

**Rome Without Emperors: The Revival of a Senatorial City in
the Fourth Century CE**

by

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	ii
List of Abbreviations	vii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: Emperors and History at Rome	9
“Expulsion of the tyrant”	10
Constantine Augustus	17
Many happy returns	32
Chapter 3: Missing Emperors	51
“So greatly does concern for the city of Rome diminish day by day”	52
Looking outward: Aurelius Victor and the view from Rome	60
Turning inward: local narratives of Rome in the Codex of 354	69
Urban prefects and Roman history	71
The formation of Christian narratives	81
Chapter 4: Reading Rome	87
“Like a graven image of a man”	89
Strolling down memory lane.....	98
Reading the Forum of Trajan.....	106
Competing constituencies	126
Chapter 5: Writing Rome.....	135

“The good men of my age”	138
Damasus and the writing of Christian Rome	150
Ammianus in Rome	162
A world apart	163
The visibility of senators.....	167
Chapter 6: Symmachus in Trier	177
Building bridges.....	182
Rome as the locus of political legitimacy	191
Ausonius	203
Themistius.....	216
Chapter 7: Symmachus and Milan.....	227
The centrality of Rome in Symmachus’ <i>Relationes</i>	232
The altar of Victory and the struggle to define an emperor	239
Theodosius and Rome.....	259
Chapter 8: Conclusion.....	266
Bibliography	273

List of Abbreviations

- CIL* *Corpus inscriptionum latinarum* (Berlin)
- CLRE* *Consuls of the Later Roman Empire*, ed. R.S. Bagnall et al. (Atlanta, 1987)
- CEFR Collection de l'École française de Rome (Rome)
- CTh* *Codex Theodosianus*, ed. T. Mommsen, *Codex Theodosianus t.2: Theodosiani libri XVI cum Constitutionibus Sirmondianis* (Berlin, 1905) – tr. C. Pharr et al., *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions* (Princeton, 1952)
- ILCV* *Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae veteres*, ed. E. Diehl (Berlin, 1925-31), 3 vols.
- ILS* *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*, ed. H. Dessau (reprint: Berlin, 1962), 3 vols. in 5
- IRT* *The Inscriptions of Roman Tripolitania*, ed. J.M. Reynolds and J.B. Ward-Perkins (Rome, 1952)
- LTUR* *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae*, ed. M. Steinby (Rome, 1993-1999), 5 vols.
- MGH Monumenta Germaniae historica (Berlin, Hannover, and Leipzig)
- PLRE* *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge). Vol. 1, A.D. 260-395, ed. A.H.M. Jones, J.R. Martindale, and J. Morris (1971).
- TTH Translated Texts for Historians (Liverpool)

Chapter 1

Introduction

This dissertation is a study in the cultural history of the city of Rome in the fourth century CE. Modern scholars have tended to think of this period in religious terms as an age of conflict or transition between the pagan past and the Christian future. Research has thus been oriented around tracing and explaining the arc of Christianization and determining the mix of pagan and Christian elements. As long ago as 1945, Herbert Bloch argued in an influential article that the last two decades of the fourth century witnessed a “pagan revival” led by high-ranking pagan senators at Rome. Allegedly, these senators resisted an increasingly intolerant Christian regime by promoting a renewal of interest in traditional cults and classical texts. In a series of articles, Alan Cameron has systematically dismantled the evidence for any such pagan or classical revival. Classical literature, he points out, was seen as independent of pagan religion, and was admired by all educated people, pagans and Christians alike. The evidence is rather for “the absorption of classical culture by Christians than for its polemical exploitation by pagans.”¹

Cameron’s work has been instrumental in shifting the focus away from the aristocracy’s supposed resistance to Christianity. Recent studies have been concerned

¹ Bloch (1945); Cameron (1977), (1999) with quote at p.119, (2004), and (forthcoming).

with the dynamics of Christianization, adding much-needed complexity to discussions of how the city of Rome and its aristocracy gradually relinquished their pagan identity. John Curran's *Pagan City and Christian Capital* is perhaps the most successful attempt to revise the traditional view of the fourth century as a period of cultural struggle between expiring paganism and triumphant Christianity. In this refreshing study of the Christianization of Rome's topography and society, Curran shows that emperors, senators, and bishops were often motivated by factors other than faith, and that divisions within Rome's Christian community were often more consequential than those between pagans and Christians. Michele Salzman's *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy* takes a fresh look at the oldest problem in the historiography of the fourth century. The processes and stages by which the senatorial aristocracy adopted Christianity will always remain somewhat elusive, but Salzman argues convincingly that aristocrats' religious preferences were not shaped primarily by a desire to conform to the imperial example. Rather, emperors and bishops had to find ways to make Christianity appealing to aristocrats, with the result that aristocratic values influenced the development of Christianity. The spread of Christianity within the aristocracy was successful insofar as it was compatible with aristocrats' traditional interest in asserting their elite status in society.²

Although the oppositional "pagan vs. Christian" model has been superseded by a "pagan and Christian" approach that emphasizes the shared elements of aristocratic culture, the fourth century nonetheless continues to be defined in religious terms. Moreover, since the pagan and Christian paradigm was devised to explain the

² Curran (2000), Salzman (2002).

developments of the fourth century, the use of these terms tends to obscure connections that might be drawn between the fourth century and other periods of Roman history. Certainly it is undeniable that the religious complexion of Rome changed dramatically during the fourth century, but Christianity was not the only force prompting fundamental changes in the outlook of Rome's senators. The advent of the new religion coincided with another change of great significance: the emperors' abandonment of Rome as their regular residence. In the nearly one hundred years between the demise of Maxentius in 312 and the Visigoths' sack of the city in 410, there was an emperor present in Rome only a handful of times, for a total of about two years.

The absence of the emperors had profound implications for the city's politics, society, and culture. In the first place, it presented both opportunities and challenges for senators at Rome. On the one hand, it allowed them to emerge from the emperor's shadow and recover a good deal of their former public prominence and visibility; to this degree, Rome in some ways became more "senatorial" than it had been at any time since the late Republic. At the same time, the absence of the emperors called into question Rome's identity as the capital of the empire. For the first time in its history, Rome was not the seat of political power. Senators at Rome could not avoid the awkward fact that real power was now located far away, in the formerly inconsequential provincial cities which emperors used as their regular residences. They now had to compete for appointments and influence with new elites in the provinces and at court. They were forced to articulate why Rome was still a special place in an age when imperial patronage was making new cities into rivals and even potential replacements of Rome. From this perspective, the most pressing problem facing senators at Rome was not their choice of

religion, but adjusting to the new political geography of an empire in which Rome was no longer at the center, but on the periphery.

Any interpretation necessarily has its own limitations. By treating Rome as a unique place with unique traditions, I have in a sense absorbed the prejudices of its senators. Unlike, for example, Salzman's treatment of the senatorial aristocracy, which encompasses all holders of clarissime rank, including those who lived in the provinces and at court, my study is focused on the traditional urban aristocracy of the city of Rome. In order to avoid the ambiguity inherent in the adjective "Roman"—which might refer either to the empire or to the city—I have, inevitably with less than complete consistency, adopted the phrase "senators at Rome" to make plain that the *Romanitas* I have in mind is specifically "Rome-ness." While provincial perspectives are not ignored, they are used primarily to illuminate what is distinctive about the attitudes of Rome's senators. The goal has been to contribute a new chapter to the history of Rome that takes better account of the long historical memories that abided there.

The chronological limits of this study also require justification. Like the studies of Christianization, it is focused on the fourth century, although the marginalization of Rome did not begin in that period. As early as the mid-second century, Marcus Aurelius, for example, spent virtually the last ten years of his reign away from Rome battling the German tribes who were pressing on the Danube frontier. The accession of Maximinus in 235 was an especially significant moment: for the first time, an emperor refused to come to Rome to receive the senate's endorsement of his designation by the army. A historian writing soon afterward could characterize Rome as being "wherever the emperor is." As Rome ceased to be an imperial residence, the city's importance

“increasingly depended on the presence of the senators and the senate...in this respect we already detect an anticipation of late antique Rome.”³ Nevertheless, it was not until the administrative reforms of Diocletian that these developments acquired an institutional basis, in the form of a reorganization of the provincial structure and the permanent relocation of imperial authority to cities closer to the military frontiers. The other chronological limit of this study is also both arbitrary and sensible. The empire for most of the fourth century retained its full geographical extent, its frontiers still marked by the Rhine and Danube rivers. As the territory of the empire contracted in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, Rome and its emperor were, if not fully reunited, at least put into closer proximity. Thus while emperors may be said to be absent from Rome at times in the third and fifth centuries, it was the fourth that saw the most prolonged periods of absence and the greatest distance between the emperor and the imperial city.

The study that follows is divided into three sections that combine thematic treatments with a diachronic narrative. The first section focuses on emperors and Rome, and consists of two chapters which set up the problem of a Rome without emperors. Chapter 2 discusses the reigns of Maxentius and Constantine with a view to elucidating the historical frameworks in which they would have been viewed by Rome’s senators. In the aftermath of Maxentius’ defeat in 312, Constantine progressively disappointed senatorial expectations. Not only did he not take up residence in the old capital, he failed to return for major anniversaries, and his foundation of Constantinople indicated the direction of his future plans. The absence of emperors left a void in Roman public life,

³ Herodian, *Historia* 1.6.5, “ἐκεῖ τε ἡ Ῥώμη, ὅπου ποτ’ ἂν ὁ βασιλεὺς ᾔῃ.” Significantly, this line, though written in the mid-third century, became the title of Mayer (2002), a study of public monuments in the cities used as imperial residences in the fourth and fifth centuries. On third-century Rome as offering a preview of the later period, see the incisive remarks of Lo Cascio (2005) 164.

the implications of which are discussed in Chapter 3. Senators were compelled to reconsider the relationship between Rome and the distant emperors. One response was to fall back on traditional ideas. Aurelius Victor wrote a historical overview of the emperors that explained their success and failure in terms of their knowledge of Roman traditions and respect for Roman senators, thus arguing that Rome and its senators remained central to the fate of the empire. Another response was to develop frameworks for thinking about Rome's history that did not depend on the emperors. The Codex of 354, prepared for a Christian aristocrat, contained lists of the prefects, bishops, and martyrs of Rome, the first signs of a new local historiography.

