷ Tilden (2006), 122-26, who argues that the original date of 17th November 365 was indeed accurate.

⁶⁸ Lenski (2002), 217.

⁶⁹ Cf. Bonamente (2011), 73.

⁷⁰ Schmidt-Hofner (2015), 68, 88.

of the senatorial elites in Rome that the safety of the temples – their places of worship but also important visual symbols of their traditions – would be at risk under the new Christian imperial house, but also to present the emperors as tolerant rulers who would proactively take the necessary steps to defend pagan religious freedoms.

The context of *CTh.* 16.2.18 is slightly more difficult to explain. There is a clear reference to the pagan renaissance of Julian (*cum paganorum animi...sunt...excitati*), and pagan practices are derogatorily referred to as ‘depravities’ (*depravitionibus*). Indeed, this law is the first legislative example of the word ‘*pagani*’ being used a blanket label of Christian abuse.⁷¹ Hunt has argued that there was little unusual about this law, claiming that, ‘Whatever political accommodations were required with the old gods, Valentinian’s official language was open and uncompromising when it came to advertising the Christian character of his regime’; although this view cannot actually be justified by the extant legislation.⁷² Tilden observed, however, that, far from being an anti-pagan law, *CTh.* 16.2.18 was simply aimed ‘at abolishing any extant Julianic legislation on religious affairs (and especially that which had been directed against the Church)’.⁷³ In other words, Valentinian simply wanted to return the Empire to what Lenski had termed the *status quo ante Iulianum*.⁷⁴ This desire even extended to the final revision (*CTh.* 13.3.6) of Julian’s controversial ‘law on teachers’, which Errington has successfully shown was issued by Valentinian and Valens, and not Jovian.⁷⁵ If Tilden’s view is accurate, then the forthright language of the law may be explained by its later date, by which time Valentinian was more assured of his position. Nevertheless, it is clear, on the basis of the surviving legislation, that Valentinian sought to represent himself as tolerant of paganism.

⁷¹ Hunt (2007), 75. Cf. Lenski (2002), 246, n. 200.

⁷² Hunt (2007), 75.

⁷³ Tilden (2006), 105-6.

⁷⁴ Lenski (2002), 217.

⁷⁵ Errington (2006), 293, n. 10.

The event, however, which has to some extent defined Valentinian's reputation for cruelty, was more severe towards the pagans in Rome. In 371, Valentinian, having heard from Maximinus, the *vicarius Urbis Romae*, that 'the offences which many men had committed in Rome could not be investigated or punished except by severer measures',⁷⁶ allocated the latter trials which might have been undertaken by the *praefectus urbi* and sanctioned, according to Ammianus, 'in his anger' (*efferatus*) the use of one general judicial sentence to cover all crimes 'of this kind' (*huius modi*).⁷⁷ It was at the height of these 'magic trials' that Valentinian's 'law of toleration' (*CTh.* 9.16.9) was issued, specifically exempting traditional pagan divination, which the wording of the law calls a '*religio*' according to Roman tradition, from criminal association with *maleficium*.⁷⁸ Lenski argued that 'it was this vague concept, *maleficium* (criminal mischief), and not the broader range of pagan practices, that was the target' of this particular piece of religious legislation.⁷⁹ This seems true, although Kahlos also argued that Valentinian's law, and the distinction which he draws between two forms of divination, demonstrates that 'for Christian emperors the boundaries were not necessarily drawn along plain religious lines but were complicated by the age-old Roman tradition of legislation'.⁸⁰ The intense anger of Valentinian, according to Ammianus, supports the conclusion that the many arrests for these offences (*perniciosa facinora*) were part of Valentinian's plan to eradicate the feared practices of sorcery and black magic. Claims, however, that Valentinian deliberately used the magic trials to purge the Roman pagan aristocracy appear unfounded. *CTh.* 9.16.7, passed in the first year of the brothers' reign, attests to the fact that the pagan practices of harmful divination and magic were greatly feared by the brothers long before the trials of 371, and subsequently outlawed, just as they had been by imperial predecessors.⁸¹ Valentinian's law permitting the practice of 'harmless' divination on 29th May 371,

⁷⁶ Amm. 28.1.10.

⁷⁷ Amm. 28.1.10-12; cf. Jer. *Chron.* 246b.

⁷⁸ Lenski (2002), 222; Kahlos (2007), 102.

⁷⁹ Lenski (2002), 222.

⁸⁰ Kahlos (2007), 102.

⁸¹ See, for example, Constantine's legislation (*CTh.* 9.16.1-3; 16.10.1).

therefore, was designed to show Roman citizens that the sole purpose of the trials was to eradicate magic and the dangers associated with it.

The second half of *CTh.* 9.16.9 concerning ‘laws’ of religious toleration seems to support Ammianus Marcellinus’ assertion that Valentinian refused to become embroiled in the religious conflict of the day.⁸² Where, however, Ammianus portrayed Valentinian’s tolerance simply as a personal preference or quality, the second half of this law shows that the emperor himself had sought to implement it as official government policy at the beginning of his reign. Whether the policy itself constituted a reaction to the political and religious instability which Valentinian had inherited in 364 is uncertain, but it is clear from this law that the emperor sought to represent his tolerance as a considered choice rather than a *démarche*. The rhetoric and language of the law, while not as grandiloquent as other surviving laws, seem to validate this conclusion. The capacity for powerfully phrased legislation to produce greater impact was widely recognised. As Jill Harries noted, ‘through the rhetoric of law, emperors promoted their policies and personalities to subjects who would probably never see them in person’.⁸³ The unusual use of the first person singular in this law assumes added importance in this context. By using the first person singular, Valentinian not only enhanced the authority of this law (which actually reflects the importance of the law itself and the urgent political context in which it was delivered), but he also ensured that this particular law would receive greater attention from the officials responsible for distributing it, which would in turn enable wider dissemination of its message amongst imperial subjects and the relevant parties affected by the issues within it. It was through this literary strategy, therefore, that the emperor’s representation of himself as a tolerant ruler was given maximum exposure. This use of the first person singular also differentiates this law in its importance from the other surviving religious laws of Valentinian.⁸⁴

⁸² Amm. 30.9.5.

⁸³ Harries (2011), 351.

⁸⁴ Cf. Kelly (2004), 214-15 on Constantine’s edict of 331, which also made powerful use of the first person.

The survival of the law itself is both highly fortunate and noteworthy. Valentinian's allusion to his own earlier legislation ('the laws given by Me in the beginning of my reign'), none of which remains extant, highlights the unusualness of this particular text's preservation. In fact, it has probably only survived because of the compilers' interest in former legislation relating to the practice of magic and divination. The reference in *CTh.* 9.16.9 to other laws dating to the beginning of the emperor's reign, which apparently bore witness to a clear policy of toleration, but which have not survived, demonstrates the arbitrary nature of the record for religious legislation, although the survival of such legislation in the *Code* was not only determined by the preferences of the compilers. As Christopher Kelly has noted, central administrative departments seemingly failed to retain copies of all the laws which they themselves had passed.⁸⁵ But the reference to earlier legislation in *CTh.* 9.16.9 also alludes to the political 'memory' of what were evidently important pieces of legislation, and highlights the emperor's desire for his religious policy to appear consistent and principled over the course of his reign. Following the sudden death of Jovian, the election of another Christian soldier must have greatly alarmed the Empire's pagans, many of whom justifiably expected a violent response from the new emperor to Julian's 'mischievous religious policy'.⁸⁶ And so, in light of Julian's pagan revolution and the religious tumult which it subsequently provoked, imperial legislation issued from the beginning of Valentinian's reign guaranteeing religious toleration in unambiguous terms, particularly to incubators of pagan belief like the Roman Senate, were probably far more memorable, and welcome, than most.⁸⁷ For these laws ensured, with some limitations and for a limited period of time, the continued existence of what was perceived by many, including the younger Symmachus, as the Roman way of life and all its accompanying traditions. This law also acknowledges the legal pronouncements and judgements of previous rulers ('our elders'). In doing so, Valentinian represents himself as appreciative of Roman tradition, but is careful not to flaunt Christian standards of morality. Such references also indicated continuity with previous imperial

⁸⁵ Kelly (2004), 119.

⁸⁶ Cameron (2011), 34.

⁸⁷ Lenski (2002), 214 on expected violence towards pagan following Julian's death in 363.

legislation, while the use of the first person plural pronoun underlined the virtue of imperial *concordia* which Lenski argued was central to the brothers' self-representation.⁸⁸

The extent to which Valentinian was innovative in passing legislation of religious toleration is debated. Hunt has argued that Valentinian's 'acclaimed religious tolerance was perhaps no more than might be expected from a (new) imperial regime seeking to navigate successfully through the entrenched interests of its subjects'.⁸⁹ In his fifth *Oration* to the emperor Jovian, Themistius had lingered on the idea of religious tolerance at an imperial level, and appeared to suggest that Jovian had passed a law to this effect:⁹⁰

Hence your legislation on divine matters has become a prelude to your care for mankind.

Them. *Or.* 5.67b.⁹¹

But the law of God, which is your law, remains immovable for all time, that each man's soul is liberated for the path of piety that it wishes. Neither sequestration of property, nor scourges, nor burning has ever overturned this law by force.

Them. *Or.* 5.68b.⁹²

⁸⁸ See note 42 above.

⁸⁹ Hunt (2007), 75.

⁹⁰ On *Oration* 5, see Vanderspoel (1995), 137-54; Heather and Moncur (2001), 137-73; Kahlos (2009), 82-86.

⁹¹ *Or.* 5.67b, *Εἴτά σοι προοίμιον γέγονε τῆς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐπιμελείας ἢ περὶ τοῦ θεοῦ νομοθεσία*. English translations of Themistius' fifth *Oration* are taken from Heather and Moncur (2001).

⁹² *Or.* 5.68b, *ὁ δὲ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ὁ σὸς νόμος ἀκίνητος μένει τὸν πάντα αἰῶνα, ἀπολελύσθαι τὴν ἐκάστου ψυχὴν πρὸς ἣν οἴεται ὁδὸν εὐσεβείας. καὶ τοῦτον οὐ χρημάτων ἀφαίρεσις, οὐ σκόλοpes, οὐ πυρκαϊὰ τὸν νόμον πώποτε ἐβιάσατο*.

John Vanderspoel, however, advocated a more nuanced interpretation of Themistius' speech, arguing that Jovian had done no such thing and that references to legislation guaranteeing religious tolerance were little more than a plea from the panegyrist which had little effect on Jovian.⁹³ Some scholars, notably Heather and Moncur, have disagreed with this view, arguing that Themistius' representation of Jovian as a tolerant emperor was based on 'a very open and unambiguous toleration', which was 'already the official policy of the regime'.⁹⁴ Heather and Moncur's view appears, at least to me, to be the most logical argument from the evidence of the text itself, but if Vanderspoel was indeed correct in his argument, then it would nevertheless remain important that political figures were engaging in discourse about the idea of religious toleration immediately prior to Valentinian's rule.

For emperors, rescripts and legislation were prime opportunities to maintain the favour and respect of their subjects. In this sense, the law could be said to transcend its primary functions of establishing standards, maintaining order, resolving disputes, and protecting liberties and rights. Imperial rescripts and rulings were often publicly displayed which meant that the voice, and authority, of the emperor could be experienced by subjects, in a similar way that imagery on coinage and statues, inscriptions on sponsored building projects, and panegyrics praising the imperial character could reach audiences far greater than an emperor could hope to appear before in person. Where, however, the production of panegyric, for example, had clear propaganda value, and a very specific audience in view, the dissemination of laws and policy not only had the capability to influence the perception of the emperor, but also to impact directly on the lives of those under imperial rule: a far wider and more disparate audience than the elites who absorbed myriad imperial propaganda aimed at securing their political support. As a record of Valentinian's religious action then, the *Theodosian Code* has much to contribute to the idea of 'representation', and although the majority of laws were probably not drafted by emperors themselves, their

⁹³ Vanderspoel (1995), 137-54.

⁹⁴ Heather and Moncur (2001), 156; see also Heather (1999), 112-14, for a similar line of argument.

expression, or reflection, of the imperial will and the imperial role renders them fundamentally self-representative in one form or another.

