TAMQUAM FIGMENTUM HOMINIS: AMMIANUS, CONSTANTIUS II AND THE PORTRAYAL OF IMPERIAL RITUAL

Constantius, as though the Temple of Janus had been closed and all enemies had been laid low, was longing to visit Rome and, following the death of Magnentius, to hold a triumph, without a victory title and after shedding Roman blood. For he did not himself defeat any belligerent nation or learn that any had been defeated through the courage of his commanders, nor did he add anything to the empire, and in dangerous circumstances he was never seen to lead from the front, nor even to be among the front ranks. But he wanted to display an exaggeratedly long procession, standards stiff with gold and the beauty of his attendants, to a population who were living more peacefully, neither anticipating or wishing to see this or anything like it. For perhaps he was unaware that some earlier emperors had been content with lictors in peacetime, but when the heat of battle could not allow inactivity, one of them had entrusted himself to a small fishing boat, blasted by raging gales, another had followed the example of the Decii and offered up his life in a vow for the state, and another had himself explored the enemy camp alongside the regular soldiers; that, in short, various of them had won renown for magnificent deeds, and so committed their glories to the distinguished memory of posterity. … When he was approaching the city, observing with a serene expression the respectful attendance of the senate, and the venerable likenesses of the patrician families, he thought, not like Cineas, the legate of Pyrrhus, that a multitude of kings had been assembled together, but rather that this was the refuge of the whole world [*cumque urbi propinquaret, senatus officia, reuerendasque patriciae stirpis effigies, ore sereno contemplans, non ut Cineas ille Pyrrhi legatus, in unum coactam multitudinem regum, sed asylum mundi totius adesse existimabat*]. Next, when he turned his gaze to the general populace, he was astonished at the speed with which every type of men from everywhere had flowed into Rome. As though he were trying to terrify the Euphrates or

the Rhine with the sight of arms, with the standards in front of him on each side, he sat alone in a golden chariot, glittering with the shimmer of many different precious stones, whose flashes seemed to produce a flickering light. After many others had preceded him, he was surrounded by dragons, woven from purple cloth and affixed to the golden, bejewelled tips of spears, open to the wind with their broad mouths and so hissing as though roused with anger, trailing the coils of their tails in the wind [*eumque post antegressos multiplices alios, purpureis subtegminibus texti, circumdedere dracones, hastarum aureis gemmatisque summitatibus illigati, hiatu uasto perflabiles, et ideo uelut ira perciti sibilantes, caudarumque uolumina relinquentes in uentum*]. Then there came a twin column of armed men, with shields and plumed helmets, shining with glittering light, clothed in gleaming cuirasses, with armoured horsemen, whom they call *clibanarii*, arranged among them, masked and protected by breastplates, encircled with iron bands, so that you might have thought them to be statues finished by the hand of Praxiteles, not men [*sparsique catafracti equites, quos clibanarios dictitant, personati thoracum muniti tegminibus, et limbis ferreis cincti, ut Praxitelis manu polita crederes simulacra, non uiros*]. Slender rings of metal plates, fitted to the curves of the body, clothed them, spread across all their limbs, so that, in whatever direction necessity moved their joints, their clothing moved likewise, since the joins had been made to fit so well.

When he was hailed as Augustus with favourable cries, [Constantius] did not shudder at the din that thundered from hills and shores, but showed himself unmoved, as he appeared in his provinces. For, when passing through high gates, he stooped his short body, and, keeping his gaze straight, as though his neck were fixed, he turned his head neither right nor left, as though an image of a man, and he was never seen to nod when the wheel shook, or to spit or wipe or rub his face or nose, or to move his hand [*nam et corpus perhumile curuabat portas ingrediens celsas, et uelut collo munito, rectam aciem luminum tendens, nec dextra uultum nec laeua flectebat, tamquam figmentum hominis, nec, cum rota concuteret, nutans, nec spuens, aut os aut nasum tergens uel fricans, manumue agitans uisus est umquam*]. Although this behaviour was an affectation, it, and

> other aspects of his more private life, were however indications of extraordinary endurance, granted to him alone, as it was given to be supposed.[1]

This passage, which describes the *aduentus* of Constantius II into Rome in 357, is one of the best known episodes in the *Res Gestae* of Ammianus Marcellinus. This historical work was completed by the retired military officer in around 390, with the surviving books covering the period from 353 to the aftermath of the Battle of Adrianople in 378. Unsurprisingly, this passage is also one of the most debated. Throughout his work, Ammianus regularly criticized Constantius as a weak vicious ruler, influenced by women and, in particular, eunuchs, and so contrasted him with his cousin and successor Julian, the emperor who receives the most favourable treatment within this text.[2] The degree and nature of criticism within this particular passage has, however, been the subject of a variety of wildly differing interpretations. It is clear that, at the outset, Ammianus is inveighing against the notion of holding a triumph for victory in a civil war, but there has been debate over whether Constantius was actually celebrating a triumph or merely the anniversary of his accession.[3]

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[1] Amm. 16.10.1-3, 5-11. All quotations from Ammianus are taken from the Teubner edition of W. Seyfarth, 1978.

[2] See especially Amm. 14.11.2-4; 18.4.3; 21.16.16, as well as J.F. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* London (London, 1989; repr. with a new introduction, Ann Arbor, 2008), 274-5; T.D. Barnes, *Ammianus Marcellinus and the Representation of Historical Reality* (Ithaca, 1998), 121, 127-8; G.A.J. Kelly, *Ammianus Marcellinus: The Allusive Historian* (Cambridge, 1998), 141-2.

[3] S. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1981), 41-2 states that no triumph took place, but that Ammianus criticized Constantius for his lack of warlike qualities. M. McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity,*

Similarly, the description of the senate as 'the refuge of the whole world' has been read in contrasting ways, being regarded as derogatory by Johannes Straub, as neutral, or even positive, by Pierre Dufraigne, and as respectful by R.C. Blockley.[4] While this passage as a whole is generally read as an attack on Constantius for his pretentions to ill-deserved military glory, it also raises the question of whether Ammianus was also criticizing Constantius for the way in which he performed his *aduentus*, emphasizing his pompous, autocratic behaviour in order to contrast him with Julian, who preferred to behave more like a *ciuilis princeps* in public.[5] Of course, such a reading almost inevitably produces a portrait of Ammianus as an

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Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West (Cambridge, 1986), 81-4 sees this as both a triumph and a *vicennalia* celebration, but regards Ammianus' criticism as out of touch with fourth-century practice. P. Dufraigne, *Adventus Augusti, adventus Christi: Recherche sur l'exploitation idéologique et littéraire d'un cérémonial dans l'antiquité tardive* (Paris, 1994), 190, Barnes (n. 2), 134-5, G.A.J. Kelly, 'The New Rome and the Old: Ammianus Marcellinus' silences on Constantinople', *CQ* 53 (2003), 588-607, at 598, and Alan Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome* (Oxford, 2011), 334 all read Ammianus as criticizing Constantius for holding a triumph for a civil war. Ammianus' apparent criticism of Constantius celebrating victory in a civil war is also sometimes read as an indirect jibe at the ruling emperor Theodosius I – see, for example, Dufraigne (n. 3), 194; S. Schmidt-Hofner, 'Trajan und die symbolische Kommunikation bei kaiserlichen Rombesuchen in der Spätantike', in R. Behrwald and C. Witschel (edd.), *Rom in der Spätantike: historische Erinnerung im städtischen Raum* (Stuttgart, 2012), 33-59, at 38.