The second section focuses on senators and Rome, and consists of two chapters that study different ways of reading and writing Rome in the mid-fourth century. It is meant to build upon André Chastagnol's fundamental work on the urban prefecture while simultaneously moving in a different direction.⁴ Whereas Chastagnol's study described the return of senatorial government to the city of Rome, my own contribution discusses the cultural consequences of senators' return to political prominence. Chapter 4 begins from Ammianus Marcellinus' famous description of Constantius II's visit to Rome in 357, an important moment when several different constituencies—senatorial, Greek, and ecclesiastical—all lobbied the emperor on behalf of their own visions of Rome. Senators showed Constantius around the sights and used the opportunity to display their importance in the city, exemplified by the many honorific statues of senators in the Forum of Trajan. At the same time, a Greek orator used the occasion to talk about the relationship of Rome to Constantinople, while the Christian communities of the city

⁴ Chastagnol (1960), (1962).

pressed Constantius to resolve a schism in the Roman Church. Many of these actors reappear in Chapter 5, which discusses the invention of new ways of conceptualizing and writing the history of Rome. Senators continued to think of themselves as the embodiment of Rome, exemplified by the epigrams of Avianus Symmachus in honor of former prefects. Commemorative epigrams were also used by bishop Damasus, whose inscriptions in honor of the city's martyrs simultaneously advertised himself as the guardian of Christian memory in the city. Meanwhile, Ammianus deconstructed the pretensions of both the senators and the Christians by portraying them as hopelessly self-absorbed and ignorant of the true business of empire.

Finally, the third section addresses the dynamic between Rome and the distant imperial court. This wider perspective I owe to the influence of John Matthews' *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court*, but, again, my emphasis is rather different.⁵ Certainly individual senators at Rome continued to use the familiar language of friendship and patronage to cultivate contacts at court and promote their private interests. Yet senators were also the most visible spokesmen for the Roman public interest, and there can be no doubt that they often experienced frustration and failure in representing this interest before the distant imperial court. Chapters 6 and 7 use the writings of Symmachus to examine how one senator grappled with the contradiction between Rome's traditional centrality and its newfound relegation to the margins of imperial consciousness. His *Orations* and *Relationes* responded to the challenge posed by the emperor's adoption of Trier and Milan and reminded the emperor of the unique importance and prerogatives of old Rome. I conclude my study with remarks on the events leading up to Alaric's capture

⁵ Matthews (1975).

of Rome in 410, which had even brought a sitting prefect of Rome to the imperial throne. At one level, this seemed to be the logical culmination of the senatorial resurgence of the fourth century. In truth, however, the prefect-emperor was merely the creature of a barbarian chieftain. Alaric's sack of Rome thus shattered two illusions—not just the myth of Rome's invincibility, but also senators' comfortable delusions of grandeur. Henceforth senators would have to contend with increasingly powerful barbarian generals and Christian bishops, fellow beneficiaries of the emperors' weakness.

To sum up, this study discusses the cultural consequences that flowed from the political circumstance of the emperor's absence from Rome. It focuses on the consequence that was most important in the fourth century, the revival of Rome as a senatorial city. In the long run, however, the most important consequence would be the replacement of the emperor by the bishop of Rome as the most powerful and prominent figure in the city. This outcome would not have been obvious in the fourth century. The emperor's departure allowed both the senators and the bishop to become public figures of importance. With their immense wealth and long tradition, senators were better positioned to take immediate advantage of the situation. By the mid-fourth century, however, the bishop of Rome was able to play a significant role in Roman politics and society, and to compete with senators for worldly status. It was not until the fifth century or even the sixth that the bishop began to get the upper hand in this competition. The fourth century, then, was a time of transition in Rome, but not just from pagan to Christian. The senatorial interlude was a distinct phase of the city's history, and the necessary bridge to explain Rome's eventual transformation from an imperial capital into a papal see.

Chapter 2

Emperors and History at Rome

At the beginning of the fourth century, Rome was already more than a thousand years old. Over long centuries, historical traditions had gradually shaped the vast raw material of names and events into a usable past. Both the making and the remembering of history at Rome had always been closely associated with the city's aristocracy. Senators believed that they were not just the custodians, but the living embodiment of the most ancient historical traditions and memories in the Roman state. In their hands, a millennium of historical examples and paradigms became a powerful symbolic idiom in which to frame their understanding of events in the present.

The relationship between emperors and history at Rome had always been complicated. According to Roman tradition, an emperor was impossible, since the Republic had been founded specifically to prevent monarchical power from returning to Rome. Yet Augustus and the senators had collaborated in reinterpreting the idea of the Republic, finding a way to make the first emperor's rule compatible with Roman tradition. At Rome historical tradition was sufficiently powerful to create political legitimacy, yet it was also flexible enough to accommodate new emperors with unexpected qualities. In the early years of the fourth century, two such emperors came to power in Rome. One of them, Maxentius, made the most archaic traditions of the city

into the cornerstone of his ideology. The other, Constantine, invoked Augustus while at the same time announcing his support for a religion that had been legalized only shortly before. The emperors were not the only ones thinking about their place in history. Senators, too, looked to history to place these emperors into a comprehensible context. Rome's history was so rich that there were many competing models available: the kings, the founders of the Republic, Augustus, the "good" emperors of the second century, Septimius Severus, and the emperors of the Tetrarchy were all used. Constantine, in particular, was viewed through multiple historical lenses. Modern scholars have tended to analyze Constantine as a Christian emperor; at Rome, however, there was no tradition that combined Christianity and political power. Constantine's relationship with the senators could only be expressed in the idiom of the Roman historical tradition; history, not Christianity, was Rome's lingua franca. Constantine and the senators experimented with various models for contextualizing his rule; in the end, Constantine found another "Roman" model that led him eventually to another Rome.

"Expulsion of the tyrant"

When Constantine entered Rome on October 29, 312, he was entering enemy territory. Rome had been ruled for the last six years by Maxentius, Constantine's brother-in-law and imperial colleague. Following the death of Constantius I in 306, Maxentius, like Constantine, had been passed over in the plans for succession by Galerius, the senior emperor. Also like Constantine, Maxentius took advantage of local circumstances to seize power for himself. Constantine had relied on the inherited loyalties of his father's troops in York; Maxentius likewise came to power with the help of the praetorian guard, who killed the vicar of the urban prefect and perhaps a few other

officials; he also had the backing of the people.¹ Thereafter the careers of Maxentius and Constantine diverged, as the latter waged war along the Rhine frontier, while the former rarely if ever left the city of Rome.

Maxentius, in fact, had been living in Rome for some time. At the moment of his usurpation, he was living on a state-owned property six miles from the city on the Via Labicana.² Although Maxentius was the son of Maximian Herculius, one of the original tetrarchs, his father's abdication in 305 left Maxentius in an awkward position, captured by a pair of inscriptions found by the Via Labicana. They record dedications by Valerius Romulus, Maxentius' son, to his father and mother, thanking them for their loving affection; since Romulus could not have been more than a young boy, these dedications must have been set up by Maxentius himself in his son's name. While Maxentius' wife, as the daughter of Galerius, a reigning emperor, still retained her "most noble" title in this inscription, Maxentius and his son no longer had a claim to this status after Maximian's abdication. Instead, Maxentius called himself and his son "most distinguished."³ This was the standard title used by Roman senators. Passed over for promotion to the imperial college, Maxentius turned to an alternative source of status. By representing himself as a senator, he capitalized on his presence at Rome, and laid claim to the city for the first time as his own.

The impetus for Maxentius' seizure of power was the proclamation by Galerius that the city of Rome was to be subject to regular tax for the first time in 450 years.⁴ This

¹ Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 26.1-3; Zosimus, *Historia nova* 2.9.3, vicar (Abellius).

² Eutropius, *Breviarium* 10.2.3, "villa publica"; *Epitome de Caesaribus* 40.2, via Labicana.

³ *ILS* 1:152, nos. 666-67, "viro claris(simo)," "c(larissimus) p(uer)," "nob(ilissimae) fem(inae)."

⁴ Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 26.2. Roman citizens in Italy had not been subject to direct taxation since 167 BCE: Pliny, *Naturalis historia* 33.56.

abrupt reversal was only the logical conclusion of Diocletian's administrative reforms, which had reorganized Italy along the same lines as the other provinces of the empire, but it demonstrated, rather rudely, that Rome was no longer entitled to the same privileges it had long enjoyed. Quite apart from this administrative rationalization, Rome's stature had been diminished by Diocletian's belief that cities located on strategic lines of communication were better suited to be imperial residences. Thus new cities, such as Milan, Trier, Sirmium, and Nicomedia, gained a measure of the prestige, symbolized by monumental buildings, which had always been Rome's prerogative.⁵ While Rome was not neglected completely—the city did receive new baths named for Diocletian, a rebuilt Curia for the senate, and a new rostra in the Roman Forum—Diocletian's policies constituted an implicit rejection of the traditional relationship between emperors and the city of Rome.⁶ Emperors favored the new residences because they were closer to the frontiers, where all emperors were now expected to lead their armies in person. Moreover, this military context in which emperors now lived permanently bred a new imperial style, characterized by dazzling splendor and elaborate ceremonial, and requiring emperors to be addressed as “lord” and “god”; even officials who did not hold military ranks were now conceived as performing *militia* and wore elaborate military-style dress uniforms.⁷

This new idiom was the antithesis of Roman imperial traditions dating back to the first emperor, Augustus, who presented himself as a humble civilian leader, especially in

⁵ For the building programs in these new cities, Mayer (2002).

⁶ Curran (2000) 43-50, Marlowe (2004) 11-39.

⁷ Ancient observers ascribed the change to Diocletian: Aurelius Victor, *Caesares* 39.2-4, “plus quam civilia” (gold-embroidered robe, jeweled sandals), Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 15.5.18, “regio more” (kissing the purple). For bureaucrats' uniforms, see MacMullen (1964b) 308-09 and Kelly (2004) 20-22: “many of the formal trappings of later Roman bureaucracy were closely modeled on the army” (p. 20).