CTh. 9.16.9 depicted Valentinian as ‘the tolerant emperor’, a representation which found greater relevance following the reigns of Constantius II and Julian, and which appealed to the Senate’s desire for political stability.⁹⁵ The Senate, however, were not unfamiliar with the emperor from whom they received this law. They had learned more about the emperor through the panegyrics of Symmachus, in which the emperor had been strongly represented in martial terms. Of course, as Harries noted, ‘endorsement by armies alone did not confer legitimacy on a ruler among the wider population of the empire’.⁹⁶ Symmachus’ panegyric, as has been discussed, was clear in its vision of a new direction for the Empire, and this short religious law, therefore, could perhaps be said to support the general representation of the emperor which was promoted extensively in the official panegyrics of Symmachus. In religious terms, the emperor Valentinian was by no means obliged to display such moderation. Previous emperors had been significantly less tolerant towards other forms of religious belief, and in the words of Peter Brown, emperors were more likely to ‘impose obedience by imperial fiat, in religious as well as secular matters’.⁹⁷ Taken with earlier laws and the religious policy of his predecessor Jovian, however, *CTh.* 9.16.9, dated to the middle of Valentinian’s reign (371), suggests that imperial neutrality in religious affairs had been a successful experiment, and demonstrates that, at least in Valentinian’s view, the image of ‘the tolerant emperor’ was a contribution to peace and stability in the western half of the Empire.

It was clear, therefore, from Valentinian’s religious legislation that the emperor sought to represent himself as both tolerant and proactive in implementing an official policy of toleration. In *CTh.* 9.16.9, we come as close as is possible to hearing the imperial

⁹⁵ On Constantius’ legacy among Christians as an imperial persecutor, see now R. Flower’s translation and commentary of a series of invectives against the emperor, including that of Hilary of Poitiers (2016).

⁹⁶ Harries (2011), 357.

⁹⁷ Brown (1992), 7.

voice and, given the significance of this law, it was clearly important that it originated from the emperor himself. Valentinian's law of toleration reflected the imperial emphasis on religious as well as political unity. In issuing laws of tolerance, Valentinian was consciously following the example of Constantine, who, himself learning from the mistakes of Diocletian, had displayed tolerance towards the pagan cults, and also perhaps from the example of his predecessor Jovian. Coercion was not an effective nor an efficient way to bring about peace. Maijastina Kahlos has observed that Constantine's 'reluctant forbearance' was accompanied with 'harsh language' and a ban on pagan sacrifices, which was 'principally aimed at gratifying Christian hardliners'.⁹⁸ There is, however, no real evidence that Valentinian's policy of religious toleration was defined within Christian moral parameters. Like the so-called 'Edict of Milan' issued in 313, Valentinian's law of toleration offered universal religious freedom, but sought ultimately to return to the state of affairs prior to Julian's reign.⁹⁹ The laws of toleration, therefore, which were issued at the beginning of Valentinian's reign may not have been a direct reaction to one specific scenario, as many laws often were, but even considered policy was fundamentally reactive. Julian's pagan legislation, the rise in Christian persecution under his rule, and the anti-Christian sentiment which was free to flourish were combatted by Valentinian via his issuing of these laws; all of which contributed to what Kahlos has described as "the atmosphere of 'tolerance' and compromise on the level of everyday life" in the 360s and 370s.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Kahlos (2009), 58-9.

⁹⁹ Kahlos (2009), 80-1.

¹⁰⁰ Kahlos (2007), 3-4.

The Reception of Valentinian's Religious Policy and Faith in the Historiographical Sources

Ammianus, Christianity and the Religious Tolerance of Valentinian

When Valentinian was elevated to the office of emperor in February 364, it seems likely that his Christianity was a prerequisite of his election, for the military and civilian council who convened to deliberate on the next emperor must have had at least some awareness of the religio-political implications of their decision.¹⁰¹ Ammianus, however, writing about this event at least two decades later, showed little inclination to depict the accession of Valentinian – in this respect – as a critical turning point in the course of fourth century history. Rather, as was argued in Chapter Four of this thesis, Ammianus represented Valentinian's accession as a hastily arranged affair, defined by various practicalities, firstly of character (Valentinian being less boorish than the other candidate), and secondly of location (Valentinian being more proximate to the council's location in Nicaea). There is no suggestion from Ammianus, however, that Valentinian's religious convictions held any sway over the council's decision; nor is there any Christian ceremonial depicted in the accession scene itself.¹⁰²

Ammianus' reluctance to address Valentinian's Christianity here is worth considering. When this episode is compared with Julian's accession as sole *Augustus* in Book 22 following the death of Constantius, the difference between the pious and divinely sanctioned elevation of the former and the hasty accession of Valentinian becomes more evident. Julian's first action is to consult the *haruspices* and *augures*, a distinctly pagan ritual; one explained by the emperor's strict adherence to traditional religious practices, and the ancient customs of prophesy and divination.¹⁰³ Julian's paganism is thrust into the forefront of the narrative, almost as if the narrator himself was anxious to represent the emperor's faithful, even humble, reliance on the permission of

¹⁰¹ As previously mentioned, this presumes that Zosimus is mistaken and that Salutius was not offered the purple after both Julian and Jovian's deaths.

¹⁰² Amm. 26.2.1-11.

¹⁰³ Amm. 22.1.1-3.

favourable omens. This is not to say that Ammianus' account of Valentinian is entirely free from traditional, acceptable 'superstitions':¹⁰⁴ for example, the emperor's refusal to appear on the bissextile day of February,¹⁰⁵ or his traditional nod to the spirit of Fortuna in his inaugural speech before the assembled army at Nicaea;¹⁰⁶ the same Fortuna who conferred upon Julian the title of sole emperor,¹⁰⁷ but who also, ironically, oversaw the elevation of the inexperienced and ultimately doomed Valens.¹⁰⁸ Perhaps it can be inferred from this comparison not only whom the gods favoured, but also the religious position which Ammianus himself favoured. Although it could be argued that the absence of conspicuous pagan elements in Books 26-30 says enough about Valentinian's Christianity, it is also fair to state that Ammianus clearly had no intention of exploring in detail the new emperor's religious convictions. Indeed, there is little semblance of Christianity in his account of Valentinian's reign, except in those instances where the unity and peace of the Church could be impugned by accounts of internal strife and civil violence.¹⁰⁹ It would be naïve, therefore, to assume that Ammianus' religious convictions did not have some effect on his representation of history, but it would also be too narrow to assume that his imperial portraits were defined by them. As Sabbah argued, Ammianus' glorification of the pagan emperor Julian and his condemnation of other emperors 'cannot be explained by exclusively, or even mainly, religious reasons'.¹¹⁰ In such nuances of representation, however, Barnes' argument that, 'at a conscious level, Ammianus sets out to marginalise Christianity by

¹⁰⁴ See Kahlos (2007), 93-112, for a discussion of *religio* and *superstitio* and the differences between them.

¹⁰⁵ Amm. 26.1.7.

¹⁰⁶ Amm. 26.2.9.

¹⁰⁷ Amm. 22.1.1.

¹⁰⁸ Amm. 26.2.9.

¹⁰⁹ For example, the fatal conflict between the supporters of Damasus and those of Ursinus over the bishopric of Rome.

¹¹⁰ Sabbah (2003), 69.

deliberately understating the role that Christians and Christianity played in the political history of the fourth century', seems to be borne out.¹¹¹

Where Barnes argued that Ammianus deliberately downplayed the role of Christianity, Matthews had adopted a slightly different position on Ammianus' approach to emperors and the matter of religious belief and policy, noting that

'Ammianus may...be accused of giving insufficient weight to the religious preoccupations of emperors; yet there were historiographical and stylistic grounds for this, and in the last resort, whatever omissions and distortions there may be in his narrative, in all cases but one of the emperors he discusses (the exception is Valens), he produces in his obituary notice a clear indication, noted with approval and disapproval, of the emperor's religious belief and policies.'¹¹²

Matthews' argument carries some weight, but it essentially suggests that all forms of religious belief in the *Res Gestae* were treated in more or less the same manner. In accordance with Barnes, I would disagree with this implication, although, while it is evident that Ammianus did not like Christianity, it is equally true that in Books 26-31 he does not openly criticise it. E. A. Thompson argued convincingly, however, that when Ammianus' narrative proceeded to the reign of Valentinian at the beginning of Book 26, his dislike for Christianity and the Christian emperors was silenced or at least tempered by the Christian attitudes at the court of Theodosius I in the early 390s.¹¹³ This did not necessarily preclude the historian from praising Valentinian's policy of religious tolerance in Book 30, but if Thompson and Barnes are correct in their verdicts on Ammianus' general representation of Christians and Christianity, then Thompson's belief that Ammianus' commendation of Valentinian's tolerance in Book 30 was a subdued criticism of the contemporary emperor Theodosius' policy of religious

¹¹¹ Barnes (1998), 81; cf. also 79-94 on Ammianus' (often inconsistent) attitude towards Christianity. See Hunt (1985) for a more positive view of Ammianus' representation of Christians and Christianity.

¹¹² Matthews (1989), 446.

¹¹³ Thompson (1947), 111ff.

intolerance, offers an interesting alternative motive for the historian's unlikely praise.¹¹⁴ Some scholars, however, have advocated a more straightforward interpretation of Ammianus' representation of Valentinian's religious tolerance, including Hunt, responding to Thompson, who argued that 'surely it is rather approval for a regime which did not make an issue, one way or the other, of religion and stayed out of ecclesiastical argument – a regime which was mindful of the way an emperor ought to behave in this sphere, and of the proper place of 'religion'.'¹¹⁵ While it would be fair to claim, therefore, that the motives behind Ammianus' representation of Valentinian's religious policy were debatable, it is evident that it reflected accurately the imperial self-representation which was promoted by the emperor in his own legislation.

Christian Historians, and the Role of the Emperor in Ecclesiastical History

Our second major historical source for the representation of Valentinian in religious terms is found in the works of the Christian historians Tyrannius Rufinus, Paulus Orosius, Socrates Scholasticus, Salamanes Hermeios Sozomenos (Sozomen) and Theodoretos of Cyrrhus (Theodoret). With the exception of Orosius, who will be considered separately, each of these historiographical works made a significant contribution to the new sub-genre of church history which had been developed by Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea, at the beginning of the fourth century. None of these Christian historians provides an extensive nor a detailed account of Valentinian's rule, in the style of Ammianus Marcellinus, because their focus was religious affairs, a historiographical innovation which resulted in historical works quite different from the classical history of Ammianus. As was touched upon in the introduction to this chapter, Ammianus' classicising 'grand history' had been dominated by secular military and political events but, in church history, these aspects were included in the narrative only when they were deemed strictly necessary.¹¹⁶ Notwithstanding this alternative focus,

¹¹⁴ Thompson (1947), 115-16.

¹¹⁵ Hunt (1985), 199-200; cf. also Hunt (2007).

¹¹⁶ Sabbah (2003), 70-1.

the ecclesiastical histories are worth considering here because they attest to the reception of Valentinian's religious policy and faith in the years after his death. Both their distance (*circa* 25 years in the *Ecclesiastical History* of Rufinus, *circa* 70 years in the *Ecclesiastical Histories* of Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret) and their clear shift in purpose render these texts valuable sources for my study of the representation of the emperor Valentinian as a religious emperor.

Imperial representation in the ecclesiastical historians takes several key forms, all of which are conscious of the Eusebian model of Christian imperial rulership, but which were modified to accommodate Christianity's new role in public life. Christianity was no longer the religion of a persecuted minority, relegated to small, hidden churches; but one from which inhabitants of all religions demanded direction, with the emperors, from Valentinian onwards, the very embodiment of Christian rulership and the imperial example which Christian elites had long desired. In a way, Christianity did change as a result of its elevation and its widespread acceptance by the Empire's elites. Success was mitigated by the theological division which undermined the authority of the Church, and as a result Christian historians did not feel the optimistic sense of Christian unity and triumph which had permeated the work of Eusebius. Christianity became responsible for failures, both military and political, and we can read the accounts of Christian historians as windows into how these men set out to defend Christianity's visible role in late Roman society. Their candidates, recently in power, had to be seen to perform as good emperors, both relevant to their people, virtuous, and equal to those 'good' pagan emperors of the second century.

To this end, the Christianised imperial model which was first introduced in the work of bishop Eusebius of Caesarea, remained something of a standard to which subsequent Christian historians aspired. They took a more pragmatic approach than Eusebius to the principles of Christian rulership, but their representation of emperors was also shaped by their preoccupation with religious faith, and their work is therefore vital to our understanding of how Christian history sought to alter historical approaches to the imperial office. Before considering how Eusebius' successors represented Valentinian,

therefore, we must analyse the original Christian rulership model bequeathed to them by Eusebius in both his extant speeches and his ecclesiastical history.