[4] J. Straub, *Vom Herrscherideal in der Spätantike*, (Stuttgart, 1939; repr. 1964), 187; Dufraigne (n. 3), 191; R.C. Blockley, *Ammianus Marcellinus: a selection* (Bristol, 1980), 31.

[5] For Ammianus as measuring Constantius against a perceived standard of imperial deportment from an earlier age, see N. Baynes, Review of J. Vogt and E. Kornemann,

impractically nostalgic figure, harking back to a style of rule which was anachronistic in the post-Diocletianic later Roman empire. In addition, Ammianus also presented Julian as performing an *aduentus* into Constantinople in 361, employing some phrases that were similar to those used to describe Constantius' procession in 357.[6] Furthermore, as John Matthews has illustrated, Ammianus' presentations of the occasions when Julian eschewed late-antique imperial protocol are not without tinges of criticism, and his judgement on the propriety of different modes of imperial behaviour varied dependent on the context.[7]

Römische Geschichte, *JRS* 25 (1935), 81-7, at 87; P. de Jonge, *Philological and Historical Commentary on Ammianus Marcellinus XVI* (Groningen, 1972), 121; G. Sabbah, *La méthode d'Ammien Marcellin: recherches sur la construction du discours historique dans les Res Gestae* (Paris, 1978), 552; R. Klein, 'Der Rombesuch des Kaiser Konstantius II im Jahre 357', *Athenaeum* n.s. 57 (1979), 98-115, at 104; Blockley (n. 4), 32; McCormick (n. 3), 81; M. Roberts, 'The treatment of narrative in late antique literature: Ammianus Marcellinus (16.10), Rutilius Namatianus, and Paulinus of Pella', *Philologus* 132 (1988), 181-95, at 184; Dufraigne (n. 3), 187-94; G.A.J. Kelly (n. 3), 607, (n. 2), 262-3.

[6] Amm. 22.2.4: *quo apud Constantinoplim mox comperto, effundebatur aetas omnis et sexus, tamquam demissum aliquem uisura de caelo. exceptus igitur tertium Iduum Decembrium uerecundis senatus officiis et popularium consonis plausibus, stipatusque armatorum et togatorum agminibus, uelut acie ducebatur instructa, omnium oculis in eum non modo contuitu destinato, sed cum admiratione magna defixis*. While some terms used to describe the soldiers here are similar to parts of 16.10, references to statues and deceptive appearances are absent.

[7] Matthews (n. 2), 236-7.

Whether or not Ammianus is read as being critical of elaborate late Roman *aduentus* rituals, he is generally regarded as a faithful reporter of their details, with 16.10 standing out as an excellent example of his ability to conjure up a vivid scene in the minds of his readers. For example, Matthews regards Ammianus' description of Constantius' *aduentus* as 'classic', 'a demonstration of the historian's technique and visual power' and 'an evocation of the late Roman imperial office at its most ceremonious'.[8] This passage has come to be employed frequently to illustrate discussions of the imperial image in late antiquity, especially the notion of the emperor's 'hieratic' pose.[9] In particular, Sabine MacCormack, whose work has done the most in recent times to illuminate the development of the *aduentus* ceremony, states that Ammianus provided a clear account of Constantius' 'dignified bearing during the ceremony as a whole' and that 'Constantius, in the context of the *aduentus* Ammianus describes, had become an image, a statue'.[10] So pervasive is the use of Ammianus 16.10 in

[8] Matthews (n. 2), 231.

[9] This view of Ammianus as a faithful reporter of Constantius' 'hieratic dignity' was expressed in 1935 in Baynes (n. 5), 87. Similar ideas about ceremonial immobility were expressed soon afterwards in Straub (n. 4), 182 and M.P. Charlesworth, 'Imperial deportment: two texts and some questions', *JRS* 37 (1947), 34-8, at 38.

[10] MacCormack (n. 3), 42, 44. See also S. MacCormack, 'Change and continuity in late antiquity: the ceremony of *adventus*', *Historia* 21 (1972) 721-52, at 736-7. R. MacMullen, 'Some pictures in Ammianus Marcellinus', *Art Bulletin* 46 (1964), 435-56 (repr. in R. MacMullen, *Changes in the Roman Empire: Essays in the Ordinary* [Princeton, 1990], 78-106), at 439, also used this passage to argue that, in late-antique ceremonies, life came to imitate art. For just a few examples of this passage being regarded as a description of the usual appearance of a late-antique *aduentus*, see de Jonge (n. 5), 120-1; Sabbah (n. 5), 429; Klein (n. 5), 103-104; Roberts (n. 5), 183-4; C.J. Classen, 'Nec spuens aut os aut nasum

studies of imperial power in the later Roman empire that, when one reads a reference to *aduentus* in a modern scholarly work, this is the passage from ancient literature which is most likely to be cited as evidence for the appearance and expectations of the ceremony.[11] It has become the *locus classicus* for our understanding of the proper performance of this key late-antique ritual.

It is a reading of this scene as neutral reportage of an *aduentus* that this article sets out to challenge. In particular, it focuses on the presentation of Constantius' deportment, his 'hieratic pose' *tamquam figmentum hominis* – 'as though an image of a man' – which has become such a vivid illustration of modern conceptions of the aloof late Roman emperor, emphasizing the distance between himself and even his most powerful subjects, in contrast to the *primus inter pares* model of the Principate.[12] This assimilation of the emperor to a statue

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tergens vel fricans (Amm. Marc. XVI 10, 10)', *RhM* n.s. 131 (1988), 177-86, at 183-4; C. Kelly, 'Emperors, Government and Bureaucracy', in Averil Cameron and P.D.A. Garnsey (edd.), *The Cambridge Ancient History, vol. XIII: The Late Empire, A.D. 337-425* (Cambridge, 1998), 138-83, at 142-3; Schmidt-Hofner (n. 3), 39-40. Dufraigne (n. 3), 187-94 regards this description of an *aduentus* as unusual, because the city amazes the visiting emperor more than he amazes it, but sees Constantius' overall bearing as usual for such a ceremony, albeit with some elements of caricature.