Rome itself.⁸ Since emperors, beginning in the third century, were less and less familiar with Rome's traditions—they were by now usually career military men from the Balkan provinces—there was now potential for great misunderstanding when emperors made their rare visits to the city of Rome. Most recently, the twentieth anniversary celebration of Diocletian's and Maximian's accession to the throne, in November 303, had turned sour when Diocletian left Rome early, “unable to endure the independence of the Roman people,” and entered on his ninth consulship at Ravenna instead.⁹ To make matters worse, a substructure of the Circus Maximus collapsed during the visit, perhaps in a stampede while the emperors were handing out gold and silver coins to the crowd.¹⁰ After Diocletian and Maximian abdicated in May 305, there were no fewer than six current and former emperors, but none of them lived permanently in Rome, and it is unclear whether any of them showed up when it was time to dedicate Diocletian's baths to “their Romans.”¹¹ Rome was estranged from its emperors.

Into this vacuum stepped Maxentius. In contrast to the hollow words of the tetrarchs, Maxentius represented himself as the champion and protector of the city of Rome: it was “his own city,” and he was the “preserver” of it, as he insisted on his coins.¹² The most important element of his appeal to Roman pride was his promise to return Rome to its rightful place as the center of the empire. Maxentius and Rome now became intertwined and interdependent. Since Maxentius was unable to secure

⁸ Wallace-Hadrill (1982).

⁹ Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 17.2, “libertatem populi Romani ferre non poterat.”

¹⁰ Chronographer of 354, *Chronographia urbis Romae*, s.v. Diocletianus et Maximianus, ed. Mommsen (1892) 148.

¹¹ *ILS* 1:148, no. 646, “Romanis suis dedicaverunt,” dated to between May 1, 305 and July 25, 306. Maximian and Severus were at least in Italy, but no source says that they came to Rome.

¹² His “favorite type” carried the legend “conservator urbis suae”: Sutherland (1967) 340, Cullhed (1994) 46-9.

recognition from his fellow emperors, he now derived his legitimacy directly from Rome itself. As he was the preserver of his own city, so Roma “was celebrated as Maxentius’ protectress.” A gold coin represented the goddess handing a globe, symbolizing universal dominion, to the emperor, shown seated and wearing consular robes; the legend pronounced Roma the “eternal authoress of our emperor.”¹³ Thus Maxentius “put to use the majesty of the city that he had seized.” Whenever he addressed his soldiers, “he boasted that he alone, together with them, was emperor; the others were fighting along the frontiers on his behalf.”¹⁴

Maxentius also gave physical expression to his policy of *Romanitas*, or “Romeness,” by enhancing the monumental center of the city with new buildings and monuments.¹⁵ After it was damaged by fire, Maxentius substantially remodeled the temple of Venus and Roma, a building which would become so synonymous with the city that it was known simply as the “temple of the city.”¹⁶ The magnificent rebuilding of this temple “was a self-consciously *Roman* contribution made by a resident Roman emperor.” The renovated temple became a fixture on his coinage, which depicted the goddess Roma seated in a temple, with the wolf and twins in the pediment, accompanied by the “preserver of his own city” legend.¹⁷ The she-wolf naturally recalled the memory of Romulus, the legendary founder of Rome. Maxentius’ own son was also named Romulus, and this all too convenient coincidence was consistently exploited. When

¹³ Cullhed (1994) 47, Sutherland (1967) 373, no. 173, “*Romae aeternae auctrici Aug(usti) N(ostri)*.”

¹⁴ *Panegyrici latini* 12(9).3.7, “*utebatur eius urbis maiestate quam ceperat*,” 14.6, “*se solum cum illis imperare, alios per limites pro se militare iactabat*.”

¹⁵ Surveys of Maxentius’ building projects in Cullhed (1994) 49-60, Curran (2000) 54-63, Marlowe (2004) 39-61.

¹⁶ Chronographer of 354, *Chronographia urbis Romae*, s.v. Maxentius, ed. Mommsen (1892) 148, fire, “*templum Romae*,” Aurelius Victor, *Caesares* 40.26, “*urbis fanum*,” Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 16.10.14, “*urbis templum*.”

¹⁷ Curran (2000) 57, Roman contribution, Cullhed (1994) 47, coinage.

Hadrian had built the temple of Venus and Roma, he had moved the Colossus down into the valley below, adjacent to the Flavian Amphitheater that would eventually take on its name. Following the death in 309 of Romulus, his son, the features of the Colossus were re-carved in his image, and a new inscription recorded the rededication of the statue in his honor.¹⁸ Maxentius himself set up a statue of Mars with Romulus and Remus in the Roman Forum, next to the black stone believed to mark the tomb of the founder Romulus; this dedication was made on 21 April, the traditional date of the founding of the city. Since Maxentius, too, had two sons, one of them named Romulus, he was in effect likening himself to Mars, the father of the first Romulus; he even gave to Mars one of his own epithets, “unconquered.” Thus Maxentius’ dedication to Mars and the twins was actually in honor of himself and his own sons.¹⁹

Ironically, Maxentius’ contrived confusion between Romulus the founder and Romulus his son has spread to one of Maxentius’ other buildings, a rotunda located at the foot of the rise known as the Velia. Although the function of this building is much disputed, signs still identify it as the “temple of Romulus,” probably leading unsuspecting tourists to assume that this must refer to the founder of the city. This misleading label may not be unlike the effect Maxentius himself was trying to achieve with this structure. Literary sources of the late Republic place a shrine to the Penates (ancient deities of the household) and a cenotaph for the Valerian family in this area. Thus Maxentius may have been associating himself once again with one of the most archaic cults in Rome, and

¹⁸ An inscription, found in the 1980s in the attic of the arch of Constantine, attests to this rededication, carried out by Cornelius Fortunatianus, a governor of Sardinia under Maxentius (*ILS* 1:153, no. 672). For a list of authors who have discussed this text, which remains unpublished, Marlowe (2004) 171 n. 33.

¹⁹ *ILS* 3.2:XXIII, no. 8935 (year unknown), “Marti invicto patri | et aeternae urbis suae | conditoribus | dominus noster | imp(erator) Maxent[iu]s p(ius) f(elix) | invictus Aug(ustus).” *Panegyrici latini* 12(9).16.5, a second son was alive in October 312.

extending his “Valerian” ancestry—which stretched back only as far as his father Maximian’s elevation to imperial rank by Valerius Diocletianus—all the way back to Valerius Poplicola, one of the consuls of 509 BCE, the first year of the Republic. Poplicola, because he was building a house atop the Velia that was beginning to look more like a citadel, had been suspected of trying to make himself king, but had moved his house to the foot of the hill in order to demonstrate his civic-mindedness; after his death the Valerian *gens* was granted a cenotaph on the site.²⁰ Poplicola thus made the perfect ancestor for Maxentius: not only was he a Valerius, but he evoked memories of both the monarchy and the Republic.

While the archaic topographical associations may have been useful, the rotunda was probably designed as a transitional “pivot” between the old Roman Forum and the newer imperial forums that had been built to the north. The rotunda gave access, through a marble-framed doorway in the rear, to the southeastern hall of the Forum of Peace, where the headquarters of the urban prefecture appear to have been located from the early third century.²¹ The rotunda and the hall connected to it were immediately adjacent to a massive new basilica which Maxentius built on the Velia. This basilica was probably intended to be an audience hall for the urban prefect, whose offices were in this same area.²² Maxentius, in fact, linked himself closely with the urban prefecture: beginning in 309, he made the prefecture an annual office whose term of office began on his imperial

²⁰ This theory was proposed by Coarelli (1986) and is endorsed by Cullhed (1994) 52-55 and Curran (2000) 59-60. Varro, *De lingua latina* 5.54, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Antiquitates romanae* 1.68.1, shrine to the Penates; Livy, *Ab urbe condita* 2.7.5-12, Poplicola.

²¹ Marlowe (2004) 50, pivot, 50-52, headquarters of urban prefecture.

²² For a plan of what is sometimes called the “Forum of Maxentius,” consisting of the rotunda, basilica, and temple of Venus and Roma, see Cullhed (1994) 50.

anniversary day, October 28.²³ By associating himself with the most important official in the city, Maxentius simultaneously advertised his devotion to Rome and the support he received from the senate. The emperor's relationship with the urban prefect became a symbolic expression of the consensus between emperor and senate.

Maxentius' chief ideological contribution had been to "make Rome a genuine imperial capital around the person of a resident emperor."²⁴ It was not to be. On October 28, 312, Rome's emperor was defeated at the Milvian bridge, three miles outside the walls of "his own city." The day could have been remembered as the anniversary of his proclamation as emperor; instead, in a calendar produced 42 years later, it was simply labeled as the anniversary of the "expulsion of the tyrant."²⁵

Constantine Augustus

Constantine delayed his entry into Rome until the next day. The night of October 28 must have been a tense one for the senators in the city. An orator of the late fourth century recalled Constantine as leading an "army of Gauls" in his invasion of Italy. The label was calculated to evoke memories of the last time Rome was captured by Gauls, in 390 BCE; then, too, Rome was gripped by a "general panic," followed by a night of anxious apprehension as the city could only wait in suspense for the inevitable arrival of the enemy.²⁶ There were, however, fresher memories. Just five years before, the emperor Galerius had invaded Italy and marched right up to the walls of Rome; although Rome's fortifications forced him to withdraw, Italy suffered such devastation during his

²³ Barnes (1982) 111-12.

²⁴ Curran (2000) 80.

²⁵ *Inscriptiones Italiae* 13.2:257, s.v. 28 October, "evictio tyranni."