The Eusebian Model of Christian Rulership

In his speech *In Praise of Constantine* (*LC*), delivered in the imperial palace of Constantinople on 25th July 336 in celebration of Constantine's *tricennalia*, the Christian bishop Eusebius of Caesarea set out a new model of rulership for the first Christian emperor, drawing inspiration from a variety of religious, political and cultural theories and ideas which those familiar with traditional discourses on the topic would understand.¹¹⁷ The speech is notable for the high quality of its language and imagery; one scholar has described it as teeming with 'elaborate language, a seamless texture of pagan and Christian vocabulary, studded with glittering erudition and magnificent imperial and cosmic imagery'.¹¹⁸ It is, however, its bold representation of the new Christian emperor, albeit within the traditional context of imperial panegyric, which remains this speech's most striking feature. As the contents of this speech have been extensively summarised by other scholars, it will suffice to emphasise some of the more important strains of Eusebius' representation.¹¹⁹ His topic is essentially the universal kingship of God, and the manner in which Constantine's kingship mirrors it.¹²⁰ Through the eyes of the panegyrist, we are introduced to the emperor as a philosopher-king, who is 'present everywhere and watching over everything', managing 'affairs below [on earth] with an upward gaze, to steer by the archetypal form [in heaven]'; an emperor who 'grows strong in his model of monarchic rule, which the Ruler of All has given to the race of man alone of those on earth'.¹²¹ Far then from being a lay Christian believer, Constantine is represented in a variety of prominent roles: as an exemplar to

¹¹⁷ For an English translation, see Drake (1976). See Barnes (1981), 253-5; Drake (1975); Cameron and Hall (1999), 184 on the date and occasion of this speech.

¹¹⁸ O'Meara (2005), 145.

¹¹⁹ See Drake (1976).

¹²⁰ As Eusebius himself, in fact, was to summarise the subject of the speech in his later *Life of Constantine* (*VC* 4.46).

¹²¹ Eus. *LC* 3.5. All translations of the *LC* are taken from Drake (1976).

his subjects;¹²² as the shepherd and watchman of his flock;¹²³ as an interpreter to the Word of God;¹²⁴ as the high priest of Christianity;¹²⁵ as the chief missionary;¹²⁶ and as a new prophet for a new age of Christian domination.¹²⁷ In short, Constantine is an emperor ‘invested...with a semblance of heavenly authority’,¹²⁸ whose role transcends that of an earthly administrator. The ideal of ‘the Christian emperor’, therefore, as represented in the *LC*, was to be chiefly a religious leader – the head bishop, as it were – whose rule was imbued with religious significance beyond the mere symbolic or political. Constantine is depicted as a new Moses, leading the Roman people out from the darkness of paganism and into the freedom and light of Christianity.

Eusebius’ vision is nothing if not ambitious, and while aspects of his presentation of monarchy and monotheism in the *LC* as two closely related concepts are extremely innovative, Eusebius’ theocratic ideal in essence represented the Christian adaptation of Hellenistic political philosophy.¹²⁹ Developing this idea, Glenn F. Chesnut posited that the basic form of Eusebius’ theory of rulership was ‘the same as that encountered previously in the pagan theorists of the Early Empire’, and that it represented the conflation of not one, but two major currents of thought: early Hellenistic divine kingship ideology and a more Hebraic mode of thought.¹³⁰ Timothy Barnes observed that Eusebius ‘coolly appropriates the terminology of Greek philosophy’, and that his representation of monarchy as a reflection of God’s kingship was an idea ‘not even

¹²² Eus. *LC* 3.3.

¹²³ Eus. *LC* 2.5; cf. 6.2.

¹²⁴ Eus. *LC* 2.5. Constantine the emperor is the key figure at church councils like Nicaea in 325, not the clerics or bishops. It was he who offered a creed that would be the statement of belief for all the Christians within the empire. Constantine, therefore, assumes much responsibility for the church’s success or failure; he proactively influences the church, something which some Christians did not approve of.

¹²⁵ Eus. *LC* 6.1-2.

¹²⁶ Eus. *LC* 2.5.

¹²⁷ Eus. *LC* 6.18-20.

¹²⁸ Eus. *LC* 3.5.

¹²⁹ Drake (2015), 291-93.

¹³⁰ Chesnut (1986), 141ff.

Christian', but one which 'appears to derive from Hellenistic theories of kingship'.¹³¹ Dominic J. O'Meara too noted, in summarising parts of the *LC*, that it is 'difficult to avoid reference to Plato's philosopher-kings who rule after a transcendent archetype and are contrasted by Plato with the tyrannical man'.¹³² It is not, however, only antique Neoplatonic ideas which permeate Eusebius' Christian rulership model. There are also clear similarities between Eusebian ideas about the role of the king, and those found in the Hellenistic Neopythagorean political tracts preserved by John Stobaeus.¹³³ Of course, Eusebius would have been very familiar with the reality of the former. A recent, and enduring, interpretation of Hellenistic divine kingship ideology had occurred under the non-Christian emperor Diocletian at the end of the third century, whose adoption of Eastern practices such as *proskynesis* and *adoratio* demonstrated a clear attempt by the emperor to associate himself with the model of sacral kingship which came to prominence under the Hellenistic monarchs of the fourth and third centuries BC. While some scholars have disputed this orientalising representation of Diocletian, it is indisputable that, at least to some degree, the emperor sought to distinguish his rule from that of his predecessors by carving out a new imperial model designed to enhance his own legitimacy. Eusebius was careful not to associate Constantine with pagan tradition, but elements of Diocletian's new imperial model, in particular the wearing of a diadem, were retained by the emperor Constantine.

The fact, therefore, that many of the themes and images in the *LC* were conventionally found in the genre of imperial panegyric did not dilute the potency of Eusebius' Christian message. His panegyric to Constantine was the first to represent the Roman emperor as an agent of the Christian God, and Jill Harries has noted the more traditional, and more appealing, message which lay at the heart of Eusebius' claim: that Constantine, like his predecessors, was a 'friend of God' (*φίλος θεοῦ*), but differed from them because 'he was the first to choose, and be chosen by, the right divinity as a

¹³¹ Barnes (1981), 254.

¹³² For Plato's tyrannical man, see *Republic* 571a-575a.

¹³³ Cf. Drake (2015), 291-92. For the extracts attributed by Stobaeus to 'Diotogenes', 'Ecphantus', and 'Sthenidas', see Thesleff (1965). Cf. O'Meara (2005), 145-51; Chesnut (1986), 144ff.

friend'.¹³⁴ Neither was Constantine depicted as a god in the manner that Diocletian or previous emperors had been. Eusebius consciously eschews any notion that Constantine was divine, stressing both the emperor's humanity and yearning for the heavenly kingdom.¹³⁵

As this speech was delivered in the presence of Constantine, we can surmise that the emperor at least approved of the elaborate theory of rulership which the bishop set forth.¹³⁶ At the heart of it was the emperor's relationship with God, and it was this special bond which set the emperor apart, not only from his subjects, but from all those imperial rulers who had preceded him. Eusebius makes no claims that the emperor had a link to the lineage of Christ himself, but it is clear from the Scriptural context of the speech that Eusebius instates Constantine as the rightful successor to the revered Old Testament kings David and Solomon, whose relationship with God was especially unique and whose conduct represented the epitome of the Christian kingship model.¹³⁷ Eusebius had explored a similar notion in his earlier *History of the Church*, the final edition of which was completed in 325, with some minor modifications in 326. Using the Hebrew kings of the Old Testament as his model, he propounded the idea of the monarch as the divinely-ordained representative of God on earth:

‘Thus, it was not only those honoured with the high priesthood, anointed with prepared oil for the symbol's sake, who were distinguished among the Hebrews with the name of Christ, but the kings too; for they, at the bidding of God, received the chrism from prophets and were thus made Christs in image, in that they, too, bore in themselves the patterns of the kingly, sovereign authority of the one true Christ, the divine Word who reigns over all.’

Eus. *HE* 1.3.6.

¹³⁴ *LC* 2.2; Harries (2011), 350.

¹³⁵ *LC* 5.5; 5.8.

¹³⁶ Cf. O'Meara (2005), 145, ‘...his speech must have represented at least an acceptable interpretation and justification of the Christian Emperor's long rule’.

¹³⁷ Unique for many obvious reasons, not least that David's bloodline culminated in the birth of Christ.

Eusebius' *History of the Church* was not only an earlier work but a more sober one, lacking the triumphalism and grandiose rhetoric of imperial panegyric; it is clear that his later works represented both an exaggeration and an evolution of the ideas contained within it. Constantine is not the sole focus of the *History* – unlike the *LC* and the *VC* – but it culminates in his reign. Constantine's victory over Maxentius, and finally over Licinius, brings peace to the Empire,¹³⁸ and unity to the Church.¹³⁹ With the rebuilding of destroyed churches, the success of Constantine is represented visually, and God himself is vindicated.¹⁴⁰ As a legitimate Christian emperor, Constantine participates in the blessing of Christ, although Eusebius is clear that emperors are divine agents, empowered by God, and must recognise the power and blessing bestowed upon them. For those who attempted to halt the progress of Constantine and Christianity, however, Eusebius had a very different message, citing the very words of King David in *Psalms* 146:3-4 to revile the emperor Maximinus Daia, who engaged in one of the last persecutions against Christians.¹⁴¹ While Constantine and Licinius are represented as the 'supreme rulers', Maximinus Daia, one of the 'enemies of the true religion', is deemed 'a most anti-religious, abominable and God-hated tyrant', whose power was unrighteously obtained and illegitimately wielded.¹⁴² In the legitimate emperor Constantine, therefore, Eusebius found a totem to which he could cling, and he held him up as a figurehead around whom Christians could gather their hopes and aspirations for a new Christian Empire.

It is evident that the demands of different genres very much dictated the tone and substance of their content. In the *History of the Church*, Eusebius wrote as a Christian bishop, sober in tone, humble in outlook, and earnest in his belief that the new emperor and the Roman Empire were predestined to effect the final triumph of the Christian church over its multifarious enemies. The Eusebian model, however, of Christian

¹³⁸ *HE* 10.1.

¹³⁹ *HE* 10.3.

¹⁴⁰ *HE* 10.2

¹⁴¹ *Psalms* 146:3-4, *Put not your trust in princes / In the sons of men, in whom there is no salvation.*

¹⁴² *Eus. HE* 9.10.14.

kingship which the later ecclesiastical historians inherited was not exclusively derived from the former's *History of the Church*. It was a combination of several different works and several different genres, some of which pushed the boundaries of traditional imagery, while others dealt with religious difference along conventional lines. In his *LC*, Eusebius had fused Christian ideas with a rhetoric that sat uneasily alongside notions of Christian humility, but was necessary if Christianity was to become a permanent part of an imperial system which relied on obeisance, patronage and powerful ceremonial. The *LC*, therefore, was not only a confident assertion of Christian values: it was a measure of Christian ambition, a statement of intent, and there can be little doubt that it constituted nothing less than the beginning of a redefinition of the imperial role in the fourth century. As H. A. Drake argued, 'the *LC* remains a necessary starting point for a study of the difference a Christian emperor made to the concept of monarchy in the fourth century'.¹⁴³ Eusebius expresses his confidence in the supremacy and dominance of his Christian world-view, confidence which remained, at least on paper, as strong in the minds of his literary successors. Eusebius, of course, had the luxury of not having to implement Christian policy so he had no problem using the *LC* and the later *VC* to construct what were essentially unrealistic representations of Constantine's power. We cannot expect, therefore, to read the same elaborate ideas of the *LC* and the *VC* in the more sober works of Rufinus, Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret, but there is a continuity of ideas between panegyric and history. The difference we can expect to see in these church histories of Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret are significant because we should see Christian emperors living out their Christianity confidently, which differs from Eusebius' church history. Eusebius did not have the luxury of Christian imperial examples, hence why a return to biblical characters like King David was both essential and necessary for his argument.

Like the *LC*, Eusebius' *VC* had a strong influence on the writings of the later ecclesiastical historians.¹⁴⁴ It was in this work, written after the death of Constantine,

¹⁴³ Drake (2015), 295.

¹⁴⁴ For a recent translation of the *Vita Constantini*, see Cameron and Hall (1999). For some important studies, see Cameron (2007); Barnes (1981), 261-71; Van Dam (2007), 252-316.

that Eusebius' Christian kingship model reached its final development, but it is interesting that even Eusebius' continuator Socrates thought that the bishop had obfuscated the clear demarcation which existed between the work of an imperial panegyrist and that of a church historian.¹⁴⁵ Herein lay the perils of representation, for Eusebius' VC is a text caught between panegyric and history, and one which never quite satisfies the criteria for either genre. In a way, however, the difference in genre here matters little in dealing with questions of representation. What was important was the centrality of Eusebius' ideas to the Christian historiographical tradition, and how his imperial representation provided a theoretical model which was to endure for centuries, revered by many a Christian scholar.