[11] M. Humphries, 'From emperor to pope? Ceremonial, space, and authority at Rome from Constantine to Gregory the Great', in K. Cooper and J. Hillner (edd.), *Religion, Dynasty, and Patronage in Early Christian Rome, 300-900* (Cambridge, 2007), 21-58, at 27, also remarks on the frequent use of this passage.

[12] For Sabine MacCormack, this transformation of the emperor into a statue, an icon, forms part of the development of imperial majesty and distance, which was also reflected in the

has often been seen as a parallel development to the carrying of statues in processions and their treatment as substitutes for the actual emperor within a city or province.[13] Yet, while statues were one medium through which the imperial presence could be brought to the far-flung corners of his empire, and so could be a place of refuge for fugitives, or a target for mob violence, as at Antioch in 387, we should be wary of regarding an account of the elision of Constantius and his inanimate effigy as a positive, or even neutral, statement about this particular emperor. As Brian Croke has described in an article on the development of Constantinople under Theodosius I, the annual ritual, in which Constantine's statue was carried in a chariot and presided over the games on the city's birthday, was stopped after Theodosius took up residence in the eastern capital. While a statue could go some way towards standing in for an absent ruler, it became redundant once a real emperor had arrived.[14] This article does not set out to overturn completely our image of *aduentus*, nor is it my intention to challenge the view that many late-antique imperial rituals were focussed on the figure of a distant emperor, whose elevation above his subjects was emphasized, rather than concealed. I do, however, wish to argue that reconstructions of late Roman ceremonies

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artistic representations of *aduentus*, such as the *largitio* dish of Constantius in the Hermitage. – MacCormack (n. 3), 44.

[13] See, for example, MacMullen (n. 10), 439; P. Stewart, *Statues in Roman Society: Representation and Response* (Oxford, 2003), 112-3; J.A. Francis, 'Late antique visuality: blurring the boundaries between word and image, pagan and Christian', in D. Brakke, D. Deliyannis and E. Watts (edd.), *Shifting Cultural Frontiers in Late Antiquity* (Farnham, 2012), 139-49, at 143-6.

[14] B. Croke, 'Reinventing Constantinople: Theodosius I's imprint on the imperial city', in S. McGill, C. Sogno and E. Watts (edd.), *From the Tetrarchs to the Theodosians: Later Roman History and Culture, 284-450 CE* (Cambridge, 2010), 241-64, at 246-7, 249.

should not rely so heavily on this passage from Ammianus. Rather than being an uncontroversial commonplace in late antiquity, the assimilation of a living emperor with an image was potentially loaded with criticism.

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Some useful context for this reading of Ammianus 16.10 is provided by descriptions of emperors and images from three texts, all of which date from the 350s and 360s, and two of which specifically concern Constantius II. The first of these is a passage from the fragmentary *Letter to a Priest*, written by Constantius' cousin and successor, the emperor Julian. In a passage discussing the worship of the gods through veneration of their statues, Julian reminded his readers that, despite being the objects of reverence, the statues were not the gods themselves, and so the destruction of such an image was not evidence of the impotence or inexistence of a particular deity.[15] In making this argument, Julian drew an analogy with the imperial images that stood in many public places throughout the empire: 'Looking at the images of the gods, let us not think that they are stones or wood, but of course let us not think that they are the gods themselves. For we do not say that statues of emperors are just wood and stone and bronze, but we certainly do not say that they are the emperors themselves, but that they are statues of emperors'.[16] His message was clear: while they were more than mere works of art, no one should mistake a statue for the actual flesh and blood ruler, and it is this latter point that Julian emphasized here. Even though an individual could gain favour by venerating the emperor's statue, just as with an image of a

[15] Julian, *Letter to a Priest* 292d-295b.

[16] Julian, *Letter to a Priest* 294c. See also L. Warren Bonfante, 'Emperor, God and man in the IV century: Julian the Apostate and Ammianus Marcellinus', *PP* 99 (1964), 401-27, at 408.

god, Julian was keen to distinguish between the actual object of reverence and the artificial conduit through which worship was offered.[17] Julian's view might be regarded as over-intellectualized, in comparison to the attitude taken by many of his contemporaries, as well as being driven by a specific desire to counter Christian criticism of idol worship by denying that statues of the gods were either mere empty works of artifice or actually the gods themselves, since they could evidently be destroyed.[18] Nevertheless, his comments do highlight the possibility of drawing a distinction between an emperor and his statue, as well as warning against assimilating them completely.

The other two texts, both of which date from the late 350s or early 360s, contain direct attacks on Constantius II himself, explicitly criticizing him for failing to live up to the authors' own perceived standards for imperial behaviour. In each of these, one of the charges levelled against the emperor is that he merely resembled a lifeless image, rather than being a real living person. In his lament for Julian, the Antiochene orator Libanius extolled the virtues of the recently-deceased young emperor, contrasting him, as Ammianus would later do, with his cousin and predecessor. He referred to Constantius pejoratively, exclaiming that 'this man, this Salmoneus, or Lycurgus, and, in fact, this Melitides, possessed no intellect and was not much better than a picture or a clay figure' (*Or.* 17.8). Libanius here compared the emperor to a trio of paradigmatic villains and idiots: Salmoneus, the mythical king of Salmone, who sought to rival Zeus and so brought down destruction on himself and his city;

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[17] Julian, *Letter to a Priest* 293a-d. On this tension in this passage, see S. Elm, *Sons of Hellenism, Fathers of the Church: Emperor Julian, Gregory of Nazianzus, and the Vision of Rome* (Berkeley, 2012), 324-5.

[18] See Julian, *Letter to a Priest* 295a: 'That which was created by a wise and good man is capable of being destroyed by a base and stupid man'.

Lycurgus, whose impiety towards Dionysus led to his blinding and death, as well as to his murdering his family in a fit of madness; and Melitides, a proverbial idiot mentioned in Aristophanes' *Frogs*.[19] While the last of these names emphasizes Constantius' stupidity, the other two present him as an impious and failed ruler, with the reference to Lycurgus also possibly alluding to Constantius' role in killing his relatives during the dynastic massacre of 337, from which Julian barely escaped.[20] In this context, the claim that Constantius was little better than 'a picture or a clay figure' referred to his lack of the virtues that were expected of emperors, such as intelligence, piety and justice. For Libanius, he was nothing more than an empty shell, resembling a ruler on the surface but lacking the internal qualities required for the role, in stark contrast to the ideal represented by Libanius' hero, Julian.