²⁶ Libanius, *Orat.* 30.6, army of Gauls; Livy, *Ab urbe condita* 5.39.5, *publicus pavor*, 6-7, anxious apprehension.

retreat that one hostile observer called him “formerly a Roman emperor, now Italy’s destroyer.”²⁷ Perhaps the most direct precedent for an invasion of Italy that resulted in Rome’s capture by enemy forces was the arrival of Septimius Severus in 193. Like Constantine, Severus had invaded Italy from the north, marched on Rome, and defeated an emperor whose control of Rome depended on the praetorian guards. Severus’ approach at the head of his army produced a “great panic” among the praetorians and citizens alike, who now regretted that they had declared him a public enemy.²⁸ Severus scrupulously dismounted and changed into civilian garb at the Flaminian gate, but his army was still at his back. According to the historian Cassius Dio, who was present, the triumphal spectacle was the most brilliant he had ever seen. The procession ended with the usual sacrifice before the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitoline hill.²⁹

Meanwhile, the whole city overflowed with soldiers who established barracks in temples, porticoes, and dwellings on the Palatine. The presence of so many soldiers in the “city of the toga” made Severus’ arrival “hateful and terrifying.”³⁰ The following day, Severus delivered a modest speech in the senate, pledging never to execute a single senator. His promises, however, were undermined by the presence of armed soldiers in the senate house who demanded a bounty; it was not long before he broke his own law.³¹ In the fourth century, Severus was mainly remembered for living up to the harshness of his name and killing dozens of senators. After he defeated a second rival in 197 who had received some senatorial support, Severus gave a fearsome speech in the senate in which

²⁷ Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 27.7, “Romanus quondam imperator, nunc populator Italiae.”

²⁸ Historia Augusta, *Severus* 6.6, *ingens trepidatio*; Herodian, *Historia* 2.14.1.

²⁹ Cassius Dio, *Historiae Romanae* 75(74).1.3-5. Herodian, *Historia* 2.14.2, sacrifice.

³⁰ Prudentius, *Peristephanon* 12.56, *urbi togatae*, Historia Augusta, *Severus* 7.1-3, “ingressus Severi odiosus atque terribilis.”

³¹ Historia Augusta, *Severus* 7.6, soldiers in Curia; Cassius Dio, *Historiae Romanae* 75(74).2.1-2, executions.

he praised the cruelty of Sulla, Marius, and Augustus, and criticized the clemency of Pompey and Caesar as ruinous to their own fortunes. He condemned twenty-nine senatorial supporters of his rival and pardoned thirty-five others. “All who were prominent at that time in the senate or who were richer and nobler in the provinces were destroyed ruthlessly.”³² Not since the days of Septimius Severus had one Roman emperor arrived with an army to fight another emperor for control of the capital. Senators’ memories of Severus would have supplied ample grounds for apprehension on the eve of Constantine’s arrival.

Entering the city of Rome on October 29, 312, Constantine immediately launched a propaganda campaign against the memory of Maxentius, which sought “both to demonize Maxentius and to continue his policies.”³³ It was at this time that the idea of Maxentius the tyrant was invented. Since Maxentius had wrapped himself in the traditions of the regal period, especially the figure of Romulus, Constantine obliged by painting him as a second Tarquin the Proud, the last king of Rome who was driven out by the founders of the Republic. Maxentius, it was claimed, had shamelessly debauched countless wives of senators, including a prefect’s wife, who, like Lucretia, had preferred suicide to dishonor, and so became an example of incorruptible Christian virtue. Maxentius had murdered senators for their property, and oppressed the people so grievously by his exactions that there was widespread famine.³⁴ Maxentius had been the

³² Julian, *Caesares* 312D, “Severus, a man full of bitterness and a punisher,” Cassius Dio, *Historiae Romanae* 76(75).8.1-4, criticism of Augustus and deaths of 29 senators. At this point in the text, the *Historia Augusta* lists 41 senators executed by Severus (*Severus* 13). Herodian, *Historia* 3.8.7, destroyed ruthlessly.

³³ Marlowe (2004) 64.

³⁴ *Panegyrici latini* 4(10).8.3, 31; Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 1.33-36; Prudentius, *Contra Symmachum* 1:467-71, 489-95, senators released from prison, with Ruysschaert (1962-63a) 88, observing the correspondence between these verses and one of the reused Antonine panels in the attic of the arch of

“murderer of the city,” his son the “false Romulus.”³⁵ If Maxentius had been a royal tyrant, then by analogy Constantine became the “liberator” and “restorer of the city,” slogans that soon appeared in a panegyric of 313 and on coins struck by Rome’s mint.³⁶

Even as he focused on consolidating control of Maxentius’ city, Constantine did not lose sight of a second objective—to avoid being perceived as the second coming of Septimius Severus. When Severus had arrived in Rome in 193, he had discharged all the praetorians and banished them from Rome, but then formed a new guard composed of his own supporters that was even more numerous; by contrast, Constantine in 312 disbanded the praetorian cohorts permanently and redeployed the men to serve on the northern frontiers.³⁷ Thus Constantine simultaneously struck a blow against Maxentius’ most dangerous supporters and distanced himself from the example of Severus. This policy was calculated to appeal to senators, whose rivalry with the praetorians was as old as the empire itself. In the turbulent third century, the senate had clashed with the praetorians several times.³⁸ Under Maxentius, there had been a riot in which a Roman mob attacked a soldier from the Balkan province of Moesia, and in retaliation Maxentius had allegedly

Constantine. Ironically, it may have been Maxentius who first dredged up the Tarquin comparison—against his own (estranged) father Maximian: Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 28.4, “tamquam Superbus alter exactus.” For the Christian reinterpretation of Lucretia, see Trout (1994). Notwithstanding the other propaganda, the food shortage may have been real: Chronographer of 354, *Chronographia urbis Romae*, s.v. Maxentius, ed. Mommsen (1892) 148, “fames magna fuit,” caused by the interruption of grain shipments during the rebellion of Domitius Alexander in Africa in 308-09 (for this date, see Barnes (1982) 14-15).

³⁵ *Panegyrici latini* 12(9).18.1, *parricidam urbis, falsum Romulum*.

³⁶ *Panegyrici latini* 12(9).2.4, 3.2. For the coins, see Sutherland (1967) 387, nos. 303-04, *liberatori urbis suae*, 388, no. 312, *restitutor urbis suae*, both struck for Constantine alone.

³⁷ Herodian, *Historia* 3.13.4, the guard was quadrupled, doubtless an exaggeration; *Panegyrici latini* 12(9).21.2-3, redeployment.

³⁸ Curran (2000) 26-35.

permitted the guard to massacre six thousand citizens.³⁹ Since Maxentius had been supported by the guard, it was easy to claim that it had been “more useful to factions than to the city of Rome.” Moreover, Constantine banned the carrying of arms and the wearing of military clothing in the city, a policy that capitalized on the hostility of civilians, especially senators, toward the open display of armed force in the city.⁴⁰ Long ago, in the Republic, it had been illegal to station armed soldiers within the sacred boundary of the city; Constantine now portrayed himself as upholding the civilian, Republican character of Rome, in which the senate would reclaim its ancient position as the most powerful institution of the city.

The most vivid demonstration of Constantine’s policy of demilitarization was reserved for the *equites singulares*, the cavalry arm of the praetorian guard. Their barracks on the Caelian Hill were leveled in order to build a new Christian basilica which became St. John Lateran; the arrangements for building this basilica may have been made less than two weeks after Constantine took control of Rome. Thus Constantine “monumentalized the erasure” of the guard while simultaneously announcing his patronage of his new religion.⁴¹ The treatment of Maxentius’ cavalry guard mirrored Constantine’s policy of erasing Maxentius’ memory from the urban landscape. Buildings and monuments associated with Maxentius were systematically finished, modified, or relabeled with Constantine’s name.⁴² According to Aurelius Victor, these rededications were carried out by authority of the senate, which “consecrated all the works which

³⁹ Chronographer of 354, *Chronographia urbis Romae*, s.v. Maxentius, ed. Mommsen (1892) 148, “Romani traxerunt militem Moesiacum et occisi sunt Romani a militibus homines VI milia,” Aurelius Victor, *Caesares* 40.24, “praetorianis caedem vulgi quondam [Maxentius] annuerit.”

⁴⁰ Aurelius Victor, *Caesares* 40.25, “quorum odio praetoriae legiones ac subsidia factionibus aptiora quam urbi Romae sublata penitus, simul arma atque usus indumenti militaris.”

⁴¹ Curran (2000) 93-96, Lateran, with Krautheimer (1983) 12-5; Marlowe (2004) 71, erasure.

⁴² Curran (2000) 76-90; Marlowe (2004) 62-112.

[Maxentius] had constructed in magnificent fashion—the temple of the city [i.e. the temple of Venus and Roma] and the basilica [of Maxentius]—to the merits of Flavius.” The use of Constantine’s family name responded to his ambition to establish a new ruling dynasty.⁴³ The rotunda beside the basilica also received a new façade and inscription, which certainly mentioned Constantine and probably his triumph.⁴⁴ The Colossus, which Maxentius had dedicated to his deceased son Romulus, got yet another makeover, in which it reassumed the features of the sun-god, and the inscription to Romulus was removed and buried in the attic of the new arch of Constantine.⁴⁵

The decree by which the senate rededicated Maxentius’ buildings was a grateful response to Constantine’s speeches in the senate. Probably Constantine appeared in the senate on the day after his triumphal entry into the senate, just as Severus had waited one day in 193.⁴⁶ Although an anonymous panegyrist claimed not to have any specific information on what Constantine had said in the senate, he evidently promised to restore the ancient authority of that institution and offered clemency to the supporters of Maxentius.⁴⁷ The senate in return granted Constantine the right of listing his name first in the imperial college.⁴⁸ The senate also dedicated to Constantine a golden statue of a god.⁴⁹ This golden statue was one of a number of statues, “most of them of gold or

⁴³ Aurelius Victor, *Caesares* 40.26; Van Dam (2007) 88-129.

⁴⁴ *CIL* 6.1147, with Coarelli (1986) 11 and Curran (2000) 82-83.

⁴⁵ For the relationship between the Colossus and the arch, see Marlowe (2006).

⁴⁶ Herodian, *Historia* 2.14.3.

⁴⁷ *Panegyrici latini* 12(9).20.1-2.