Recent scholarship continues to debate Eusebius' impact on the steady Christianisation of the Empire under Constantine, with some scholars convinced that his contribution was minimal and that his writings had little direct influence in the sphere of imperial religious policy. Timothy Barnes noted that Eusebius can be put in Constantine's presence on no more than four occasions, as he argued against the common assumption that Eusebius was a close advisor and confidante of the emperor.¹⁴⁶ Eusebius' importance, however, is not diminished by his contemporary impact. If anything, his representation of Constantine remains significant, both as an indicator of Christian ambition at the highest levels of the church, but also as a reminder of the confidence with which Christians sought to capitalise on the fortuitous opportunity which presented itself to them, in order to protect and guarantee their political and religious future standing. Eusebius' work was widely read by most subsequent Christian writers; for many church historians, it was their inspiration; for others, his *History of the Church* was their starting point. While Eusebius' ideas, therefore, may not have penetrated to the heart of imperial governance, his ideas, disseminated at such public forums like the Imperial Palace at Constantinople, formed a basis of representation upon which future writers could construct their own imperial portraits of Christian emperors.

¹⁴⁵ Socr. *HE* 1.1.

¹⁴⁶ Barnes (1981), 266-8. See also Cameron (1983), 83-4 and Williams (2008), 25-57.

The priest and theologian Tyrannius Rufinus, or Rufinus of Aquileia, has been called ‘the first great Church historian of the Latin Church’.¹⁴⁷ Born in 345 to an elite Christian family in the Roman town of Concordia, near Aquileia, Rufinus joined Jerome in Aquileia in 369, where they devoted themselves to the practice of asceticism under the protection and blessing of the city’s bishop Valerian.¹⁴⁸ It was during his time in this increasingly Christianised city that Rufinus was baptised by Chromatius of Aquileia and Chromatius’ brother Eusebius in 370.¹⁴⁹ Possibly inspired by the departure of Jerome to Syria with Evagrius, Rufinus too journeyed east in the early 370s.¹⁵⁰ Following a period of eight years spent studying with Didymus the Blind at Alexandria, Rufinus toured the Egyptian desert in search of ascetic teachers, before founding a monastic community in Jerusalem at his own expense.¹⁵¹ As Peter Brown argued, taking responsibility for a monastic community was one way in which elite Christians could display their wealth before the church, whilst also pursuing ‘the philosophical wisdom that truly healed the soul’.¹⁵² In 397, Rufinus returned to Italy from Palestine, and between the year 398 and his death in late 410 or early 411, he produced a significant body of Latin translations of Greek Christian texts, including those of the theologian Origen, who pioneered the application of Hellenistic philosophical thought to Christianity but whose doctrines were later considered heretical by many orthodox Christians, including Jerome.¹⁵³ Rufinus’ publication of his translation of Origen’s *De principiis* in 398/9 instigated a bitter conflict with Jerome, whose reputation for

¹⁴⁷ Van Deun (2003), 164. For Rufinus’ life and work, see Murphy’s biography (1945).

¹⁴⁸ McEachnie (2017), 44. For Rufinus’ birth-date, see Murphy (1945), 2-3.

¹⁴⁹ On Chromatius of Aquileia, see now McEachnie (2017). For Rufinus’ baptism, see Jer. *Ep.* 4.2; 4.7; also *Chron.* 247ff., with McEachnie (2017), 45.

¹⁵⁰ Indeed, Jerome’s third letter (‘To Rufinus’) encourages Rufinus to visit him in Syria.

¹⁵¹ Chin (2010), 621.

¹⁵² Brown (2012), 170-71.

¹⁵³ On the Hellenistic foundations of ecclesiastical historiography, see Mortley (1990). On Origen’s theology and its influence, see Barnes (1981), 81-105.

orthodoxy could have been tarnished by Rufinus' claim in the preface to the work that Jerome was an admirer of Origen.¹⁵⁴

By 401, Rufinus had turned his attention to the historical work which would ensure his position as a key literary figure in the development of Christian historiography in the Latin West – a Latin translation and continuation of Eusebius' *History of the Church* which was published in 402. This was a text with a clear purpose. Undertaken at the request of Bishop Chromatius of Aquileia, by whom Rufinus had been baptised, it was designed to assuage the fears of Christians in the midst of the Gothic invasions of the Italian peninsula.¹⁵⁵ Having compressed the ten books of Eusebius' surviving history into nine through various editorial decisions, Rufinus maintained his own peculiar style of translation, one which often included a clear simplification of the primary text. Rohrbacher noted that Rufinus 'got into the habit of producing paraphrases rather than literal translations', and Christensen argued that Rufinus' *interpretatio* of Eusebius' *History of the Church* was 'in actual fact an independent piece of work', such was the scale of the alterations which he had made and the digressions he had inserted.¹⁵⁶ The second part of the work – the continuation of Eusebius' *History of the Church* – constituted two new books (10 & 11), documenting the period from where Eusebius had left off (Constantine's victory over Licinius in 325) up until Theodosius I's defeat of the usurper Eugenius in 394.¹⁵⁷ Rufinus was not the first scholar to 'continue' Eusebius' *History of the Church*; that honour belonged to Gelasius of Caesarea, whose work is regrettably no longer extant. There was often thought to be a link between these continuations, and many twentieth century scholars had argued that Rufinus' continuation was merely a translation of Gelasius' Greek original, although there is

¹⁵⁴ For Rufinus and the Origenist controversy, see Clark (1992), 159-93.

¹⁵⁵ Vessey (2008), 325.

¹⁵⁶ Rohrbacher (2002), 95; Christensen (1980), 137.

¹⁵⁷ For the Latin text of Rufinus, see *Eusebius Werke*, Zweiter Band, *Die Kirchengeschichte*, Vol. 2, edited by E. Schwartz and Th. Mommsen, GCS (Leipzig, 1908). For an English translation, see *Rufinus of Aquileia. History of the Church*, translated by P. R. Amidon (The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C., 2016).

now a scholarly consensus that Rufinus' history was an original development.¹⁵⁸ While Rufinus' continuation of Eusebius, therefore, may not have been an innovation, its significance, as Vessey has stated, lay in the fact that it was the 'first significant addition to the Latin store of Christian historiography since Jerome's pioneering version of the *Chronicle* two decades earlier and would stand almost alone until joined by the *Tripartite History* compiled by Cassiodorus'.¹⁵⁹ Amidon, too, noted that 'however Rufinus's methods of translation and composition are assessed, the importance of his history is vast. It was an instant and lasting success'.¹⁶⁰ A major part of this success was its singularity, as the one complete history of the early church available in the western half of the Empire.¹⁶¹

As a contemporary of Ammianus, Rufinus' history offers an unique degree of comparability with the former's *Res Gestae*. Both men lived during the reign of Valentinian, although it is self-evident that Rufinus' view of the world in 364 as a young, Christian man (approximately twenty years old) would have been quite dissimilar to that of the more experienced 'pagan' Ammianus (approximately fifteen years his senior). Both men were, however, from elite families, and were well acquainted with the city of Rome, Ammianus famously so and Rufinus having studied grammar and rhetoric there prior to entering the monastery at Aquileia. Both men also chose to write their histories in Latin, and in doing so, it is clear that they were both composing for western, Latin-speaking audiences. However, despite these contextual similarities, the histories of Ammianus and Rufinus are fundamentally at variance, not least of all in their respective central concerns and literary purposes.

As previously argued, the central focus of Ammianus' *Res Gestae* was the figure of the emperor, and it was the military and political events of the imperial reigns which furnished the historian with the majority of his material. In seeking to locate his work

¹⁵⁸ Rohrbacher (2002), 100.

¹⁵⁹ Vessey (2008), 325.

¹⁶⁰ Amidon (2016), 14.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

within the grand tradition of Roman historiography, Ammianus employed traditional literary structures for assessing the moral quality of emperors and their suitability for office, and self-consciously made use of a wide range of *exempla* from the past in order to judge the actions of the emperor about whom he was writing. The key aim of Ammianus' *Res Gestae*, therefore, was to account for and assess the reigns of the emperors, and as has been discussed, Ammianus represented the emperor Valentinian as deficient in the traditional imperial virtues which were hallmarks of the famous 'good' emperors and, in more recent times, of the emperor Julian.

The church history of Rufinus, however, does not include an extensive nor a detailed account of Valentinian's rule. While this may seem surprising, the primary reason for this is to be sought in the knowledge that Rufinus was not writing a *Kaisergeschichte*; rather his focus was (Christian) religious affairs, a historiographical innovation which resulted in a historical work quite different from the classicising history of Ammianus. Indeed, as Sabbah observed, the secular events of imperial rule were only included in the narrative of church history when they were deemed strictly necessary.¹⁶² It is evident, therefore, that this divergence in historical approach would result in a narrative which was no longer transfixed solely on the figure of the emperor. Book 10, for example, of Rufinus' *Historia Ecclesiastica* was one in which a Christian bishop (Athanasius) could legitimately be the hero; his heroism found not in his embodiment of a set of traditional virtues, but in his ability to withstand great persecution and to lead the fight for Christian orthodoxy against the authorities. In this context, the emperors Julian and Valens, both represented as persecutors of Christian orthodoxy, were merely foils for extolling the virtues of Athanasius.

This preoccupation with Christian 'heroes', a feature which drew inspiration from elements of hagiography, did not preclude Christian historians from addressing the notion of 'the ideal emperor'. This remained an important concept, not least for Rufinus who saw in Theodosius I an example of Christian rulership that was worthy of imitation. It is clear, however, that the traditional criteria by which Ammianus had

¹⁶² Sabbah (2003), 70-1.

determined the meaning of 'ideal' were secondary to those set out in the work of Eusebius, the first of which, of course, was that the emperor had to be an orthodox Christian. In the history of Rufinus, there was little subtlety to the application of this model: 'bad' emperors were those who did not fit with the standard Christian notion of the ideal ruler, and that group included pagans, heretics and persecutors. As Van Deun observed, Rufinus' comparisons of emperors were 'black-and-white and over-simplified'.¹⁶³

The source of tension, therefore, in Rufinus' *HE* differs greatly from that of Ammianus' *Res Gestae*. The tension in Ammianus' final six books derives from the implicit, and explicit, comparisons between Valentinian and Valens, and the emperor Julian. With the figure of the emperor no longer central to a Christian history, Rufinus and his fellow orthodox Christian historians composed histories in which the tension derived from the sense of religious conflict that defined their collective world-view. Each historian identified an opposing force against which 'true' Christianity could struggle. For Rufinus, this conflict was essentially with the pagan cults and their representatives, like Julian; for his later counterparts Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret, Christian orthodoxy had to contend not only with paganism, but also with the rise of heresy, most prominently those doctrines which had been promulgated by the bishop Arius.

Following the initial success of Christianity under the emperor Constantine, the 'true' Nicaean faith had lost its impetus under the reigns of his successors, his Arian son Constantius II and the latter's ambitious Caesar, the polytheist Julian. In what was intended to be an account of unbroken, divinely ordained Christian triumph from Constantine to their own day, the legacy of Julian was problematic for Rufinus. One of the ways in which he dealt with Julian was by minimising his role in the narrative to what was strictly necessary for chronological accuracy, or to descriptions of events which could represent him in strongly unfavourable terms. Rufinus lingers on the figure of Julian only three times in his narrative: firstly, to describe his accession as *Augustus*,

¹⁶³ Van Deun (2003), 165.

a position which Julian had taken upon himself presumptuously;¹⁶⁴ secondly, to depict him as a religious persecutor, whose obsession with Christianity occupied his entire reign;¹⁶⁵ and thirdly, to represent him as a troublemaker in his dealings with the Jews, whom he tricked into attempting to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem.¹⁶⁶ The next time Julian's name appears in the narrative is at the beginning of Book 11, where Rufinus' use of *tandem* points to the relief he and other Christians felt upon the occasion of Julian's death:

‘After Julian's death a legitimate government was restored to us at last with Jovian; for he appeared at once as emperor, confessor, and averter of the error which had been introduced for evil.’

Rufin. *HE* 11.1.¹⁶⁷

It was not until the reign of his successor Jovian that ecclesiastical historians had an opportunity to resume the Christian imperial narrative of the fourth century. However, while Jovian's reign was favourably represented, it was almost too short to be considered worthy of significant discussion, as it did not provide a sufficient counterbalance to Julian's paganism.¹⁶⁸ It was natural, therefore, that the church historians generally took a greater interest in Valentinian because of his proximity to the pagan Julian.

Two key aspects of Valentinian's reign are reported in Book 11 of Rufinus' *HE*, and while they are all important, Rufinus does not discuss either of them in great detail.¹⁶⁹ The first is Valentinian's accession (§ 2, ‘*Valentinianus imperium suscepit*’); this section follows directly after an opening *caput* which mentions the reign of Julian and

¹⁶⁴ Rufin. *HE* 10.27-8.

¹⁶⁵ Rufin. *HE* 10.33-7.

¹⁶⁶ Rufin. *HE* 10.38-40.