The third passage demonstrates that this form of criticism was not limited to pagan authors. Lucifer, bishop of Cagliari in Sardinia and a staunch defender of the theological formula enshrined in the Nicene Creed, wrote several lengthy denunciations of Constantius and his religious policy after being exiled at the Council of Milan in 355.[21] Across these works, he

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[19] *OCD*[4] s.v. 'Salmoneus' and 'Lycurgus (1)'; Aristophanes, *Frogs* 991. Salmoneus tried to imitate Zeus by riding in a four-horse chariot in a triumphal fashion, much as Constantius was doing in Ammianus' account – see Virgil, *Aen.* 6.585-94. It is possible that Ammianus knew this passage of Libanius, although the resemblances between the texts are not close enough to suggest a direct influence.

[20] On this massacre, see R.W. Burgess, 'The summer of blood: the "great massacre" of 337 and the promotion of the sons of Constantine', *DOP* 62 (2008), 5-51 (repr. in R.W. Burgess, *Chronicles, Consuls, and Coins: Historiography and History in the Later Roman Empire* [Farnham, 2011], ch. 10).

[21] R. Flower, *Emperors and Bishops in Late Roman Invective* (Cambridge, 2013), 84-5.

abused the emperor in a plethora of vivid and fascinating phrases, with some of the most extreme and colourful appearing in his pamphlet entitled *Moriundum esse pro Dei Filio* (*On the Necessity of Dying for the Son of God*). Like Libanius, he sought to present Constantius as falling far short of the standards expected of a successful Roman emperor. In a section of this text that denounced Constantius' failure to display the imperial virtue of justice, he addressed the emperor directly and asked him, 'Do you really believe that you are a man, although you have nothing of a human being except the mere shape and outline?'.[22] This was itself an adaptation of a line from Lactantius' *Divine Institutes*, which had described pagan rulers who displayed animal savagery in their persecution of Christians.[23] Lucifer took Lactantius' phrase and wove it into a broader attack on many aspects of Constantius' rule, in which the emperor's vices revealed the disjunction between his appearance and his essential nature. Lucifer's portrait of a Constantius who lacked a sense of justice, just like Libanius' depiction of him as devoid of intellect and piety or Lactantius' generic vicious tyrant, used the notion of a hollow image of a human being to bring force to its imperial invective. While Constantius might have the appearance of a man, he lacked the internal qualities which would actually make him a real person, or allow him to live up to the ideal of the virtuous emperor that was proclaimed in panegyrics.

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[22] Lucifer of Cagliari, *Moriundum esse pro Dei Filio* V.30-31 (ed. G.F. Diercks, 1978): *et te esse hominem censes, cum nihil hominis nisi liniamenta ac summam figuram geras?*

[23] Lact. *Diu. Inst.* 5.11.3: *sibi adeo placent, quod homines nati sint, quorum nihil nisi lineamenta et summam figuram gerunt*. On Lucifer's numerous uses of Lactantius' *Divine Institutes* in this text, see U. Pizzani, 'Presenze lattanziane nel *Moriundum esse pro Dei filio* di Lucifero di Cagliari', in S. Laconi (ed.), *La figura e l'opera di Lucifero di Cagliari: una rivisitazione. Atti del I Convegno Internazionale, Cagliari, 5-7 dicembre 1996* (Rome, 2001), 223-52; Flower (n. 21), 115-17, 163-76.

These treatments of imperial images provide a context within which to read Ammianus' account of Constantius' *aduentus*. I do not wish to argue that Ammianus was drawing directly on passages from these earlier authors, but, rather, that such language formed part of the contemporary register of imperial assessment. Such rhetoric continues to be found in the later fourth and early fifth centuries. When Synesius of Cyrene wrote his *De regno*, after his unsuccessful embassy to the court of Arcadius in Constantinople in the late 390s, he provided his own vision of ideal kingship, which stood in sharp contrast to many of the emperor's own practices. At the end of the work, he invited Arcadius to bring to life this 'statue of a king in words' and then to 'deliver to me the action of a king' (*De regno* 29.4). Similarly, Ambrosiaster, in a passage on understanding God, used an analogy with images of emperors, stating that 'although we do not know emperors, we see them in a statue, but not in truth'.[24] Since most inhabitants of the empire would never encounter an emperor, they perceived something of his authority in his statue, although Ambrosiaster also stated that this was no substitute for the real man: 'for when the emperor is absent, his image possesses authority, but it does not have it when he is present'.[25] While statues were significant in bringing a distant emperor closer to his subjects, the difference between a lifeless image and a living person was employed rhetorically by fourth-century authors, sometimes in philosophical and theological contexts, but especially when criticizing an emperor for his failings.

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[24] Ambrosiaster, *Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti* 71.1.

[25] Ambrosiaster, *In Epistolam B. Pauli ad Colossenses* 2.17.3. For discussion of both passages, see S. Lunn-Rockliffe, *Ambrosiaster's Political Theology* (Oxford, 2007), 45-6.

Despite both the existence of this theme in contemporary descriptions of emperors and also the comments about Constantius' military ineptitude that immediately precede the *aduentus* passage, Ammianus should certainly not be read as criticizing every aspect of the emperor's behaviour when entering Rome; for example, it seems highly unlikely that he was saying that a good emperor should actually be constantly spitting and blowing his nose in public.[26] Nonetheless, this passage describing Constantius' *aduentus* consistently undermines his imperial status, emphasizing the emptiness of his rule. Ammianus opened with the complaint that not only did Constantius wish to celebrate a triumph, despite failing to achieve the requisite martial successes, but he also seemed to be unaware of the examples set by his worthier predecessors on the imperial throne. He did not know that some had been happy just to be accompanied by lictors, and he also failed to act as three other, better rulers had done in battle (16.10.3). Ammianus' descriptions of the exploits of these earlier emperors provided *exempla* of good imperial behaviour, although without naming the illustrious predecessors,

[26] This part of Ammianus' description is usually taken to be a reference to Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 8.1.42, which states that Cyrus told his close courtiers not to spit, wipe their noses or turn to look at things when they appeared in public. The link with this passage was made in Straub (n. 4), 184 and Charlesworth (n. 9), forming part of their arguments that such behaviour came to the Roman empire from Persia, and it has appeared frequently ever since – see Classen (n. 10); Matthews (n. 2), 233; Dufraigne (n. 3), 191. This description of Constantius' public behaviour appears again in the positive section of Ammianus' necrology for Constantius at 21.16.7. For a contrary image of an emperor moving his eyes around too much in a procession and so being regarded as looking like a tyrant, see Olympiodorus' description of the early fifth-century *magister militum*, consul and (short-lived) emperor, Constantius III – Olymp. fr. 23 (ed. R.C. Blockley, 1983).