⁴⁸ Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 44.11, “*primi nominis titulum.*”

⁴⁹ *Panegyrici latini* 12(9).25.4, with Nixon and Rodgers (1994) 331 n.157 on this problematic passage: “*Merito igitur tibi, Constantine, et nuper senatus signum dei [mss. dee] et paulo ante Italia scutum et coronam, cuncta aurea, dedicarunt.*”

silver,” erected in the most frequented places in the city.⁵⁰ At the same time, a priesthood was instituted for the Flavian family in Africa.⁵¹ Statues in gold and silver were qualitatively different from statues in bronze or marble; they verged dangerously close to divine honors, which is why early emperors did not accept them. Augustus characteristically took credit for removing eighty silver statues of himself from the city of Rome, and transferred the proceeds to Palatine Apollo.⁵² By the later empire this taboo had been overcome: the senate’s first attempt to honor Constantine was to represent him as a god.

Constantine had a different and more complex understanding of his relationship to the divine. A Gallic orator in 310 had claimed that Constantine saw a vision of Apollo.⁵³ The next year another orator spoke for the first time of the “divine mind” that governed the universe. By 313 a third orator was able to provide a rudimentary theology: the divine mind was superior to the lesser gods, and it revealed itself to Constantine alone, while the rest of mankind was left in the charge of the lesser gods. In particular, the divine mind had imparted to Constantine the impulse to liberate Rome from the tyranny

⁵⁰ Aurelius Victor, *Caesares* 40.28, “statuae locis quam celeberrimis, quarum plures ex auro aut argenteae sunt.”

⁵¹ Aurelius Victor, *Caesares* 40.28, “tum per Africam sacerdotium decretum Flaviae genti.”

⁵² Augustus, *Res gestae* 24.2; Suetonius, *Augustus* 52. Pliny, *Panegyricus* 52, praised Trajan for having only a few statues in bronze, in contrast to Domitian’s many statues in gold and silver. The Severan historian Cassius Dio imagined that Maecenas would have counseled Augustus against accepting any gold or silver images, or any temples to himself: *Historiae romanae* 52.35.3-4. Marcus Aurelius and Faustina received, by decree of the senate, silver images in the temple of Venus and Roma: 72.31.1. The short-lived Didius Julianus supposedly refused the senate’s offer of a gold statue, observing that the gold and silver statues of previous emperors had been destroyed: 75(74).14.2a. For the meaning of such images, see Scott (1931).

⁵³ The literature on Constantine’s visions is vast, but I am principally concerned with the messages that were propagated at Rome, rather than with the visions themselves. For a discussion of Constantine’s vision of Apollo, his vision of the “cross in the sky,” and his dream on the eve of the battle of the Milvian bridge, see Potter (2004) 353-63, especially nn. 103, 119. The vision of the cross may have been a solar halo (Weiss (2003)), but it should not be backdated and identified with the vision of Apollo mentioned by the orator of 310; the orator of 313 and Eusebius agree that Constantine had his Christian vision while contemplating the invasion of Italy (hence late 311/early 312).

of Maxentius. Although it is difficult to know what was meant by “divine mind,” it was clearly this explanation that was circulated at Rome immediately after he captured the city. Not only is it attested in the oration of 313, but it was also the version that was monumentalized in the triumphal arch dedicated to Constantine in Rome in 315. Both the orator and the inscription on the arch mention “liberation” and “mind” in the same breath.⁵⁴ According to Christian writers, Constantine personally took a hand in shaping the publicity surrounding this event. When he was greeted by crowds in Rome who hailed him as “redeemer, savior, and benefactor,” he ordered that a statue be set up with an inscription explaining that he had “restored the senate and people of Rome to their ancient splendor” by the power of the cross. A variant of this story held that it was while the senate was dedicating statues to him that he ordered the inscription to be set up, and a cross to be added to the hand of an already-existing statue.⁵⁵ What the Christian variants have in common is that Rome was trying to honor Constantine, but that Constantine insisted on attributing the credit to the Christian God. The miscommunication between Rome and Constantine reflected in the Christian tradition would explain why “divine mind” must have seemed a felicitously non-committal compromise. Both sides were groping for ways of representing a Christian emperor in a Roman context.

⁵⁴ *Panegyrici latini* 6(7).21.4-5, Apollo, 5(8).10.2, “divina illa mens, quae totum mundum hunc gubernat,” 12(9).2.4-5, “liberandae urbis tempus,” “habes profecto aliquod cum illa mente divina, Constantine, secretum, quae delegata nostri diis minoribus cura uni se tibi dignatur ostendere.” *ILS* 1:156-57, no. 694, “liberatori urbis,” “instinctu divinitatis, mentis magnitudine.”

⁵⁵ Eusebius, *HE* 9.9.9-11, acclamations, new statue, and inscription; Rufinus, *HE* 9.9.10, senate, addition of cross to pre-existing statue, and inscription, 11, “in hoc singulari signo, quod est verae virtutis insigne, urbem Romam senatumque et populum Romanum iugo tyrannicae dominationis ereptam pristinae libertati nobilitatique restitui.” The statue in question was probably the colossal acrolithic statue that sat in an apse of the basilica of Maxentius, of which the head and two right hands—proving that a change was in fact made in the object being held—are preserved in the Capitoline Museums.

At least the senate could take heart from the traditional language of restoring the senate and people of Rome. Here was something familiar: Constantine seemed to be presenting himself in the image of Augustus, the first emperor who had claimed to liberate the republic and return it to the control of the senate and people of Rome.⁵⁶ Yet this familiar language had been so shamelessly abused over the centuries that it is doubtful whether anyone knew what it really meant any longer. After all, none other than Septimius Severus had used the same words, emblazoning them on the triumphal arch he built in the Roman Forum, adjacent to the senate-house. That arch had been dedicated to Severus and his sons by the senate and Roman people “in return for the restoration of the republic and the enlargement of the empire of the Roman people.”⁵⁷ Thus a Roman audience might well have found Constantine’s restoration motif ambiguous: was he announcing himself a second Augustus, or a second Severus? There was no guarantee that Constantine would take the “right” lessons from history. Severus, after all, had spoken the same language of restoration, but had also praised Augustus for his ruthlessness and executed dozens of senators.

Constantine’s decision to demilitarize the city had simultaneously eliminated Maxentius’ most potent supporters and distanced himself from the example of Severus. Constantine now implemented a second policy with the same objective. The most visible way of pardoning the city for its misplaced allegiance to Maxentius was to extend his clemency to the leading senators of the former regime. Constantine now began to link himself with the urban prefects who had served Maxentius, much as he had inscribed his

⁵⁶ Augustus, *Res gestae* 1.1, “in libertatem vindicavi,” 34.1, “rem publicam ex mea potestate in senatus populique Romani arbitrium transtuli.”

⁵⁷ *ILS* 1:103, no. 425, “ob rem publicam restitutam imperiumque populi Romani propagatum.”

own name on Maxentius' buildings. The reappointment of these prefects thus served as a bridge between the two regimes, and signaled Constantine's interest in continuity and reconciliation with the Roman aristocracy.⁵⁸ Constantine's first three urban prefects had all served in the same office under Maxentius. The first was Annius Anullinus, who was appointed by Maxentius on the eve of his defeat and retained by Constantine for another month.⁵⁹ Although little is known about Anullinus' terms as prefect, he is better attested as the proconsul of Africa under Diocletian, where he was responsible for the deaths of numerous Christian martyrs. His past record as a persecutor precluded neither his own continuation as prefect, nor his son's appointment as proconsul of Africa in 313—where he received letters from Constantine on the restoration of Church property and the privileges of clergy.⁶⁰ Constantine's second prefect, too, was an old hand: Aradius Rufinus had served Maxentius as prefect for most of 312.⁶¹ The fact that Rufinus had stepped down only a month before indicates that he was recalled by Constantine in order to signal his policy of reconciliation with the Roman aristocracy. A later prefect remembered Rufinus as "loved by all, a protector of the fearful," who skillfully managed good emperors and usurpers alike.⁶² Whereas Severus' promises of fair treatment had soon vanished in a senatorial bloodbath, Constantine's reappointment of prominent senators embodied his pledge of clemency toward the senate as a whole.

⁵⁸ Potter (2004) 388, policy of reconciliation. By contrast, repeated urban prefectures were virtually unknown in Constantinople (one instance only, not connected with a change of regime). Since civil wars were less common in the east, there was less occasion for repeated prefectures, and senators (and prefects) were less important in Constantinople anyway, since the emperor exerted more direct control over Constantinople than he did over Rome.

⁵⁹ Chastagnol (1962) 45-48, 63.

⁶⁰ *PLRE* 1:79, "C. Annius Anullinus 3," father; 1:78-79, "Anullinus 2," son. The careers of Anullinus father and son indicate that religious affiliation did not as a rule determine either appointments to high office or administrative performance in office.

⁶¹ Chastagnol (1962) 59-63; *PLRE* 1:775, "Aradius Rufinus 10."

⁶² Symmachus, *Ep.* 1.2.3, "unus amor cunctis et praesidium trepidorum."

After Maxentius' reign of six years, Constantine stayed in Rome for a little over two months, long enough to celebrate the consular games in January 313.⁶³ He left the city in the hands of the prefect Rufinus, who later that year handed off to Caecionius Rufius Volusianus. Like Anullinus and Rufinus, Volusianus had rendered signal service to Maxentius.⁶⁴ It was Volusianus who, as praetorian prefect, had suppressed the rebellion of Domitius Alexander in Africa in 309, which had caused severe food shortages in Rome. Volusianus was subsequently rewarded with the urban prefecture, a post which conferred special honor on this occasion, as his term in office coincided to the day with the beginning and end of Maxentius' fifth year in power. The honors Volusianus had received from Maxentius proved no impediment to his advancement under Constantine, for he was made consul in 314. Perhaps as a gesture of thanks for this appointment, Volusianus dedicated a statue of Constantine in the Forum of Trajan, praising him as the "restorer of the human race, enlarger of the Roman empire and dominion, and founder of eternal security."⁶⁵ His consulship was held simultaneously with a second stint as urban prefect from December 313 to August 315. Thus his second prefecture coincided with Constantine's decennial anniversary, just as his first prefecture had fallen in Maxentius' fifth year. By such reappointments, Constantine simultaneously honored these aristocrats and tried to erase the memory of their service to Maxentius.