¹⁶⁷ Rufin. *HE* 11.1, *Post Iuliani necem tandem civile nobis Ioviani reparatur imperium: is namque sub uno eodemque tempore imperator et confessor et male inlati extitit depulsor erroris.*

¹⁶⁸ In Rufinus' *HE*, one chapter (11.1).

¹⁶⁹ The period of Valentinian's reign spans a mere 12 chapters of Book 11's 33 chapters.

the virtue of Jovian, part of whose accession speech to the army is included, the army who had been ‘profaned by Julian’s sacrilegious acts’ (§ 1, ‘*exercitum Iuliani sacrilegiis prophanatum*’). Rufinus represents Valentinian’s accession at § 2 as a God-given reward for his display of Christian faith under Julian, in accordance with the teachings of the Bible.¹⁷⁰ To what extent this episode is true has been the subject of scholarly debate, but it is included in Rufinus’ narrative here both to encourage his audience of Christians in the west and to attest to the fact that Valentinian was an earnest Christian before he assumed the imperial office.¹⁷¹ This was one key element in which all of the Nicene Christian historians who documented the reign of the emperor Valentinian, although they differed on some biographical details, found general consensus, with Rufinus, Orosius, Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret all retailing versions of this same incident to substantiate the sincerity of the emperor’s Christian faith.¹⁷²

The reported incident took place when Valentinian was serving as a tribune in Gaul. According to our sources, one day Julian went to the temple to offer the customary incense, accompanied by his tribune, in accordance with an ancient Roman custom;¹⁷³ on entering the temple, the pagan priest sprinkled ritual water, possibly by accident, on Valentinian’s robe, which provoked the latter to rebuke the priest before either tearing off the cloak on which the water had fallen¹⁷⁴ or striking the priest¹⁷⁵ or perhaps both. Julian, privately enraged at this incident, banished Valentinian to Melitine in Armenia,¹⁷⁶ or to a fortress in the desert,¹⁷⁷ under the pretext of a serious military

¹⁷⁰ For the event, cf. Socr. *HE* 4.1.8, Soz. *HE* 6.6.3-6, Philost. *HE* 7.7, 8.5, Theod. *HE* 3.16, Oros. *Hist.* 7.32.2. For the reliability of their information, see Woods (1998) and Lenski (2002a).

¹⁷¹ See previous note.

¹⁷² Cf. also Philost. *HE* 7.7; Zos. 4.2.2.

¹⁷³ Soz. *HE* 6.6. According to Philostorgius, the emperor Julian, being aware of Valentinian’s Christianity, had previously tried, unsuccessfully, to detach him from his faith (Philost. *HE* 7.7).

¹⁷⁴ Soz. *HE* 6.6.

¹⁷⁵ Theod. *HE* 3.16.

¹⁷⁶ Soz. *HE* 6.6; or possibly to Thebes in Egypt (Philost. *HE* 7.7).

¹⁷⁷ Theod. *HE* 3.16.

misdemeanour. Socrates offered a slightly different account, claiming that Valentinian had refused to sacrifice, and so proved his faith under Julian but never actually left the service.¹⁷⁸ While Rufinus does not provide specific details of the incident itself, he reports very clearly that Julian had expelled Valentinian from the service because of his faith.¹⁷⁹

The imperial office itself was represented by Rufinus as Valentinian's reward for his confession of faith, a detail which marked out the emperor's accession as divinely ordained. Valentinian's actions, however, had not only made him worthy to be emperor; they also marked him out as a fellow Christian sufferer. Via an allusion to the Gospel of Mark on the reward for persecuted Christian believers, Rufinus associated Valentinian with fellow Christians who had previously suffered for their faith.¹⁸⁰

‘But the Lord fulfilled in him what he had promised, restoring him in the present age even more than *a hundredfold*; for because he had left the service for the sake of Christ, he received the empire.’

Rufin. *HE* 11.2.¹⁸¹

The historian, therefore, aligned the emperor with all those Christian believers who had been persecuted for their faith under Julian, but who had later received a reward commensurate with their suffering. This was concordant with Rufinus' view of the Christian faith in his *HE* more generally, which, as Amidon observed, was defined by

¹⁷⁸ Socr. *HE* 4.1; cf. 3.13, and Oros. *Hist.* 7.32.1-3.

¹⁷⁹ Rufin. *HE* 11.2.

¹⁸⁰ Mark 10:29-30, ‘And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, // But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.’ (KJV) Cf. Amidon (2016), 302, n. 3.

¹⁸¹ Rufin. *HE* 11.2, *sed complevit in illo dominus quod promisit, plus etiam quam centuple in praesenti saeculo restituens ei: nam quia militiam pro Christo reliquerat, recepit imperium*. Emphasis in translation mine.

a number of important criteria, including the rhythm of persecution and respite that had characterised the history of the church since its inception.¹⁸² By depicting this process of persecution and reward at an imperial level, Rufinus perhaps hoped to signal the return of true Christian belief to the imperial office following the reigns of Constantius and Julian.

The second area of Valentinian's reign which Rufinus comments upon is the security and stability which the former's governance brought to the Empire:

‘In the west, meanwhile, Valentinian, his religious faith untarnished, was ruling the state with the vigilance traditional to Roman government.’

Rufin. *HE* 11.9.

Again, Rufinus mentions the faith of the emperor, this time in the context of the Empire's division into separate areas of rule. In § 2, Rufinus had introduced Valens, with a pointed reference to his persecution of orthodox Christians:

‘He [Valentinian] took as his partner in government his brother Valens, choosing for himself the west while he left the east to him. But Valens went off in his fathers' path by supporting the heretics. He sent bishops into exile and while Tatian was governing Alexandria went so far as to hand over presbyters, deacons, and monks to torture and to the flames, and plotted many wicked and cruel deeds against God's church.’

Rufin. *HE* 11.2.

Given that the persecutions of Valens and their consequences occupy much of the following seven chapters, the implication of Rufinus' statement at § 9 is evidently that Valentinian's adherence to the Nicæan doctrines of Christianity equated to a stability in the western half of the Empire which was simply unattainable for the Arian heretic

¹⁸² Amidon (2016), 8.

Valens. Moreover, when trouble in the west does arise, it is no surprise that it originates in Milan in 374, where the homoean bishop Auxentius had recently died and where the population was apparently divided into feuding Catholic and Arian factions (§ 11).¹⁸³ In Rufinus' report – the first formal account of Ambrose's election – Ambrose, when he saw that the city was 'on the brink of destruction' as a result of the in-fighting over who would replace Auxentius, entered the church in order to calm the riot.¹⁸⁴ Following his delivery of a lengthy speech calling for calm, the people were instantly united in their request that Ambrose himself be appointed bishop. When Ambrose resisted,

'...the people's wish was communicated to the emperor, who ordered it to be fulfilled with all speed. For it was thanks to God, he said, that this sudden conversion had recalled the diverse religious attitudes and discordant views of the people to a single viewpoint and attitude.'

Rufin. *HE* 11.11.

Rufinus' representation of Valentinian in this passage is of an emperor willing to intervene in church affairs when called upon to do so. By expressing his approval of the people's request, Valentinian demonstrated, in Rufinus' view, his piety, his orthodoxy, and his respect for the wishes of a united *populus*.

In Rufinus' *Church History*, the emperor Valentinian is represented as an earnest Christian, who had proven both the sincerity of his Christian faith under Julian, and the orthodoxy of his beliefs during his reign. Rufinus, interestingly, makes no reference to the official policy of religious tolerance which was promoted in the imperial legislation of Valentinian, and included as a key virtue in Ammianus' necrology of the emperor, despite the fact that he must have been aware of it. By omitting it, however, Rufinus removed uncertainty from the political and religious landscape of his history, and shaped for his readers a representation of the emperor Valentinian which was black and

¹⁸³ Barnes (2002), 236 stated that there is no evidence for the relative strength of either faction.

¹⁸⁴ Amidon (2016), 453, n. 25.

white, and which showed the emperor's primary concern to be his Christian faith.¹⁸⁵ Indeed, on the whole, the treatment of Valentinian's religious policy and faith in Rufinus' history is positive, if relatively minor in comparison to the treatment afforded the reign of the contemporary emperor, Theodosius I.

Valentinian in Orosius' Historiae Adversum Paganos (AD 416/7)

Following the barbarian invasions of 406 and the Gothic sack of Rome four years later, the Christian bishop Augustine began the composition of one of his most influential works, *De Civitate Dei*, which was completed by c. 427. This work was designed to be a considered response to those pagans who sought to blame Christianity for the disaster in the West, but also a rebuttal to the long-held notion, of which Eusebius was a leading proponent, that Christianity would move towards its destiny in tandem with and under the aegis of the Roman Empire.¹⁸⁶ In Augustine's view, the invasions had shown Rome to be like all those other empires that had preceded it, destined neither to be eternal nor universal, with the seeds having been sown for a gradual and piecemeal abdication of sovereignty, in the West at least, to erstwhile foes.¹⁸⁷ In 414/5, Augustine encouraged a Spanish presbyter, Paulus Orosius, to write a history of the world which would act as a companion work to his *De Civitate Dei* and have a similar aim; namely, to show that the pagan perception of the Roman past as a period of glory and triumph was mistaken, and that Christianity offered a better alternative for the present and for the future.¹⁸⁸ Other than the general circumstances surrounding the composition of his famous *Historiae Adversum Paganos* in 416/7 (details of which are sourced from the history

¹⁸⁵ Rufin. *HE* 11.9.

¹⁸⁶ Aug. *DCD* 2.2. On the context of the *DCD*, see Mommsen (1951) and Markus (1970).

¹⁸⁷ Indeed, it became clear to Augustine, following the sack of Rome, that the Empire's social and political institutions and her Roman leaders had, as Bathory (1981), 119 states, 'by and large' failed in their task of offering guidance and encouragement. The setting out of a theoretical framework for Christian leadership until Christ's second coming was, therefore, Augustine's primary aim in the *De Civitate Dei*.

¹⁸⁸ Van Nuffelen (2012), 1. For the debate around Augustine's commissioning of Orosius' history, see Fear (2010), 7.

itself), little else is known about Orosius' life for certain, even his date and place of birth. He first appears in a letter of commendation written by Augustine to Jerome in 415.¹⁸⁹ Based on statements from Augustine about his subject's youth, Fear inferred Orosius' date of birth to be around 385, and from his 'evident pride' in Spanish history, that he was indeed a native of Spain.¹⁹⁰ Following the barbarian invasions of Spain in 409, Orosius is believed to have fled to North Africa soon after (possibly in 411), where he made Augustine's acquaintance, before travelling to Palestine via Egypt where he met up with Jerome, whose *Chronicon* was to be a major source for his *Historiae*.¹⁹¹ He returned to North Africa for the Council of Carthage in 416, and after a brief visit to Spain, returned again to North Africa where he wrote his *Historiae*.¹⁹² There is no more information about his life thereafter.

The *Historiae* was an ambitious attempt to recast the entirety of human history in Christian terms. His audience was the same as that of Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*: elite Romans with Christian sympathies who had fled Rome after its sack in 410.¹⁹³ Despite the influence exerted by Orosius' work, even into the Middle Ages, his reputation as a historian is generally poor, although arguments that his *Historiae* is mostly derivative or polemical have generally been rebutted by several important works of recent scholarship.¹⁹⁴ So how did Orosius' history differ from that of the ecclesiastical historians? Well, Victoria Leonard, in a recent doctoral thesis, captured succinctly what Orosius had created in his history when she stated that:

‘In the absence of a more appropriate label, the *Historiae* can be categorised as ‘sacredizing’ history, in the appropriation and reworking of secular classical history into a new form of Christian universal history. The main aim of the

¹⁸⁹ Augustine, *Letter* 166 = PL 33 720-21; *CSEL* 44 547-48.

¹⁹⁰ Fear (2010), 2.

¹⁹¹ Fear (2010), 3-4.

¹⁹² Fear (2010), 5.

¹⁹³ Van Nuffelen (2012), 1.

¹⁹⁴ E.g. Van Nuffelen (2012), Leonard (2014), who also has a monograph forthcoming on Orosius. On the influence of Orosius' work in the Middle Ages, see, for example, Ward (2014).

Historiae as a prototype of historiography is to demonstrate the influence of the Christian God on all of history. ‘Sacred’ history is often used as a synonym for ecclesiastical history in the tradition of Eusebius of Caesarea, Sulpicius Severus, or Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret, who emphasised the importance of ecclesiastical affairs and Christianity as defined by the institution of the Christian Church...The genre that Orosius creates cannot be described as ecclesiastical history as the *Historiae* almost completely elides the ecclesiastical institution of the Church. Instead Orosius focuses on the secular and political...The importance of the work cannot be overlooked; the engagement of a Christian work with secular history was unique for its time.’¹⁹⁵

In this unique amalgamation of historiographical philosophies, we would perhaps expect to find Orosius’ representation of Valentinian quite different from both Ammianus’ view and that of the ecclesiastical historians, given the increased focus on the secular and political events, viewed from a Christian perspective. Like Rufinus, however, Orosius opens his account of Valentinian’s reign by relating his conflict with the emperor Julian during the latter’s service in the army. According to the historian, ‘that sacrilegious emperor’ Julian ordered Valentinian to sacrifice to idols or leave the service, but Valentinian

‘knew as a true believer that God’s judgements are more severe and His promises better than an emperor’s...[so he] left the service of his own free will.’