leaving his readers to fill in the gaps if they could, while also demonstrating his own superiority over the ill-informed Constantius in his knowledge of Roman history.[27]

The rest of the passage then continues this theme by presenting Constantius as a man who did not know how to be an emperor, being desperate to look the part, but not actually able to become a real ruler. Since Ramsey MacMullen discussed it in 1964, the description of Constantius' fastidiously immobile pose has been linked with Tacitus' account of Nero's activities on the stage during his musical performances, in which he 'obeyed all the laws of the lyre, not sitting down when tired, nor wiping away sweat, except with the garment which he wore, so that no refuse of his mouth or nose might be seen'.[28] Surprisingly, this was not used to support the argument that Ammianus may have been criticizing Constantius through an allusion to Tacitus, but instead to demonstrate that the model of the motionless emperor had its roots in the rules of the stage. In fact, Tacitus' Nero, in seeking to be both an emperor and a musician, succeeded in being neither, his strict adherence to the letter of the rules only

[27] J.C. Rolfe (ed. and trans.), *Ammianus Marcellinus*, 3 vols. (London, 1935-40), 1.243-4 and Barnes (n. 2), 179 identify the figures as Julius Caesar, Claudius Gothicus and Galerius. de Jonge (n. 5), 113 confuses the Republican Decii, who practised *deuotio* in battle, with the third-century emperor Decius and his sons, Herennius and Hostilianus.

[28] Tac. *Annals* 16.4: *cunctis citharae legibus obtemperans, ne fessus resideret, ne sudorem nisi ea, quam indutui gerebat, ueste detergeret, ut nulla oris aut narium excrementa uiserentur*. See MacMullen (n. 10), 439; Classen (n. 10), 181; Matthews (n. 2), 514 n. 3. See Barnes (n. 2), 191-2 for discussion of stylistic differences between the relevant passages in Tacitus and Ammianus.

serving to demonstrate his failure to comprehend what was actually required of him.[29] He was the consummate bad actor, whose method for attempting to play the part was as bad as the attempt itself, like a man trying to learn charisma from a book.

As with Tacitus' description of Nero, Ammianus' presentation of Constantius emphasized the theatricality of the emperor's behaviour, in which he tried to perform a role that he did not understand. The presence of this theme in Ammianus Marcellinus has been discussed by Jacques Fontaine in a 1985 article. Although he does not specifically explore the *aduentus* passage, his discussion of the portrait of the praetorian prefect Petronius Probus illuminates Ammianus' use of the eminently Tacitean themes of dissimulation and false appearances: 'Cette couleur théâtrale s'accorde avec la peinture d'un monde de *personnages* où dominent trop logiquement les *masques* divers de l'*hypocrisie*'.[30] Ammianus was providing a vivid

[29] The description of Nero as a *scaenicus* – an 'actor', 'player' or 'pretender' – appears in Tac. *Ann.* 15.59 and Pliny, *Panegyricus* 46.4. On theatricality and Nero as actor, see S. Bartsch, *Actors in the Audience: Theatricality and Doublespeak from Nero to Hadrian* (Cambridge, MA, 1994), 1-62, as well as C. Edwards, 'Beware of imitations: theatre and the subversion of imperial identity', in J. Elsner and J. Masters (edd.), *Reflections of Nero: Culture, History and Representation* (London, 1994), 83-97, which concludes (93) that Caesar was 'the only role Nero could not play'. On the themes of acting and pretence in Tacitus more generally, see R. Boesche, 'The politics of pretence: Tacitus and the political theory of despotism', *History of Political Thought* 8 (1987), 189-210, at 207-9; A.J. Woodman, 'Amateur dramatics at the court of Nero: *Annals* 15.48-74', in T.J. Luce and A.J. Woodman (edd.), *Tacitus and the Tacitean Tradition* (Princeton, 1993), 104-28.

[30] J. Fontaine, 'Valeurs de vie et formes esthétiques dans l'*histoire* d'Ammien Marcellin', in C. Giuffrida and M. Mazza (edd.), *Le trasformazioni della cultura nella tarda antichità: atti*

description not only of a man who was successful through his skill in dissembling, but also of a political culture that nurtured and encouraged such behaviour. Elsewhere, in an ostensibly positive description of Constantius' virtues, Ammianus described the emperor as 'always preserving the majesty of imperial authority' (*imperatoriae auctoritatis cothurnum ubique custodiens*).[31] The word *cot(h)urnus* originally meant the raised boot or buskin worn by actors in tragedies and is used negatively by Ammianus at other times to refer to haughty behaviour by both Petronius Probus and the general Lupicinus.[32] The display of imperial power is here made to seem theatrical, with the suggestion that Constantius might be playing a role, even when he appears to be succeeding in behaving like an emperor.

These tropes of pretence and costume are also to be found in a passage from book 26, in which Ammianus described the failed usurpation of Procopius, a relative of the emperor Julian, in 365. After comparing his seizure of the throne to the shameful *exemplum* of the coup of Didius Julianus in 193, Ammianus provided a memorable account of Procopius' farcical accession ceremony. The unfortunate figure was presented to the waiting public in a

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del convegno tenuto a Catania, Università degli Studi, 27 sett. – 2 ott. 1982, 2 vols. (Rome, 1985), 2.781-808, at 796. See Amm. 27.11. On Petronius Probus, see *PLRE* 1.736-40 (Probus 5).

[31] Amm. 21.16.1.

[32] Amm. 27.11.2; 20.1.2. See also n. 42 below. See J. den Boeft, D. den Hengst and H.C. Teitler, *Philological and Historical Commentary on Ammianus Marcellinus XXI* (Groningen, 1991), 243 for the argument that, while these other passages denote people acting with *superbia* because they present themselves as above their station, the description of Constantius at 21.16.1 shows him behaving as one would expect from an emperor at this time.

collection of hastily-assembled gold and purple clothes, 'looking like a court page', which was particularly ridiculous for the forty-year-old Procopius. His appearance was such that, in Ammianus' words, 'you would think that, on the theatrical stage, some decorated image [*simulacrum quoddam insigne*] had emerged suddenly through the curtain or some mime chicanery' (26.6.15). As John Matthews has remarked, this scene presents the usurpation as 'a ludicrous disgrace', in which Procopius appeared not as a legitimate emperor, but as a 'fancy-dress mockery', 'deserving scorn and hilarity had not the outcome been so disastrous'.[33] Not only does Ammianus present this performance as theatrical, he also specifically links it to mime, thereby underlining the image of Procopius as a comic parody of a proper ruler.[34] He wanted to play the part of an emperor, but instead ended up imitating an infamous usurper, failing to fulfil his intended role.[35] Rather than being a majestic monarch, Procopius comes across as nothing but a *simulacrum*, an artificial and ridiculous creation that belonged in the false world of the theatre.