Volusianus was still in office when Constantine returned to Rome to celebrate the beginning of his tenth year in power on July 25, 315, and he probably had a role in

⁶³ *Panegyrici latini* 4(10).33.6, "bimestris fere cura."

⁶⁴ Chastagnol (1962) 52-58, 63; *PLRE* 1:978-78, "C. Ceionius Rufius Volusianus 4."

⁶⁵ *ILS* 1:156, no. 692, "restitutori humani generis, propagatori imperii dicionis(ue) Romanae, fundatori etiam securitatis aeternae."

supervising the construction and dedication of the new triumphal arch.⁶⁶ This arch was an unusually complex monument that could be interpreted in multiple ways. By its location in an area rich with memories of the first Flavian dynasty, and in its framing of the Colossus, the arch gave monumental expression to Constantine's ambitions to establish his own Flavian dynasty and to his links with the sun-god. At the same time, the arch was formally bestowed by the senate and people of Rome. Since Constantine was away from Rome between 313 and 315, it is doubtful that he could have been consulted on the details of the arch. Instead, it is more likely that the decisions about the sculptural decoration on the arch, much of it reused from second-century monuments, together with the wording of the dedicatory inscription, were in the hands of the "local, senatorial elites." Thus the arch was also a senatorial statement in the continuing dialogue between Constantine and the senate that had started upon his arrival in Rome in 312.⁶⁷

The architectural design and sculptural program of Constantine's arch were designed to draw comparisons and contrasts with earlier Roman emperors, which in turn embodied the senate's hopes for Constantine.⁶⁸ The first, and probably most noticeable element of this message, was a pointed rejection of Septimius Severus. The basic proportions of Constantine's arch—the height of the columns and the width of the central passageway—were identical to those of Severus' arch in the Roman Forum, "suggesting that the earlier building represented not just a precedent in general terms, but the specific

⁶⁶ The old problem of whether the arch was a new construction, or a rebuilding of an earlier arch, does not affect Volusianus' responsibility for preparing the monument for Constantine's visit. For a discussion of the problem, concluding that the arch was built *ex novo* for Constantine, see Marlowe (2004) 158-65.

⁶⁷ Marlowe (2004) 206.

⁶⁸ For the view that the arch "constructs [Constantine] in the way [the senate] hoped he would turn out," see Elsner (2000) 171 n.28. This thesis is further developed in Marlowe (2004) 202-56.

basis for Constantine's project."⁶⁹ The use of the Severan arch's dimensions makes the contrast in their ideological emphasis all the more pointed. The most distinctive feature of Severus' arch—one that may have appeared for the first time on this arch—was the use of four enormous sculpted panels showing actual battle scenes from the emperor's Parthian campaigns.⁷⁰ The language of Severus' inscription drove home this message. Sprawling across the entire width of the attic, it used the full imperial titulature, including the two victory titles claimed on the basis of the campaigns depicted in the sculpted panels below.⁷¹

Measured against this muscular demonstration of military prowess, the arch of Constantine strikes a markedly more civilian posture. There were only two relatively small scenes of Constantine's actual battles, confined to narrow friezes that depicted his victories at Verona and the Milvian bridge. An equally striking departure from the earlier arch was the handling of the dedicatory inscription in the attic. In contrast to the full-length inscription of Severus, Constantine's was reduced to a center panel. Moreover, Constantine was named comparatively plainly as Flavius Constantinus, and no victory titles were used, a surprising omission on a triumphal arch; instead Constantine's

⁶⁹ Jones (2000) 124. Peirce (1989) points out correspondences in some of the sculptural motifs as well, noticeably in the use of river-gods and Victories in the spandrels and of captives on the pedestals (p. 413), but I cannot agree with his conclusion that "by quoting the Arch of Septimius Severus Constantine was attempting to compare himself with another emperor remembered with reverence" (p. 414).

⁷⁰ Brilliant (1967) 220-1, with comprehensive photographs at plates 60-95; on the Severan arch's innovative use of war imagery, Lusnia (2006). Severus' arch may have responded to Augustus' Parthian arch diagonally opposite: Brilliant (1967) 85-90, site of arch; de Maria (1988) 269-72, no. 59, Augustus' Parthian arch.

⁷¹ *ILS* 1:103, no. 425, "Parthico Arabico et Parthico Adiabeno," with Brilliant (1967) 91-5, who believes that the inscription preserves the wording of the authorizing decree of the senate.

titulature emphasized his civilian qualities as “dutiful and fortunate” and the “greatest Augustus.”⁷²

The second theme in the senatorial program of Constantine’s arch was an implicit recommendation that Constantine adopt positive imperial role models, namely Augustus and the “good emperors” of the second century. In the dedicatory inscription, the senate praised Constantine for “avenging the Republic, with the help of his army, both on the tyrant and on all his faction at one moment with just arms.” The language echoed that of Augustus, who had also claimed to use his army to liberate the Republic when it was “oppressed by the domination of a faction,” and to have “avenged by lawful tribunals” the murder of Julius Caesar.⁷³ The senate also expressed its hopes that Constantine would emulate the good emperors through its decision to decorate the arch with reused sculpture from second-century monuments. These elements were taken from various monuments to Trajan, Hadrian, and Marcus Aurelius; in most of the twenty reused panels, the heads of these earlier emperors were re-carved into heads of Constantine, or sometimes into heads of Constantius I, his father. The effect of this reuse of second-century elements was to turn the arch of Constantine into a “panegyric of sculptures.” Constantine was presented as a conservative who could restore the empire to its happy condition in the second century. Fittingly, a frieze that depicted Constantine addressing the people from the rostra also showed statues of Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius that stood at each end of the rostra; the reality of the fourth century was neatly inserted into a

⁷² *ILS* 1:156, no. 694, “Imp(eratori) Caes(ari) Fl(avio Constantino maximo p(io) f(elici) Augusto.”

⁷³ *ILS* 1:156, no. 694, “cum exercitu suo tam de tyranno quam de omni eius factione uno tempore iustis rempublicam ultus est armis.” Augustus, *Res Gestae* 1-2, “rem publicam dominatione factionis oppressam in libertatem vindicavi,” “iudiciis legitimis ultus eorum facinus.” The similarity in the inscriptions is noted also by Van Dam (2007) 48-9.

second-century background. The arch also suggested how Constantine was supposed to accomplish this restoration. If the panels of the frieze were read in the proper sequence, it yielded nothing less than an ideology of empire. Beginning on the short west side and continuing along the south, east, and north, the viewer saw a progression from scenes of warfare to scenes of triumph. The point was that the fighting took place outside Rome, and the triumphal celebrations took place in the city. It was an expression of the traditional view that Rome was still the center of the empire—a view that by this time was held more by Rome’s senators than by its emperors.⁷⁴

Thus the senators expressed their hope that Constantine would govern from Rome as a civilian in the tradition of the good emperors of the second century; they also registered their disagreement with the unduly militaristic self-image that Septimius Severus had promoted on his arch. While the arch of Constantine was not without military scenes, Constantine was pointedly portrayed as a civilian within the city limits, and a devotee of traditional activities such as hunting and sacrifice, rather than as a military man living in armed camps. Ironically, the arch of Severus was actually portrayed in one of the scenes on Constantine’s arch: it appeared in the background of the frieze that portrayed Constantine addressing the people of Rome from the rostra. What was originally a military monument was reduced to a mere backdrop for the proper civilian activities of the Roman Forum. Constantine, they hoped, would avoid the example of Severus, and instead model himself on the emperors of the second century,

⁷⁴ Ruysschaert (1962-63a) 80, progression from military to triumphal scenes, 92, panegyric of sculptures. Potter (2004) 360-2, Constantine on the rostra and “message of conservatism” (p.362). Van Dam (2007) 46, “through the medium of this arch, the senate and people of Rome were both applauding the emperor and hoping to shape his behavior. In particular, they hoped to reinstate the priority of Rome itself.”

and on Augustus, the first emperor, whose memory endured in the titlature of every emperor who followed him.⁷⁵

Many happy returns

The senate had hoped that Constantine would rule in the manner of a traditional, civilian emperor living at Rome. Constantine, however, only stayed for a little over two months from October 312 to January 313, and for another two months from July to September 315. His quick departures indicated that Constantine planned to rule from the new imperial residences that were far more convenient than Rome for the conduct of military operations. Nevertheless, Diocletian and Maximian's twentieth anniversary celebrations in Rome in 303 had established a precedent for returning to Rome occasionally to celebrate major anniversaries or triumphs.⁷⁶

The arch of Constantine had given monumental expression to the senate's understanding of how Constantine ought to conduct himself in relation to the city of Rome. In addition to celebrating the defeat of Maxentius and the liberation of Rome, the arch was explicitly a monument in honor of Constantine's *decennalia*, or first ten years in power. Since Constantine dated his accession to July 25, 306, the day on which he was acclaimed emperor at York by his father's army, it is likely that the arch was dedicated on July 25, 315, the day which marked the beginning of Constantine's tenth year in power. The arch carried brief inscriptions on its south and north sides linking the celebration of the ten-year anniversary with prayers for another such celebration in the

⁷⁵ For the idea that "Augustus" as an imperial title could evoke memories of Augustus the emperor, see Pliny, *Panegyricus* 88.10.