Oros. *Hist.* 7.32.2.¹⁹⁶

Again, the image of Julian as a Christian persecutor brings into stark relief the representation of Valentinian as a ‘true believer’. In the previous chapter, Orosius, drawing much of his information from Jerome’s *Chronicon*, noted how Julian had

¹⁹⁵ Leonard (2014), 84.

¹⁹⁶ All translations of Orosius’ *Historiae* are taken from Fear (2010).

‘attacked the Christian faith more through cunning than violence, trying to lure men with honours rather than force them by torture to deny the faith of Christ and take up the worship of idols. He openly decreed that no Christian could be a teacher of the liberal arts, but, as we have learnt from our forefathers, almost everywhere where all those affected by this chose to abandon their office rather than their faith.’

Oros. *Hist.* 7.30.2.

In Orosius’ view, Julian had employed the state as an instrument of persecution against Christians, by denying them what could be considered basic privileges; although, just as Rufinus had argued, Orosius also argued that such persecution only strengthened the resolve of the Empire’s Christian population.¹⁹⁷ It was important, however, for Orosius’ philosophy of history that the narrative of Julian’s general persecution was juxtaposed with his discrimination against the future emperor Valentinian. Not only was Valentinian’s display of faith representative of the increasing Christianisation or sacralisation of the imperial office – the culmination of which was, of course, the depiction of Theodosius as saintly and Christ-like¹⁹⁸ – but, by presenting the persecution of Valentinian alongside that of ordinary Christian believers, Orosius reinforced the idea that Roman unity and harmony were only attainable goals when there was a shared religious identity and experience between the emperor and the Empire, between the ruler and the ruled.

Indeed, under the governance of a Christian emperor, the Empire no longer facilitated persecution, but acted as a refuge for those experiencing it. When Athanaric, the king of the Goths, brutally persecuted Christian believers amongst his own people, Orosius told how ‘many more fled, because they confessed Christ, to Roman soil. They did not come trembling, as if to enemies, but with confidence because they were coming to their brothers’.¹⁹⁹ Orosius even argued that Valentinian’s ability to limit persecution

¹⁹⁷ Oros. *Hist.* 7.30.2-3. Cf. Rufin. *HE* 11.4-9.

¹⁹⁸ Leonard (2014), 158.

¹⁹⁹ Oros. *Hist.* 7.32.10.

against Christians extended to his own family, since it was his authority which checked the actions of the infamous persecutor Valens; for

‘...he [Valens] was mindful how much power Valentinian could wield to avenge the faith as an emperor, when he had showed such constancy in keeping it as a soldier.’

Oros. *Hist.* 7.32.7.

There is no evidence in Orosius’ history of the official toleration which was a key feature of both Valentinian’s own legislation, and Ammianus’ representation of Valentinian’s religious policy. Rather Orosius’ representation finds more in common with that of the Christian historian Rufinus, although the former does not eschew the secular and political events of the emperors’ reigns in the same manner as the latter. Notwithstanding this difference in historiographical approach, Orosius’ representation of Valentinian centres on the theme of religious persecution, a *topos* which was of particular interest to a Nicene Christian historian given its relevance in the context of Julian’s paganism, Valens’ heresy, and their respective persecutions of Nicene Christians. Valentinian, therefore, is depicted by Orosius as an earnest Nicene Christian, who had suffered persecution under Julian, and who actively contributed towards efforts to limit Christian persecution by opening the Empire up as a refuge for sufferers and by harnessing the actions of his heretical sibling. In his representation of Valentinian as a proactive Christian emperor, and as a true *Fidei Defensor*, there can be little doubt that Orosius, like Rufinus, wanted to foreshadow his contemporary Theodosius by depicting the latter as the culmination of the Christianisation of the imperial office over the course of the fourth century.

*Valentinian in the Eastern Church Histories of Socrates (c. AD 438-43), Sozomen (c. AD 443) and Theodoret (c. AD 441-9)*²⁰⁰

Our final three sources in which the representation of Valentinian as a religious emperor will be considered are the Eastern church histories of Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret. The evidence of these sources is included in this chapter because, although they were composed in a much later, and very different, political context to those of Ammianus, Rufinus and Orosius, they both reinforce and develop further the image of Valentinian found in our other sources; of particular interest is their representation of Valentinian as a tolerant ruler, a description which was last seen in the *Res Gestae* of Ammianus.

Socrates Scholasticus, a lawyer by profession, was born in Constantinople in c. 380.²⁰¹ At the request of a certain Theodorus, Socrates decided to write a new church history.²⁰² As Chesnut noted, the termination date of his *HE* was 439, and given Socrates' profession, it is not unlikely that he designed this to accord with the date in which the *Theodosian Code* took effect, 1st January 439.²⁰³ It has even been suggested that Socrates may have worked on the project in some secondary role.²⁰⁴ Like Socrates, Sozomen was also a lawyer in Constantinople, and at approximately the same time as the former. He was, however, not a native of the city, but was rather of Palestinian origin. While Chesnut has called the ecclesiastical history of Sozomen a 'genuinely critical piece of historiography', he also noted that Sozomen 'apparently made heavy and completely unacknowledged use of a copy of Socrates' history'.²⁰⁵ Our third source, Theodoret, born c. 393 in Antioch, is better known as a theologian. Having been appointed bishop of Cyrrhus in 423, he served three decades in his see, and commenced

²⁰⁰ For all of these dates, see Chesnut (1981).

²⁰¹ For the following information on the lives of these three historians, I am greatly indebted to G. F. Chesnut's classic *The First Christian Histories* (1986).

²⁰² Socr. *HE* 2.1; 6. intro; 7.48.

²⁰³ Chesnut (1986), 176-7.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ Chesnut (1986), 205-6. Cf. also Urbainczyk (1997).

the composition of his church history sometime between 441 and 449. By as early as the late sixth century, all three of these texts had become the great classics of Christian historiography, as the historian Evagrius made clear in the preface to his own *Church History*.²⁰⁶ As historians, they were linked by more than just their common subject matter; like Rufinus above, they also followed in the Eusebian tradition, and regarded themselves as successors and continuators of Eusebius' influential and innovative *History of the Church*.²⁰⁷ As Leppin argued, 'it is evident that all three Church historians...consider themselves to be true followers of Eusebius, and rightly so'.²⁰⁸ As the three most important later successors to Eusebius, the church histories of Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret display the further development of the Eusebian historiographical tradition in the fifth century.²⁰⁹

As previously discussed, for Eusebius, the Christian Roman state of the early fourth century was the pinnacle of human civilisation, the climax of centuries of historical progress, that would endure until the end of the world. With the sack of Rome in 410, however, and the western Empire's subsequent disintegration, Augustine reinterpreted the entire Eusebian understanding of history, an interpretation which was not accepted by the church historians Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret.²¹⁰ By the mid-fifth century, when the Greek historians were writing, the Nicene creed to which they all adhered had overcome any credible opposition to become the dominant creed of the Empire. The manner in which church historians represented emperors and imperialism had shifted, inevitably so, as the result of a century of religious conflict and a change in the context within which they were writing. The youthful exuberance which permeated Eusebius' church history had been tempered by political reality. This realisation did not preclude

²⁰⁶ Evag. *HE* 1. pref.; cf. 5.24.

²⁰⁷ Leppin (2003), 253.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ For the relationship of Eusebius to the Greek church historians, see Chesnut (1986), 199; cf. also Hartmut Leppin's article in G. Marasco's edited volume *Greek and Roman Historiography in Late Antiquity* (2003), 219-54.

²¹⁰ Chesnut (1986), 215, 'Neither Sozomen, Socrates nor Theodoret make any mention of Augustine's name at any point in their histories.'

the church historians from representing faithful Christian emperors as superior to both their predecessors and their rivals in power, but it did imbue their work with a greater awareness of Christianity's tenuous success and the need to 'continue' the development of Christian history. After all, pagan historians like Ammianus appeared to have been intent on minimising the impact of Christianity during the fourth century.²¹¹

The predominant representation of the emperor Valentinian which emerged from the historiographical accounts of Socrates and Sozomen converged upon the notion of religious tolerance, as did Valentinian's official legislation and Ammianus' *Res Gestae*, but more specifically that of the tolerant and/or impartial layman. They described the emperor as tolerant in his dealings with both the Arians and pagans. Socrates observed that, while Valentinian 'favoured those who agreed with him in sentiment, [he] offered no violence to the Arians'.²¹² Socrates also highlighted Valentinian's reputation for religious impartiality later in his Book 4 when he described the plight of the Macedonians, who in danger of persecution had resolved to send 'deputations to one another from city to city, declaring the necessity of appealing to the emperor's brother [Valentinian]'.²¹³ Furthermore, Sozomen wrote that the emperor 'considered...ecclesiastical matters...beyond the range of his jurisdiction', and that he 'never imposed any commands upon the priests, nor ever attempted to introduce any alteration for better or for worse in ecclesiastical regulations'.²¹⁴ Sozomen also

²¹¹ Barnes (1998), 79-94.

²¹² Socr. HE 4.1.12-13, Οὐαλεντινιανὸς γὰρ τοὺς μὲν οἰκείους συνεκρότει, τοῖς δὲ Ἀρειανίζουσιν οὐδαμῶς ἦν ὀχληρὸς, Οὐάλης δὲ Ἀρειανοὺς αὐξῆσαι προαιρούμενος δεινὰ κατὰ τῶν μὴ τοιαῦτα φρονούντων εἰργάσατο, ὡς προῖὼν ὁ τῆς ἱστορίας δηλώσει λόγος.

²¹³ Socr. HE 4.12.2, Οἱ δὲ φόβῳ μᾶλλον ἢ βίᾳ στενοχωρούμενοι κατὰ πόλεις διεπρεσβεύοντο πρὸς ἀλλήλους δηλοῦντες δεῖν ἐξ ἀνάγκης καταφεύγειν ἐπὶ τε τὸν ἀδελφὸν τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ ἐπὶ Λιβέριον τὸν Ρώμης ἐπίσκοπον, ἀσπάζεσθαι τε τὴν ἐκείνων πίστιν μᾶλλον ἢ κοινωνεῖν τοῖς περὶ Εὐδόξιον.

²¹⁴ Soz. HE 6.21.7, ὡς ἐπίπαν δὲ πᾶς κληρὸς ἐπειράθη διὰ ταῦτα τῆς τοῦ βασιλέως ὀργῆς, πλὴν τῶν πρὸς ἐσπέραν τῆς ἀρχομένης ἐκκλησιῶν, καθότι τῶν ἐπέκεινα Ρωμαίων ἤρχεν Οὐαλεντινιανός, ἐπαινέτης τε ὦν τοῦ δόγματος τῆς ἐν Νικαίᾳ συνόδου καὶ εὐλαβῶς εἰσάγαν περὶ τὸ θεῖον ἔχων, ὡς μήτε ἐπιτάττειν τοῖς ἱερεῦσι μηδὲν μήτε ἄλλως αἰρεῖσθαι νεωτερίζειν ἐπὶ χεῖρονι ἢ ἀμείνονι δοκοῦντι περὶ τοὺς τῆς ἐκκλησίας θεσμούς· τάδε γὰρ κρεῖττω τῆς αὐτοῦ δοκιμασίας ἡγεῖτο, καίπερ βασιλεὺς ἄριστος γεγονὼς καὶ ἱκανὸς ἄρχειν διὰ τῶν πραγμάτων ἀναφανείς.

explored Valentinian's neutrality when he described an episode in which the emperor, as he passed through Thrace on his way to Milan, was stopped by a deputation of Nicene bishops who requested the emperor's presence at a council to deliberate on questions of doctrine. Valentinian responded with the words: 'I am but one of the laity, and have therefore no right to interfere in these transactions: let the bishops, to whom such matters ascertain, assemble where they please'.²¹⁵ This representation echoed the evidence of the *Theodosian Code* and accords with the essence of Ammianus Marcellinus' portrayal discussed previously.

Contra this representation of imperial impartiality, however, sits a letter and a creedal document found in the *HE* of Theodoret, both supposedly written by Valentinian and addressed to the dioceses of Asia. In the document, the emperor explicitly forbade the Arian party from persecuting the orthodox adherents of the Nicene creed, stating that

'the council assembled in Illyria have declared after a prolonged and accurate examination of the subject, that the Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost are the same substance...We have ordered this doctrine to be preached...We condemn those who hold other opinions.'