Similarly, Ammianus' Constantius was an imitation of a real emperor, whose strenuous attempts to look like an authoritative ruler only underlined the gulf between presentation and

[33] Matthews (n. 2), 237. See also MacMullen (n. 10), 451.

[34] M.-A. Marié, *Ammien Marcellin: Histoire, Tome V (Livres XXVI-XXVIII)* (Paris, 1984), 219-20 n.76.

[35] See also Amm. 26.6.18 on Procopius' inability to speak well when he addressed the people from the tribunal during his accession, although in a later episode, at 26.7.16-17, he is depicted as winning soldiers over to his side through his well chosen words. On the contrast between the two passages, see J. den Boeft, J.W. Drijvers, D. den Hengst and H.C. Teitler, *Philological and Historical Commentary on Ammianus Marcellinus XXVI* (Leiden, 2008), 210.

reality. This sense of fabrication, of deceptive appearances, is created by Ammianus' choice of language, both in describing Constantius himself and in the rest of this passage on the *aduentus* into Rome. In reading Ammianus' description of the emperor as *tamquam figmentum hominis*, it is appropriate to translate the word *figmentum* as 'statue', but it is nonetheless important to remember that it could also mean a 'fiction', 'invention' or 'unreality'.[36] Of the fifteen appearances of this term within the surviving portions of Ammianus' work, on five occasions it is employed to denote a false claim, flattery or trick.[37] These include two uses within the story of the fabricated accusations used to bring down the military commander Silvanus in Gaul in 355.[38] In this vivid tale, where deception and disloyalty is exhibited by almost every character, Ammianus employs *figmentum* to denote both the original fraud of the conspirator Dynamius and also the insincere praises offered by the military officer Ursicinus, in order to put Silvanus off his guard and make it easier to kill him.[39] Here, the term appears in the context of a failure at all levels of imperial government, in which nobody, from the emperor downwards, acts with honesty and honour, leading to the destruction of a capable general.

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[36] OLD^2 s.v. 1, 2; TLL 6.1.708.84-710.12.

[37] Amm. 15.5.5, 15.5.25, 28.4.12, 29.6.4, 30.1.22. The other ten passages are 14.6.8, 16.10.10, 17.4.6, 19.1.3, 19.1.10, 19.12.10, 22.9.7, 22.13.3, 22.16.12, 23.6.24.

[38] For the story of Silvanus, see Amm. 15.5; C. Kelly, 'Later Roman bureaucracy: going through the files', in A.K. Bowman and G. Woolf (edd.), *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, 1994), 161-76, at 168-9. On Silvanus, see *PLRE* 1.840-1 (Silvanus 2).

[39] Amm. 15.5.5, 15.5.25. On Dynamius, see *PLRE* 1.275 (Dynamius 2). For the career of Ursicinus, see *PLRE* 1.985-6 (Ursicinus 2).

Moreover, one of the other passages where *figmentum* is used to mean 'statue' is also, like the *aduentus* episode, concerned with the city of Rome. In book 14, while recounting the first urban prefecture of Orfitus, Ammianus provides a famous account of the faults of the contemporary senate and people of the eternal city.[40] The senators in particular are described as failing to live up the models provided by earlier, greater Romans, despite their pretensions in this regard: 'Some of them believe that they can be committed to eternity through statues, and so they aspire to them eagerly, as though they could achieve a greater reward from bronze images [*figmenta*] devoid of sense, rather than from the consciousness of honest and proper actions' (14.6.8). Elsewhere, Ammianus complains of both the senators' undeserved pride in their ancient names, which, so they believe, recall their eminent ancestors, and also their habit of drawing unreasonable comparisons between themselves and the great men of old, such as Cato the Younger or Marcus Claudius Marcellus.[41] Ammianus' central complaint here is not that the current senators do not live up to these impressive examples (although that certainly forms part of his criticism), but that they believe that they do, because they lack any real understanding of the models that they seek to imitate. They are also described as being like people performing on the stage, dressing like actors in comedies or tragedies when they go to either take out or repay loans.[42] It is therefore notable that, in the account of Constantius' *aduentus*, which, as Ammianus informs the reader, took place during the second

[40] Amm. 14.6. On Orfitus, see *PLRE* 1.651-3 (Orfitus 3).

[41] Amm. 28.4.7, 18, 21, 23.

[42] Amm. 28.4.27. On allusions to acting and theatrical characters in this passage and Ammianus' earlier criticism of fourth-century Romans, see G.A.J. Kelly (n. 2), 265. The term for being dressed like an actor in a tragedy is *coturnatos*, which means wearing the *coturnus* (or *cothurnus*), the boot of the tragic actor. On this term elsewhere in Ammianus, see n. 32 above.

urban prefecture of Orfitus (16.10.4), the senators who come to meet the emperor are described using the peculiar phrase 'venerable likenesses of the patrician families' – *reuerendas patriciae stirpis effigies* (16.10.5). Here, like the bronze statues that they pompously erected to glorify themselves, they tried to appear as worthy descendants of their distinguished senatorial predecessors who had made Rome great. In fact, however, as in so many of their other attempts to imitate earlier models that they did not understand, they instead came across as merely hollow images, as *effigies*, unable to live up to their famous names.[43]

Meanwhile, within the *aduentus* procession itself, the soldiers marched, arrayed in glittering armour, along with the *clibanarii* cavalry, dressed in breastplates and masks, whose appearance was such that 'you might have thought them to be statues [*simulacra*] finished by