⁷⁶ Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 17.2, vicennalia of Diocletian and Maximian.

twentieth year.⁷⁷ Thus these short texts not only expressed the senate's desire that Constantine reign for another ten years, but also its expectation that he would return to celebrate his *vicennalia* at Rome. In 315, this expectation must have seemed reasonable. By this reckoning, Constantine should at least be present in Rome on July 25, 325. Constantine spent most of the next ten years on the Danube frontier, preoccupied with a stand-off against his only remaining imperial colleague, Licinius, which twice broke out into open warfare.⁷⁸ Even when Constantine spent the summer of 318 in northern Italy, he did not travel south to Rome.⁷⁹ Instead, he patronized newer cities, such as Trier, Sirmium, and Serdica, the last of which he was even wont to call "my Rome."⁸⁰

Without direct access to the emperor, senators at Rome could only react to imperial policies from a distance. Constantine's confrontation with Licinius in the years between 316 and 324 was closely intertwined with the politics of the extended Flavian family, precisely the sort of information that was most difficult and dangerous for senators at Rome to obtain. In the aftermath of the defeat of Maxentius, Constantine had forged an alliance with Licinius, embodied in the latter's marriage to Constantia, a half-sister of Constantine.⁸¹ This alliance quickly outlived its usefulness. Once Licinius eliminated Maximinus Daia, the last survivor from the Tetrarchic age, Constantine and Licinius had little reason to cooperate; each was intent on establishing a family dynasty that necessarily would exclude the other's children. Sometime in late 315 or early 316, Constantine proposed to Licinius that they make Bassianus, the husband of Constantine's

⁷⁷ *ILS* 1:156, no. 694, "sic X sic XX" (south side), "votis (solutis) X votis (susceptis) XX" (north side).

⁷⁸ On the tensions between Constantine and Licinius, see Lenski (2006) 72-77.

⁷⁹ Barnes (1982) 73-77, Constantine's movements between 315 and 326.

⁸⁰ Anonymus post Dionem (= Dio Continuatus), *Frag.* 15.1, ed. Müller (1851) 199.

⁸¹ *Origo Constantini imperatoris* 5.13.

half-sister Anastasia, a junior emperor (Caesar), with responsibility for Italy. Licinius countered by allegedly suborning Bassianus to assassinate Constantine; Bassianus was caught, and the obscure affair led to the death of Bassianus and the first open rupture between Licinius and Constantine. Licinius ordered the overthrow of Constantine's statues and images in Emona, a city in Pannonia near the frontier between their territories; Constantine responded by invading and defeating Licinius in two engagements at Cibalae and Mardia in the autumn of 316. The Bassianus affair had far-reaching consequences within the extended Flavian family. Constantine had now killed two brothers-in-law (Maxentius and Bassianus) and was at war with a third (Licinius). Moreover, his emissary in the Bassianus affair had been a man named Constantius, who may have been Julius Constantius, his half-brother.⁸² It was likely because of Julius' role in the failed negotiations with Licinius that he and another half-brother, Flavius Dalmatius, retired to southern Gaul.⁸³ At the same time, Constantine produced two new sons of his own: Constantine II was born on August 7, 316 at Arles, and Constantius II exactly one year later. In the peace settlement following the war of Cibalae, Constantine and Licinius agreed to promote three sons to the rank of Caesar: Crispus, Constantine's significantly older son by a previous marriage, Constantine II, and Licinius' son (Licinius

⁸² *Origo Constantini imperatoris* 5.14-18, Bassianus affair and war of Cibalae. For the identification of Constantius the emissary as Julius Constantius (cos. 335), see Barnes (1981) 66. Alternatively, the emissary may have been Flavius Constantius (cos. 327), as suggested by Barnes (1982) 103. Flavius Constantius, to judge only from his name, may have been a member of the imperial house, but his precise relationship to Constantine cannot be conclusively determined. See now Chausson (2002) 134, who guesses that Flavius Constantius was a full brother of Constantine, i.e. a younger son of Constantius I and Helena. For his career, see *PLRE* 1:225, "Flavius Constantius 5," with 1:224, "Constantius 1." No source, however, mentions any full brother of Constantine.

⁸³ Ausonius, *Professores* 16.10-11, "dum Constantini fratres opulenta Tolosa l exilii specie sepositos cohibet," 17.9-11, Dalmatius' two sons, Dalmatius and Hannibalianus, at Narbo.

II).⁸⁴ Thus between 313 and 317 there was a radical shift in the internal dynamics of the Flavian family: Constantine turned away from his brothers-in-law and half-brothers, and began to promote his own sons instead.

At Rome there is little trace in the surviving sources of the downfall of Constantine's half-siblings; the promotion of his sons, however, was a much safer topic, and meshed nicely with what senators knew about Constantine's ambition to establish a Flavian dynasty. It was not long after the creation of the Caesars on 1 March 317 that the news reached Rome from Constantine's base at Serdica. The urban prefect at the time, Ovinus Gallicanus, greeted the nomination of Crispus by setting up a statue in the Roman Forum, hailing the only known or important fact about the new ruler—his Flavian ancestry as the son of Constantine and grandson of Constantius I.⁸⁵ As yet Crispus, still only a teenager, had little else in the way of accomplishments. This would change in the coming years as Constantine began to provide Crispus with opportunities to enhance his military reputation. It was probably in 319 that Crispus achieved a noteworthy victory over the Franks, in which he apparently fought in person.⁸⁶

The valor of Crispus was one of the themes in an oration given at Rome on 1 March 321. The occasion marked the beginning of the fifth year in power of Constantine's sons and Caesars, Crispus and Constantine II.⁸⁷ Perhaps the most unusual feature of this speech was that no emperor was present to hear it. The orator could only

⁸⁴ *Origo Constantini imperatoris* 5.19.

⁸⁵ *ILS* 1:161, no. 716, "filio d(omini) n(ostri) Constantini maximi adque invicti semper Aug(usti) et nepoti divi Constanti." The dedication was made between March 1 and May 15, 317, when Gallicanus left office: Chastagnol (1962) 68-70.

⁸⁶ Crispus' date of birth is impossible to fix, but was not later than c. 300: Barnes (1982) 44, Chausson (2002) 153. *Panegyrici latini* 4(10).17.2 with Nixon and Rodgers (1994) 362 n. 77 for his victories over the Franks, fighting in person implied in 4(10).36.3, 37.4.

⁸⁷ Nixon and Rodgers (1994) 338.

imagine Constantine in his mind's eye; "only one thing," he concluded, "could make Rome happier—a very great request, but the only one—that it see Constantine, its preserver, that it see the most blessed Caesars."⁸⁸ In fact, however, Constantine and the rest of his family remained at Serdica, and Crispus traveled from Gaul in late winter to meet him there.⁸⁹ The Caesars' five-year anniversary thus passed without an official appearance at Rome by any member of the imperial family. In the absence of the court, the orator, most likely a teacher of rhetoric in Rome, reverted to themes with which he and his Roman audience were already familiar. Most of Nazarius' speech rehashed the familiar story of Constantine's liberation of Rome from the tyranny of Maxentius. The most contemporary element of the speech, however, was his praise of Constantine's sons, which once again highlighted Constantine's well-known plans to establish a Flavian dynasty.⁹⁰ Crispus, his eldest son, was "already a heavyweight in crushing the enemy, and has begun to divert to his own name his father's capacity for inspiring the terror at which every barbarian land has always trembled." Unhindered by his young age, the valor of Crispus had "filled his boyhood years with triumphal glory."⁹¹ Indeed, Crispus was more and more beginning to look like a young Constantine: each was an only son of a first marriage with many half-siblings, and each had gained a military reputation at an

⁸⁸ *Panegyrici latini* 4(10).3.1, "Constantine maxime (praesentem enim mihi adloqui videor qui, etsi conspectu abes, revelli tamen mentibus non potes)," 38.6, "unum modo est quo fieri possit Roma felicior, maximum quidem sed tamen solum, ut Constantinum conservatorem suum, ut beatissimos Caesares videat." Marlowe (2004) 260-62 observes the striking reuse of Maxentius' *conservator* slogan, and suggests that it was a pointed reminder to Constantine to pay more attention to Rome.

⁸⁹ Barnes (1982) 74, Constantine at Serdica on February 27, 321; *Panegyrici latini* 4(10).36.4-5, Crispus and Constantine together. Despite Chastagnol (1982b) 370, who mistakenly placed the two Caesars in Rome for the anniversary, the oration of 321 was the only one in the collection known as the Latin Panegyrics not to be heard in person by at least one emperor: Nixon and Rodgers (1994) 345 n. 11.

⁹⁰ Booth (1978) 244, Nazarius a professor at Rome. Nixon and Rodgers (1994) perhaps overstate the oration's "lack of contemporaneous information" (p.338), since, as they themselves point out, "the dynastic motif is more evident than in 313" (p.340).

⁹¹ *Panegyrici latini* 4(10).3.5, "iam obterendis hostibus gravis terrorem paternum, quo semper barbaria omnis intremuit, derivare ad nomen suum coepit," 36.3, "pueriles annos gloriis triumphalibus occupavit."

early age. The orator himself pointed out that Crispus' early career bore many resemblances to his father's.⁹²

Already a teenager at the time of his elevation to Caesar, Crispus completely overshadowed his half-brothers, who were at least fifteen years younger. By comparison, Constantine II, then four years old, was praised by the orator of 321 for happily scrawling his name on official documents.⁹³ By autumn 322, Crispus was a father in his own right; in celebration of the birth of his first grandchild, Constantine addressed an edict to the prefect of Rome granting a pardon to all but the most depraved criminals.⁹⁴ Nothing more is known of this child of Crispus; a second child may have been expected in 324.⁹⁵ In short, Crispus was the earliest guarantor of the continuity of the Flavian line into the next generation. He also continued to play an important role in his father's military campaigns, defeating German tribes along the Rhine in 323. Crispus' "undoubted strength for brave deeds" was hailed by the poet Publilius Optatianus Porfyrius, writing in the early 320s, who praised the Caesar for "keeping an eye on the Rhine and Rhone from the far bank" and preparing "harsh justice for the Franks."⁹⁶ By virtue of his victories in the north, Crispus has "cut through the boundary of empire." Claudius Gothicus, his great-grandfather, "from his place in heaven bestows upon Crispus an

⁹² *Panegyrici latini* 4(10).36.3, "cuius ita iam uberes scatent laudes ut plenae possent videri nisi <sic> coepisse et patrem cogitaremus." Constantine, too, had been praised for emulating his father, Constantius I, by crushing Frankish tribes: *Panegyrici latini* 7(6).4.2.

⁹³ *Panegyrici latini* 4(10).37.5, "fructuosa subscriptione laetatur."