Theod. *HE* 4.8.

In the letter, the emperor also asserted the veracity of the Nicene creed:

'It is our imperial will that this Trinity be preached, so that none may say 'We accept the religion of the sovereign who rules this world without regard to Him who has given us the message of salvation,' for, as says the gospel of our God which contains this judgment, 'we should render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's.'

Theod. *HE* 4.7.

²¹⁵ Soz. *HE* 6.7.2, προσελθόντος δὲ αὐτοῦ καὶ τὰ παρὰ τῶν ἐπισκόπων διδάξαντος ὑπολαβὼν Οὐαλεντινιανός «ἐμοὶ μὲν», ἔφη, «μετὰ λαοῦ τεταγμένῳ οὐ θέμις τοιαῦτα πολυπραγμονεῖν· οἱ δὲ ἱερεῖς, οἷς τούτου μέλει, καθ' ἑαυτοὺς ὅπῃ βούλονται συνίτωσαν.»

Some scholars have dismissed the letter as fictitious. Tomlin, for instance, claimed that it could be ‘safely ignored’,²¹⁶ but others like Barnes have cited the letter as evidence of Valentinian’s more active role in ecclesiastical politics.²¹⁷ On the basis of an analysis of the creedal document’s ‘theological formulations’, Barnes concluded that Valentinian ‘must be the author of the letter’.²¹⁸ It does, however, seem unlikely. As David Hunt argued, the letter ‘is certainly unlike any other fourth-century imperial correspondence in its plethora of scriptural quotations and allusions; the context in Theodoret also places it in suspicious proximity to a manifestly fictional version of Valentinian’s involvement in the election of Ambrose’.²¹⁹ As previously argued, Rufinus also represented Valentinian as intervening decisively in the case of Ambrose’s election to the see of Milan. If this letter is indeed spurious, it is significant, but not entirely unsurprising, that Theodoret represented the emperor as an active supporter of the cause of the Eastern Nicenes in the face of Arian persecution, because this aligns with the theme of Nicene Christian triumph which permeates his entire history. As Chesnut observed, ‘the principal object of theological attack in his [Theodoret’s] work was in fact the Arian movement’.²²⁰ Valentinian’s general attitude of religious tolerance is also withheld from Theodoret’s account – unlike Socrates and Sozomen – an omission which reflects what Allen called the ‘dogmatic and polemical, rather than apologetic or historical’ nature of the historian’s work.²²¹ Theodoret’s preoccupation with the Arian heresy demanded a stronger representation of Valentinian’s Nicene beliefs, and the exclusion of any elements which could be perceived as ambiguous in a religious sense, even to the point where he altered information taken from the histories of Socrates and Sozomen, as Rohrbacher observed.²²² As discussed previously, Theodoret was not entirely innovative in this respect.

²¹⁶ Tomlin (1973), 413.

²¹⁷ Barnes (2002).

²¹⁸ Barnes (2002), 234.

²¹⁹ Hunt (2007), 89.

²²⁰ Chesnut (1986), 210.

²²¹ Allen (1987), 377.

²²² Rohrbacher (2002), 132, ‘Even when Theodoret uses information from Socrates or Sozomen, he often freely alters it in order to highlight the moral or doctrinal point he wishes to make.’

In chapter 2 of Book 11 of his history, Rufinus had represented Valentinian's accession as a God-given reward for his display of Christian faith under Julian. While versions of this event feature in all of the ecclesiastical histories, Socrates' account stands out for its emphasis on the emperor's genuine Christian conviction. Having been asked to perform a pagan sacrifice by the emperor Julian,

‘...it at once became evident to all, who were the real Christians, and who were merely nominal ones. Such as were Christians in integrity of heart, very readily resigned their commission, choosing to endure anything rather than deny Christ. Of this number were Jovian, Valentinian, and Valens, each of whom afterwards became emperor.’

Socr. *HE* 3.13.²²³

It seems a fair inference that Socrates, like Rufinus, and indeed Orosius, intended to draw a connection between the emperor's principled stance and his later elevation to the purple. Theodoret made this connection between Valentinian's actions under Julian and his accession to the imperial office even more explicit:

²²³ Socr. *HE* 3.13, αὐτίκα γοὺν ὡς ἐν χωνευτηρίῳ οἱ τε ὄντες Χριστιανοὶ καὶ οἱ νομιζόμενοι φανεροὶ πᾶσιν ἐγίνοντο· οἱ μὲν γὰρ ὀρθῇ γνώμῃ χριστιανίζοντες εὐθυμότεροι τὴν ζώνην ἀπετίθεντο, πάντα μᾶλλον ὑπομένειν ἢ ἀρνεῖσθαι τὸν Χριστὸν αἰρούμενοι (ἐν τούτοις ἦσαν Ἰοβιανός, Οὐαλεντινιανός τε καὶ Οὐάλης οἱ καὶ ὕστερον βασιλεύσαντες).

‘As Valentinian walked before the emperor, he noticed that a drop had fallen on his own cloak and gave the attendant a blow with his fist, “for,” said he, “I am not purified but defiled.” For this deed he won two empires. On seeing what had happened Julian the accursed sent him to a fortress in the desert, and ordered him there to remain, but after the lapse of a year and a few months he received the empire as a reward for his confession of the faith, for not only in the life that is to come does the just Judge honour them that care for holy things, but sometimes even here below He bestows recompense for good deeds, confirming the hope of guerdons yet to be received by what he gives in abundance now.’

Theod. *HE* 3.16.

Given the inconsistency of the evidence, it is not surprising that some scholars dismiss this story as fiction, especially in view of Valentinian’s Nicene faith and his elevated status as the founder of an imperial dynasty. John Matthews argued that ‘the story told by the ecclesiastical historians of his dismissal and exile for crossing Julian on a religious matter can safely be ignored’.²²⁴ Roger Tomlin too outright dismissed the story as apocryphal, while Noel Lenski argued that this story should be regarded with ‘extreme scepticism’.²²⁵ Presumably this assessment is based to some degree on the evidence of Ammianus, who stated that Valentinian, alongside the tribune Bainobaudes, was actually dismissed by the emperor Constantius, thereby implying that Valentinian was simply another unfortunate victim of imperial politics at that time.²²⁶ Scholars who accept Ammianus’ version as a reliable record of events would indeed doubt the veracity of the church historians’ accounts, as it could no doubt be simply a construct of *homoousian* scholars who wanted simultaneously to tarnish the ‘apostate’ Julian’s reputation and praise Valentinian’s strength of faith. Some scholars have, however, treated the story as factual truth;²²⁷ indeed, given Ammianus’ proven

²²⁴ Matthews (1975), 34.

²²⁵ Tomlin (1973), 13-16; Lenski (2002a), 254.

²²⁶ Amm. 16.11.6-7.

²²⁷ Woods (1995); Olariu (2005), 372. Cf. Barnes (1998), 52.

shortcomings as a reliable and impartial historical record,²²⁸ it would be ill-advised not to take into consideration the possibility that the story had at least some basis of truth. It could be argued that, regardless of the facts, Ammianus' partiality towards the emperor Julian would have precluded him from including in his history a story which not only represented his hero unfavourably, but also reflected favourably on the character of an emperor of whom he disapproved. The fact that Zosimus, a pagan scholar like Ammianus, and Philostorgius, an Arian, also cite the story, attests to its widely accepted nature and confirms that it was not exclusive to orthodox Christians who sought to venerate Valentinian after his death, as Ammianus did Julian. Ambrose also alludes to Valentinian's display of faith under Julian, which suggests that the story may have at least some historical basis.²²⁹

All of the Christian historians represented Valentinian as a earnest Christian, a Christian on principle and not because it was politically expedient to be so, when he attained sovereign power in 364. It seems to have been a matter of concern to the church historians that the polytheism of Julian was depicted as an unfortunate blip in the history of the Christian emperors. With the accession of Jovian, it seems natural that church historians were anxious to return to a narrative of Christian triumph. Theodoret's portrayal of the Christian emperor Jovian, in discussing the emperor's brief reign, as 'too good for life' was an extreme representation of the emperor, but one which highlighted how keen the church historians were to provide their audience with evidence of a clear Christian heritage, but also to present contemporary emperors with faithful Christian predecessors worthy of imitation.²³⁰ Their common depiction of Valentinian as a principled Christian early in his military career can also tell us more about their attempts to represent the ineluctable nature of the Empire's Christian destiny, and about the kind of religious conviction which they expected of its commander-in-chief. As historians writing from the perspective of Christian hegemony

²²⁸ Alföldi (1952), 3.

²²⁹ Ambrose, *De ob. Val. Con. 55, adest pater qui militiam sub Iuliano et tribunatus honores fidei amore contempsit.*

²³⁰ Theod. *HE* 4.4.

and safety, everything following Valentinian's reign (since he was the first emperor to make a real difference following Julian's pagan revolution) is in Christianity's favour, and even the Arianism of his brother Valens cannot blacken the positivity of Valentinian's representation in these texts.

The histories of Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret have a natural disposition towards events in the eastern half of the Empire, which meant that their concern was more with the actions of Valens than those of Valentinian. Lenski attempted to dispel some of the inaccuracies which surrounded the latter's reign, and to understand how and why the emperor was represented in the way that he was. He claimed, and rightly so, that Valens was 'an ordinary man' confronted by an 'extraordinary challenge – the challenge of empire – [which he] ultimately failed to meet'.²³¹ The representation which has come down to us from our sources, however, was not only the result of Valens' catastrophic defeat at the Battle of Adrianople in 378; it was also the product of Valens' Arianism which has since antiquity defined, to a large extent, his poor reputation. As factual sources, bias and unreliability have led modern scholars to decry the value of the church histories; but as Barnes has convincingly shown, Ammianus is no different in this respect.²³² The difference between the Nicene faith and that of the heretical Arians is encapsulated in the contrast between the respective actions of Valentinian and Valens. It was vital to the accounts of the church historians that the *homoousian* Valentinian be represented as fundamentally different from his Arian sibling and co-emperor. In Book Four of Socrates' *Church History*, Valentinian is described as an emperor who possessed great 'skill in tactics' and who was endowed with such 'greatness of mind that he always appeared superior to any degree of honour he might have attained'.²³³ The Christian 'zeal' of both brothers is mentioned, but it is as early as the first chapter of Book Four that the contrasting faiths of the two brothers are delineated. Swiftly and succinctly, the difference between the brothers is made clear to the audience. Valentinian is depicted as favouring those who agreed with the Nicene creed, but he

²³¹ Lenski (2002), xi.

²³² Barnes (1998).

²³³ Socr. *HE* 4.7.

‘offered no violence to the Arians’, in line with the official imperial policy previously discussed. Valens, however, was a persecutor for the Arian creed, who had fallen under the influence of Eudoxius, the Arian bishop of Constantinople, and who ‘grievously disturbed’ those of the Nicene faith.²³⁴

In order to depict the emperor Valentinian as different from his brother Valens, Socrates focuses on a number of key events and uses a number of important strategies. Firstly, he includes numerous chapters on the persecutions which Valens enacted on the *homoousian* believers, which become increasingly violent, and contrasts it with Valentinian’s flagship policy of toleration mentioned in the first chapter of Book Four.²³⁵ The difference in the brothers’ respective reputations is highlighted when those being persecuted by Valens propose an appeal to the emperor Valentinian for help.²³⁶ Secondly, he emphasises Valens’ unsuitability for the imperial office by describing a number of civil disturbances which occurred as a result of Valens’ actions; for example, the deposition of Eleusius the Macedonian by imperial edict in order to install the incompetent Arian Eunomius as the new bishop of Cyzicus.²³⁷ Thirdly, he suggests a clear link between natural disasters and Valens’ heresy, the obvious implication being that Valens’ actions had met with God’s disapproval.²³⁸ Leppin makes an interesting comparison with the favourable storm which the church historians depicted in their accounts of Theodosius I’s triumph at the Battle of the Frigidus River.²³⁹ Fourthly, he highlights the independence of Valens from his brother, making Valentinian unaccountable for the heinous actions of his sibling.²⁴⁰ Socrates even goes as far as impugning Valens’ Christian faith when he represents the emperor as deeply concerned by a pagan prediction naming his successor.²⁴¹

²³⁴ Socr. *HE* 4.1.

²³⁵ Socr. *HE* 4.2, 4.6, 4.9, 4.12, 4.15, 4.16.

²³⁶ Socr. *HE* 4.12.

²³⁷ Socr. *HE* 4.7.

²³⁸ The earthquake at *HE* 4.3; giant hail/earthquakes at *HE* 4.11.

²³⁹ Leppin (2003), 236.

²⁴⁰ Socr. *HE* 4.16.