[43] In contrast, see Alan Cameron, 'Biondo's Ammianus: Constantius and Hormisdas at Rome', *HSPh* 92 (1989), 423-36, who regards 16.10 as laudatory about the city's current inhabitants, stating (at 429) that 'both senate and people of Rome are presented more positively in this chapter that almost anywhere else in Ammianus'. This term *effigies* here could be interpreted as a reference to actual statues of senators , however this seems unlikely as this phrase falls within a section where Constantius is surveying people who have come out of the city to meet him, looking first at the senate and then at the urban plebs. He has not yet arrived in the city itself, where one would expect to find senatorial statues. The word *stirps* provides the sense of a 'family' or 'stock' from which the *effigies* have sprung (as in the phrase *homo patriciae stirpis* at Amm. 28.1.52; see also OLD^2 s.v. 4). For the use of *effigies* to denote offspring who are 'copies' or 'images' of their parents or ancestors, see OLD^2 s.v. 2. This reading can also be found at Blockley (n. 4), 31; Dufraigne (n.3), 187-8. The ambiguity of the phrase adds to the sense of unreality in this passage.

the hand of Praxiteles, not men' (16.10.8). I would not wish to argue that Ammianus' description of the close-fitting armour of the cavalry was inaccurate or that describing them as resembling statues would necessarily always be pejorative, but rather that there is a tension inherent in the way they are described in this passage.[44] Not only does Ammianus state that they appear to be the products of great technical skill, but also that they no longer resemble men: they have gained a statuesque appearance, yet, in making this transformation, they have also lost any sense of recognisable humanity. This image is reinforced by the use of the term *personatus* to describe the fact that the cavalrymen are wearing masks, as one might expect in a ceremonial parade of this sort.[45] Like *figmentum* or *simulacrum*, however, this is a term which can have other, more critical resonances, since it often refers to the wearing of a mask for a theatrical performance, and thus also meant 'pretended', 'affected', or 'masking one's true nature'.[46] Just as Jacques Fontaine identified the themes of theatricality and masking in his analysis of Ammianus' description of Petronius Probus, here the description of the soldiers shows up the gulf between appearance and reality: these are fabricated troops for a fabricated triumph. In contrast, the dragon standards, the product of human artifice, were 'open to the wind with their broad mouths and so hissing as though roused with anger, leaving the coils of their tails to the wind' (16.10.7). Guy Sabbah has remarked on the contrast between the movement of the dragons and the immobility of the emperor, but regards it as part of the passage's wider disparity between the motionless Constantius and the

[44] On the armour of the cavalry in this period, see also Julian, *Or.* 1.37b-38a; de Jonge (n. 5), 119. At 37c, Julian remarks that the cavalrymen sit on their horses καθάπερ ἀνδριάντας.

[45] A number of masked cavalry helmets survive, including the Ribchester and Crosby Garrett examples.

[46] OLD^2 s.v. 1b; TLL 10.1.1732.14-56. See, for example, Sen. *Ep.* 80.8; *Mart.* 11.2.3; Apul. *Met.* 8.9, 10.5.

activity of everything else surrounding him.[47] In fact, however, the dragons seem to stand in opposition not only to the emperor, but also to the many other, seemingly lifeless figures that populate this diorama. In an inversion of the proper state of affairs, the only things that actually appeared to be alive in this procession were these false creations, woven from purple cloth.

These images thus contribute to the sense of unreality in the text, in which images can be mistaken for living creatures, and men for effigies. At the centre of this vivid scene, like the ridiculous figure of the usurper Procopius, sits the statuesque, yet ultimately hollow, Constantius, the great pretender. The one movement that Ammianus says that Constantius did make during his entry into the city was that 'when passing through high gates, he stooped his short body'.[48] Ammianus remarks elsewhere that Constantius was actually rather tall in the top half of his body, although his legs were short and bowed (21.16.19). Because of this, R.C. Blockley has suggested that *perhumile* in this passage should be taken predicatively to mean that Constantius 'used to bend his body very low'.[49] This is possible, although Ammianus may merely be remarking on the difference between the heights of the gate and the emperor, highlighting the fact that his ducking to pass through them was merely another facet of his deluded self-perception. This is underlined by Ammianus' following comment on Constantius' behaviour in the parade: 'Although this behaviour was an affectation, it, and other aspects of his more private life, were however indications of extraordinary endurance, granted to him alone, as it was given to be supposed' (16.10.11). Ammianus thus presented him as trying to act out the role of an emperor, a unique figure amongst humanity, by

[47] Sabbah (n. 5), 570-1.

[48] Amm. 16.10.10: *nam et corpus perhumile curuabat portas ingrediens celsas*.

[49] Blockley (n. 4), 33.

performing in this manner, but failing to understand that people easily saw through his charade.

There is another famous passage from late antiquity which could seem, at first glance, to suggest that describing an emperor as resembling a statue could be panegyrical. In his poem on Honorius' fourth consulship, Claudian compares the appearance of the young emperor in a procession to a ceremony that took place in Egypt, where the *effigies* of the god was brought out and paraded.[50] This should not, however, be treated as analogous to Ammianus' account of the *aduentus* at Rome. As Guy Sabbah has argued, it is important that Ammianus describes Constantius as resembling a statue not of a god, but of a man, remarking that 'l'immobilité de Constance qui, malgré tous ses efforts pour s'identifier à un dieu, n'arrive à imiter qu'une statue d'homme – *figmentum hominis* – n'était que la figure pauvrement masquée de la mortalité'.[51] Sabbah's reading contrasts the mortality of the emperor – and of all emperors – with the eternity of the city of Rome itself. While Constantius' pretensions to a lofty status are evidently being ridiculed here, particularly in the comment about him stooping when passing under high gates, Ammianus' criticism cuts deeper even than Sabbah acknowledges. Constantius does fail to appear as god-like, but, more significantly, he is also incapable of being a proper man, instead merely resembling a statue, with the outward appearance of an

[50] Claudian, *de IV cos. Hon.* 565-576. This passage is used to corroborate the reading of Ammianus' description of Constantius' *aduentus* as faithful at Straub (n. 4), 186 and MacCormack (n. 10), 737-8.

[51] Sabbah (n. 5), 572. See also Roberts (n. 5), 184: 'Constantius is made to seem like a self-important stager of extravagant spectacles rather than the superhuman embodiment of imperial magnificence'.

emperor but none of the essential virtues.[52] He strives to look the part, but only succeeds in revealing that he is incapable of fulfilling it.

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With these issues in mind, it is worth briefly examining the remainder of Ammianus' account of Constantius' visit to Rome, in which the emperor moves through the city, entranced by its many wondrous sights. It is frequently remarked upon that Constantius' behaviour in his *aduentus* is contrasted with his more *ciuilis* behaviour in 16.10.13-17, where he acts in a manner much more becoming for an emperor within Rome itself.[53] Undoubtedly, there is a clear change in his deportment. He marvels at the numerous amazing buildings, visits the Senate House and the imperial palace, addresses the people and presides over the games, even allowing them to be contested freely. In attempting to explain this apparent switch in Constantius' behaviour, Guy Sabbah argues that the passage highlights the difference between Constantius' affected immobility and the real quality possessed by the eternal city.[54] Pierre Dufraigne and Gavin Kelly have also sought to find a thematic unity to the whole account of Constantius' visit, identifying it in an inversion of a triumph or *aduentus*, with the

[52] For Ammianus' general presentation of Constantius as a bad emperor, see, for example, the statement at Amm. 21.16.8 that he was more savage than Caligula, Domitian and Commodus.