²⁴¹ Socr. *HE* 4.19.

Following his introduction into the narrative, the emperor Valentinian is limited to sporadic appearances in the course of Socrates' work, a quality which attests to the eastern focus of the history and, despite the brothers' own concern with imperial unity, their divergence in religious belief is so stark that the brothers rarely enjoy a shared moment. Of course, Socrates and the church historians in general were aware that it was Valentinian's line which was to endure via his sons, but their focus on the eastern half of the Empire depicts the struggle which Nicene Christianity had to endure against polytheism and heresies like Arianism, a struggle which ultimately led to the deaths of many Christian martyrs and an opportunity to revel in a memorable Christian triumph under Theodosius I. It is unsurprising then that Valens should gain special attention for his actions. He becomes a target for the church historians because of his Arian belief, but he nevertheless serves an important role in the representation of the emperor Valentinian, who is often used as the point of contrast for his brother's wicked actions.

Conclusion

In the imperial legislation from his reign, Valentinian represented himself as a tolerant emperor in religious affairs, who had passed laws of religious toleration at the beginning of his rule. Valentinian's religious legislation was carefully crafted to allow universal freedom of worship but there were notable limitations to the policy, most notably the practice of 'harmful' divination. In *CTh.* 9.16.9, we come close to hearing the 'imperial voice' as the emperor issued legislation using the first person singular, a feature which stressed not only the importance of the law, but also the fact that it came directly from the mouth of the emperor. Given the recent political context of such legislation, this religious policy was no doubt a favourable development for the Empire's Christians and pagans alike, and Valentinian was evidently keen for this representation of imperial tolerance to reach as wide an audience as possible. In the work of the Christian historians, the representation of the emperor was more diverse, although unlike in the work of Ammianus, the figure of the emperor was no longer central to the historical narrative, so Valentinian's role was thus diminished. Nevertheless, the 'official' representation of 'the tolerant emperor' was favourably received in the work of Socrates and Sozomen, as it had been in the text of Ammianus Marcellinus, but Rufinus, Orosius and Theodoret made no mention of it, perhaps because it did not suit their view of an orthodox Christian emperor. Christian historians, however, were not only concerned with imperial policy. Rather, in line with their narrative of Nicene Christian hegemony, they were more focussed on representing the emperor Valentinian as an earnest Christian, and on emphasising the difference between him and his Arian brother Valens. This representation of Valentinian had greater resonance in light of Julian's pagan revolution, the impact of which was minimised in the church histories.

Conclusion

This thesis set out to analyse three different themes related to the representation of the emperor Valentinian I in both contemporary and historical literary sources. As stated in my introduction, the isolation of these themes, namely dynastic, military and religious, from their natural contexts was a necessary step, as it encouraged a more methodical analysis of how the official view of Valentinian's regime was promoted and developed by the imperial office itself, before it was received, interpreted and, in many cases, countered by the historians who engaged directly with it. It was the panegyrics of the Roman orator Symmachus, of course, which represented this 'official view', not only because these speeches were designed to praise the emperor and tell him what he wanted to hear; but also, as I argued in Chapter Two, because it is possible to identify details of imperial self-representation in the context and material which Symmachus discussed in *Orations* 1-3. This 'Selbstdarstellung' was evident in certain aspects of Symmachus' subject matter, including the emperor's early life, and the strong military themes of which the panegyrist had very little knowledge; in the strong political purpose of his panegyrics and their importance to the dynasty as a whole; and in his proximity to the emperor when, for example, he accompanied him on campaign over the Rhine, during which Symmachus received a guided tour around the fortification works that would become the subject of his second panegyric. In what appears to have been a period of very close cooperation with the emperor, Symmachus, an inexperienced senator, produced three speeches which accorded well with the priorities of Valentinian's regime. This clearly indicated, in my view, that Valentinian was aware of the significant role which such speeches – far from being effete ceremonial or empty propaganda – could play in communicating favourable portrayals of the dynasty to external and internal political operators. Indeed, these speeches are one of the few ways by which we can hear the 'imperial voice', and really gain an understanding of the issues which Valentinian thought it important to highlight, discuss, or contradict. In Chapters Three (Dynastic) and Four (Military), therefore, Symmachus' speeches furnished an official view which could be contrasted with the later historical depictions of Ammianus Marcellinus. They had, however, little to say on religious matters or the emperor's religion, so in Chapter Five (Religious), the 'official view' was taken from

another source which contained strong elements of imperial self-representation, namely Valentinian's imperial legislation, as I recently argued.

Symmachus' task as the official propagandist for Valentinian's regime was to promote an unequivocally positive representation which not only espoused themes that the emperor considered important, but also served as a first line of defence, as it were, to those critics who found fault in Valentinian's political choices, style of rule or even with the Valentinianic dynasty as a whole. The tension between Symmachus' panegyric and Ammianus' history was evident in their respective representations of Valentinian as a dynast. Valentinian's foundation of a new imperial dynasty in 367, when he appointed his young son Gratian to the imperial office, was an event which, unsurprisingly, attracted much attention from both the official panegyrist and the historian Ammianus. In his third *Oration* to Gratian, Symmachus had presented a vision of dynastic harmony which was designed to legitimise both son and father. He represented Valentinian as cautious dynast who had only taken such an unusual step after much consideration. In a carefully composed speech, Symmachus explored a number of important images through which he attempted to make this event acceptable to the Empire's elites. These included a return to the Golden Age under Gratian; a fictitious justification of the army's role in his accession; a defence of his youth (and therefore Valentinian's decision to elevate one so young); a description of his 'ancient virtues'; and a clear expression of dynastic harmony and stability. In the background of this entire work was the figure of Valentinian, whose imperial example and rulership model was to act as a guide to the newly promoted young child. What was evident from Symmachus' third panegyric was that it was designed to augment the legitimacy of both Gratian *and* Valentinian. In it, Valentinian appeared as a strong dynast, who had assured the Empire of a prosperous future by raising and appointing such an excellent child to be his colleague and successor.

Ammianus, however, disagreed. I argued that in a cleverly devised narrative, the historian situated Gratian's accession in a wider textual and historical context which painted Valentinian's dynastic ambition in an extremely negative light. Gratian's

accession scene in Book 27, Chapter 6 was surrounded by a number of events which were designed to remind Ammianus' audience of the political difficulties and toxic milieu which encompassed Valentinian's reign. The reminder of the rebellion of Procopius, an extended description of Valentinian's worst vices, and several accounts of chaos, rebellion and Roman defeat across the Empire attested to Ammianus' belief that Gratian's accession, itself ironically depicted, was a not-so-subtle *démarche*, which reflected Valentinian's weakness and ambition. Ammianus' representation of Valentinian the dynast, therefore, was quite at odds with the favourable portrayal the emperor had received in his official propaganda.

In Symmachus' first *Oration*, similar themes of legitimacy were central to the political message which was clearly communicated by the regime. This panegyric was, however, focussed on the military character of Valentinian, and acted as a justification of both his rule and the circumstances which had led to his military accession. This too served as a line of defence for the emperor, and was delivered on the same political occasion as *Oration* 3. In it, Symmachus explored Valentinian's military background and his upbringing in Africa under his father, an image which acted as a reminder of the emperor's unique military temperament and experience. He also discussed the circumstances surrounding Valentinian's accession in a description which was intended to legitimise both the emperor and the army's role in the process. The army appeared as a youthful, but intelligent group of organised men who had deliberated over their choice of Valentinian, before unanimously approving him as their rightful ruler. Symmachus then proceeded to depict Valentinian as an emperor devoted to his military duty, who tirelessly worked to ensure the safety and security of his subjects in a way that his predecessors, even illustrious ones, had been unable to. In the first *Oration*, Symmachus represented Valentinian as a selfless military emperor, who understood the need to lead the army and be a visible presence on the frontiers. In the second *Oration*, this imperial image was explored in a more detailed fashion, as the emperor was sighted designing frontier defences and showing the kind of military *labor* which Symmachus had mentioned in *Oration* 1.

In Ammianus, however, the representation of Valentinian as a military emperor which was prominent in the official narrative of Symmachus was not so favourably received. Disapproving of Valentinian's preferment of military men and the military elite which the emperor had created, Ammianus made a case for a decline in political culture during the reign of the emperor. This was symbolised by what Jan Willem Drijvers had noticed was an increase in feral and animal imagery in the last six books of the history. But it was not only the regime's favourable depiction of the military 'takeover' which irked Ammianus. Symmachus' representation of Valentinian as an experienced and uniquely qualified general was questioned by the historian through his depiction of Valentinian's reliance on generals for notable victories, and through episodes which demonstrated the emperor's own military incompetence. Finally, the emperor's accession ceremony, which was the central focus of Symmachus' text, was represented as a hastily arranged affair by Ammianus. Valentinian's election itself was portrayed as a convenience and a compromise, while the latter's elevation of his brother Valens was an imperial disaster on many fronts, not least military, as was attested by Valens' final catastrophe at Adrianople in 376.

In Chapter Five, I explored the self-representation of the emperor Valentinian in the imperial legislation pertaining to religion from his reign. With an analysis of several of his surviving laws, it was evident that Valentinian sought to represent himself as a tolerant emperor who had actively implemented a policy of religious toleration at the beginning of his reign. So while the emperor was obviously a Christian, Valentinian distinguished himself clearly from the emperors who had preceded him, many of whom had taken clear stances in matters of religious faith and debate. Aside from his law on magic, which as has been discussed was the product of a very specific religious and political context, Valentinian's legislation indeed appeared to be extremely tolerant.

It was interesting to consider how the Church historians interpreted Valentinian's religious policy. Like Ammianus, who had argued that Valentinian was a tolerant emperor, the church historians also considered Valentinian to be fairly neutral in matters of religious debate, but it was clear that they still regarded him as an earnest

Christian. This was important for their general representation of history and religion, in which Christianity had to appear as having progressed strongly from Constantine to their own day, albeit with an infamous intermission under Julian. It was not only Julian who appeared as a religious persecutor, however, in the Christian histories; Valens too was a figure who inspired much dislike from Nicene historians. It was important, therefore, that Valentinian was represented as different from his Arian brother, and this was something which the ecclesiastical historians were fully aware of in their writings. And finally, the church historians also represented Valentinian as the head of the Christian church, who took an interest in proceedings and clearly involved himself in issues of religious doctrine. This demonstrated, of course, that Valentinian was a true Christian, a Nicene Christian, who had advanced Christianity's mission in the highest office of the Empire.

Valentinian I was undoubtedly one of the last great military rulers of the West. He inherited an Empire which had been set back, unsettled even, by the events of the previous four years, most notably the revival of paganism under Julian, the death of said emperor in the disastrous Persian campaign of 363, and the untimely death of his successor Jovian in his sleep at Dadastana. Valentinian's reign brought a much needed period of stability to the Empire, as he regained control of her extensive military problems, reorganised her administration and quietened the religious unrest which had followed in the wake of Julian's divisive policies. In the contemporary sources for Valentinian's reign, the message which emerged most strongly was one of legitimacy, hard work, security and imperial stability. The emperor was clearly anxious to promote an imperial image with these qualities to wider audiences, and it was imperative that all propaganda and political communications from the regime reiterated and emphasised this 'Selbstdarstellung' at every opportunity, and in a variety of ways. In both the imperial panegyrics of Symmachus and the official imperial laws, the tone of this message was closely regulated. The emperor desired to appear powerful but compassionate, stable but innovative, energetic but measured. In the volatile political context of the mid-fourth century, achieving this balance was the difference between successful rule and humiliating failure, but, in terms of the Empire at large, it was also

the difference between peace and war, since emperors who appeared strong and stable were less susceptible to the threat of usurpers. What my analysis of the historical sources has clearly demonstrated, however, is that these official messages were open, and likely, to be challenged by authors who enjoyed the benefit of hindsight in their writings. Elements which appeared ‘good’, or novel, or stable, or innovative in contemporary sources could look decidedly poor when analysed from the distance of historical writing. Historians like Ammianus were free to interpret Valentinian’s political legacy as they saw fit, and it was clear that the self-promotion of the Valentinianic dynasty could prove detrimental to an imperial legacy. Those elements which in the hands of Symmachus or the emperor were laudable virtues become condemnatory vices in those of writers like Ammianus. And it is, in many respects, the latter whose representation has determined Valentinian’s negative imperial legacy. I hope that I have demonstrated the need to reassess this legacy, in order to achieve a balance between such positive and negative portraits, between the self-representation and representation, between the contemporary sources and the historical sources, and ultimately between the polarised representations of Valentinian as a good emperor and as a bad emperor. With a more nuanced interpretation which pays closer attention to the intersection between these two types of representation, we can achieve a better understanding, and create a more historically accurate foundation for a wider assessment of Valentinian’s political and historical legacy.

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