[53] See, for example, Straub (n. 4), 187-9; MacCormack (n. 10), 736-7 n. 96, (n. 3), 42; Sabbah (n. 5), 570; Klein (n. 5), 105-106; Cameron (n. 43), 428; Dufraigne (n. 3), 190-2; C. Kelly (n. 10), 148; G.A.J. Kelly (n. 3), 598-9.

[54] Sabbah (n. 5), 570-1.

arriving emperor attempting to dazzle the city, but instead ending up being dazzled by it.[55] This passage thus becomes a hymn of praise to *Roma aeterna*.

Certainly, Ammianus' account celebrates the city of Rome itself, although, significantly, his focus is really on the monuments from the earlier ages of the Republic and the first two centuries of the Principate, rather than the contemporary inhabitants.[56] In fact, the main appearance by the ordinary populace in this passage comes in a description of their enjoyment of the games, for which Ammianus criticizes them elsewhere.[57] Importantly, while Constantius' actions within the city may be seen as respectful, Ammianus repeatedly emphasizes the alien nature of Rome, at least from the perspective of the emperor. When he first surveys the buildings, he is 'astounded' – *obstipuit* – and 'struck by the great mass of amazing sights' – *miraculorum densitate praestrictus* (16.10.13). Here, in what should be the centre of his empire, the emperor is acting like a tourist. Even the visit to his own palace is described as an exciting novelty, in which he 'enjoyed a longed-for delight'.[58] In his exploration of the city, looking at a large number of historic buildings that are listed in this passage, he is constantly reminded of his predecessors, whose examples he fails to follow. Literally towering over him are the columns of Trajan, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius, which carry 'statues of earlier emperors' – *priorum principum imitamenta* (16.10.14). Here, after the end of the *aduentus* passage, statues continue to appear in Ammianus' account, now

[55] Dufraigne (n. 3), 187-94; G.A.J. Kelly (n. 3), 599. See also Straub (n. 4), 189; Klein (n. 5), 106; Cameron (n. 43), 433.

[56] See Humphries (n. 11), 27-8, which also notes Ammianus' omission of fourth-century Christian buildings from his description of Rome.

[57] Amm. 28.4.30-31.

[58] Amm. 16.10.13: *laetitia fruebatur optata*.

providing models for Constantius to look up to and marvel at, but not to be able to reach through his actions.

The climax of his walkabout was the Forum of Trajan, where he once again 'stopped, astonished'.[59] Ammianus reports that Constantius realized that he could not build anything like it, so he 'said that he wished to, and could, copy [*imitari*] only the horse of Trajan, placed in the middle of the atrium, which carried the emperor himself' (16.10.15). Constantius' ambition is here limited to one tiny attempt to imitate Trajan: he cannot build a forum like his, let alone rule like him, so he merely tries to reproduce his statue.[60] In fact, however, the emperor's failure ends up being even greater. After Constantius declared his wish to copy the equestrian statue, the Persian prince Hormisdas, who was in his retinue, remarked, 'first, emperor, command that such a stable [*stabulum*] be constructed, if you are able; let the horse, which you are arranging to make, range as widely as the one which we see'.[61] Importantly,

[59] Amm. 16.10.15: *haerebat attonitus*.

[60] As Gavin Kelly (n. 2), 262-3 has noted, this stands in stark contrast to Julian, whom Ammianus soon presents as much more successful in actually acting like Trajan, firstly in winning a major military victory at Strasbourg and then in rebuilding a Trajanic fort – see Amm. 16.12, 17.1.11.

[61] Amm. 16.10.16. Scholarly opinion is divided on whether *stabulum* refers to the Forum, the city or the Roman empire itself. Cameron (n. 43), 429-32. argues for the Forum. G.A.J. Kelly (n. 3), 600-601 sees it as a reference to Rome, with the implication being that Constantius is enlarging Constantinople and making it into a new Rome. R.O. Edbrooke, 'Constantius II and Hormisdas in the Forum of Trajan', *Mnemosyne* 28 (1975), 412-17, at 415, and Blockley (n. 4), 36-7 both take this to be a comment on Constantius' failure to create an empire as great as Trajan's. Sabbah (n. 5), 331-2 reads this remark as a comment on Theodosius I's attempt to

however, Constantius does not then go on to copy the statue, at least in Ammianus' account, electing eventually to add an obelisk to Rome instead.[62] Whatever *stabulum* may be denoting here, Constantius is not able to resemble Trajan. In an eminently Tacitean inversion, his inability to live up to the model of this paradigmatic emperor was revealed through a remark by a Persian foreigner, while the Roman emperor himself, stood in the very heart of Rome, was conspicuously unable to live up to Roman standards, acting like an foreign visitor to his own city. Constantius' failure was complete: not only could he not imitate this earlier emperor, he could not even imitate his statue.

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The passage on the arrival of Constantius into Rome, as well as his subsequent tour through the great monuments of the city, is suffused with expressions that create a sense of unreality, false appearances and failed acting by a man who had some small inkling of how he needed to behave, but no real understanding of what it meant to be an emperor.[63] Ammianus' writings contain numerous references to theatricality and pretence, both in the behaviour of Constantius and in pejorative descriptions of other figures. In 16.10, as elsewhere, Constantius emerges as an unsuccessful performer, unable to play his role properly, but also existing in a wider world of actors, masks and fictions. This passage should, therefore, be

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rival Trajan with his new forum at Constantinople. On the interpretation of this passage, see also Dufraigne (n. 3), 193.

[62] Amm. 16.10.17. In fact, an equestrian statue of Constantius had already been erected near the Senate House a few years earlier – see *CIL* 6.1158; Humphries (n. 11), 36.

[63] Ammianus also states (at 15.1.3) that Constantius claimed to model his behaviour on earlier *ciuiles principes* – on this passage, see Matthews (n. 2), 235; C. Kelly (n. 10), 150.

read not as a neutral description of an imperial ceremony, but as a skilful attack to undermine the authority of an inadequate ruler. As such, it ought not to be relied upon so heavily by historians in reconstructing the general conventions of late-antique *aduentus* or, more specifically, a concept of the hieratic, statuesque pose of the emperor himself.

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