⁹⁴ *CTh* 9.38.1 (30 October 322), "propter Crispi atque Helenae partum omnibus indulgemus praeter veneficos homicidas adulteros."

⁹⁵ For speculation about the survival and descendants of this child of Crispus, assumed to be a daughter who would go on to become the mother of Justina, see Barnes (1982) 44. For the possibility of a second child expected in 324, see Barnes (1982) 44, citing Publilius Optatianus Porfyrius, *Carm.* 10 versus intexti, "pater imperas, avus imperes," with Barnes (1975b) 180-81 for the date of this poem.

⁹⁶ Barnes (1982) 83, citing coin issues for the campaigns of 323. Publilius Optatianus Porfyrius, *Carm.* 5.30-32, "sed Crispi in fortia vires / non dubiae ripa Rhenum Rhodanumque tueri / ulteriore parant et Francis tristia iura."

illustrious empire.” “Blazing in his distinguished arms,” Crispus is the “salvation of the world;” Clio, the Muse of history, sounds “the fair deeds of [his] youth.” Not only is Crispus “a noble ornament” for his father, but he will be the “hope of the Roman citizenry and the city [of Rome].”⁹⁷ Crispus’ military reputation grew still further as a result of his participation in the final campaigns against Licinius in 324. Constantine put Crispus in command of a fleet with instructions to take possession of Asia; opposed by Licinius’ fleet, Crispus won such a crushing victory at Gallipoli that the enemy commander barely escaped alive.⁹⁸

The victory of Constantine and Crispus in September 324 made of the Roman Empire “a single united whole, as in the days of old.” The new unity prompted a rewriting of history. The church historian Eusebius of Caesarea retouched his *Ecclesiastical History*, finished ten years before, now praising Crispus as a “most humane emperor,” his father’s partner in “extending the right hand of salvation to those who were perishing” under the impious tyranny of Licinius. Crispus’ position as his father’s heir seemed more secure than ever: he was an “emperor most dear to God and similar to his father in all respects.”⁹⁹ The military victory also seemed to herald a new golden age that could be inaugurated the following year when Constantine was due to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of his rise to power. The intertwining of these themes is most

⁹⁷ Publilius Optatianus Porfyrius, *Carm.* 10.28-31, “Ut, caeso limite, victor / rite atavo summo melior, cui Claudius acer, / magnanimum sidus, dat clarum e numine divo / imperium, Virtus quem felix optat alumnum”; *Carm.* 9.23-27, “Sancte, salus mundi, armis insignibus ardens, / Crispe, avis melior, te carmine laeta secundo / Clio Musa sonans tua fatur pulchra iuventae. / Nobile tu decus es patri, tuque alme Quiritum / et spes urbis eris.”

⁹⁸ *Origo Constantini imperatoris* 5.23-26.

⁹⁹ For the editions of Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History*, with changes made to reflect the elimination of Licinius in 324, see Barnes (1980) 201. Eusebius, *HE* 10.9.4, most humane, hand of salvation, 10.9.6, single united whole, “similar to his father in all respects,” with Van Dam (2007) 283 n.1 on the subsequent transmission of this phrase, which became entangled in the Arian controversy.

visible in the poems of Publilius Optatianus Porfyrius, a virtuoso poet whose signature technique was to embed acrostics and patterns within the text of his poems. The pattern in one poem depicts a ship, complete with rudder, oars, and chi-rho mast, which must allude to Crispus' naval victory at Gallipoli or to the final victory over Licinius at Chrysopolis. Within the pattern are the letters VOT XX, a reference to the vows due to be discharged at the commencement of Constantine's *vicennalia* on July 25, 325.¹⁰⁰ It appears that Porfyrius dedicated a book of twenty poems to Constantine in autumn 324.¹⁰¹ The twenty poems thus amounted to an offering to the emperor in anticipation of his twentieth anniversary. The excitement that attended Constantine's twentieth year also affected another literary work: Eusebius executed a second revised edition of his *Chronicle*, which he extended as far as Constantine's *vicennalia* in 325/6.¹⁰² For Eusebius, this anniversary now marked the culmination of human history.

The height of the anticipation of the *vicennalia* was matched only by the depth of the disappointment which greeted Constantine's unorthodox celebration of the occasion. After defeating Licinius in September 324, Constantine then spent the next 18 months consolidating his control over the newly acquired eastern provinces, traveling as far as Antioch before returning to the Bosphorus area. His major initiatives at this time—the founding of Constantinople on November 8, 324 and convoking a council of Christian bishops at Nicaea in May/June 325—were both designed to project his authority in Licinius' old territory and foster a spirit of unity that would bind the two halves of the empire together. The twin policies of encouraging unity in the eastern provinces and in

¹⁰⁰ Publilius Optatianus Porfyrius, *Carm.* 19, with Barnes (1975b) 182.

¹⁰¹ Barnes (1975b) 186.

¹⁰² Barnes (1981) 113.

the Christian Church underscored how marginal Rome had become. Preoccupied in the east, Constantine celebrated his *vicennalia* in July 325 in Nicomedia, the very city which Diocletian had been “intent on making the equal of the city of Rome.” It represented a homecoming of sorts, for Constantine had been a military staff officer at Diocletian’s court.¹⁰³ All signs pointed toward the increasing influence of the east in Constantine’s thinking for the empire. For the second time in four years, Rome, “the world’s summit,” was left to mark an important imperial anniversary without its emperor.¹⁰⁴

Rome’s disappointment that Constantine did not return for his *vicennalia* in 325 was not assuaged by his exceptional decision to return for the end of his twentieth year in July 326.¹⁰⁵ His visit was surrounded by uncertainty and apprehension. Only a couple of months before, Constantine had executed Crispus, his eldest son and the man who, thanks to his mature age and military experience, had seemed the best hope for the next generation of the Flavian dynasty.¹⁰⁶ The fall of Crispus was inexplicable even to contemporary observers, as shown by the lurid speculation that surrounded his demise in later sources.¹⁰⁷ Setting these tales aside, there are vague hints that Crispus was beginning to get above himself. Already in 321, Crispus had been praised for “diverting

¹⁰³ Jerome, *Chronica* s.a. 326, *vicennalia* at Nicomedia; Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 7.10, “Nicomediam studens urbi Romae coaequare.” For Constantine at Diocletian’s court, Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 18.10, *Panegyrici latini* 4(10).4.5, Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 1.12.

¹⁰⁴ Publilius Optatianus Porfyrius, *Carm.* 20a.16, “Roma, culmen orbis”: Porfyrius laments his own enforced absence from Rome at the time of an unspecified imperial festival.

¹⁰⁵ Chastagnol (1987a) 491, the repetition of Constantine’s *vicennalia* was unique.

¹⁰⁶ The death of Crispus is placed in c. May by Barnes (1982) 84, but see the different reconstruction of Constantine’s movements in the first half of 326 in Potter (forthcoming), who concludes that Constantine was at Sirmium in the spring, and that the execution of Crispus at Pola, not far from Sirmium, thus cannot be fixed more precisely than the spring of 326. Despite Guthrie (1966), it is unlikely either that Crispus was illegitimate or that he was executed solely to make way for Constantine’s sons by Fausta.

¹⁰⁷ For a discussion of the different traditions, Potter (forthcoming). Note especially the memory of Crispus as an “outstanding man” in Eutropius, *Breviarium* 10.6.3, “egregium virum filium,” and the story that connected his demise to an adulterous relationship with his stepmother Fausta: Zosimus, *Historia nova* 2.29.2.

to his own name” his father’s capacity to strike fear into the heart of the Franks; his detailed reports of his successes were composed “for his father’s pleasure, not for boasting about himself.”¹⁰⁸ In retrospect, this language looked ominous, for it seemed to suggest that Crispus might be more ambitious than was permitted to a Caesar.

It is possible to get a better idea of how Crispus ran afoul of his father by comparing the evidence from better attested relationships between senior and junior emperors in the fourth century. In the 350s, the emperor Constantius twice elevated cousins to the position of Caesar. Both Gallus and Julian proved troublesome. In each case, Constantius insisted on his right to appoint the Caesar’s senior officials; both Caesars eventually quarreled with these officials, whom they believed, quite rightly, had been sent to keep an eye on them. A contemporary observer noticed a link between the demise of Gallus and Crispus: each was executed at Pola, a port city at the head of the Adriatic.¹⁰⁹ Constantius apparently viewed his relationship with Gallus through the lens of earlier family history. By implication, Constantius was making a point: the removal of Gallus was justified by reference to the precedent of Crispus, and was perhaps required for the same reasons. Even this analogy does not really explain what Crispus did wrong, but it may be significant that the trouble erupted around the time of Constantine’s twentieth anniversary. It was after Diocletian’s *vicennalia* that Galerius, his Caesar, began pressuring him to retire and promote the Caesars to full imperial authority.¹¹⁰ Crispus may have assumed that his father, like Diocletian, would retire after twenty

¹⁰⁸ *Panegyrici latini* 4(10).3.5, “terrorem paternum...derivare ad nomen suum coepit,” 37.2, “narravit utique exhausta bella, et hoc ad tuam gratiam, non ad sui ostentationem.”

¹⁰⁹ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 14.11.20, “prope oppidum Polam, ubi quondam peremptum Constantini filium accipimus Crispum.”

¹¹⁰ Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 18, Galerius’ pressure.

years, and begun pressuring him to turn over power to his Caesar. If so, it would be an interesting example of the lingering influence of the Tetrarchic model even in the later years of Constantine's reign.

Whatever the reason for Crispus' fall from grace, it must have taken the whole empire by surprise, and may have contributed to the cooler relations between Constantine and Rome in 326. In contrast to Constantine's visits to Rome in 312 and 315, when statues and a triumphal arch were dedicated to him, no evidence has emerged of any dedications to greet the visit of 326. The absence of dedications may be a sign that new men, less invested in the city's traditions, had risen to prominence in the Roman senate. The orator of 321 had praised Constantine for enhancing the dignity of the senate by choosing "the best men of every province," doubtless an allusion to Constantine's policy of expanding access to senatorial rank.¹¹¹ One consequence of this reform was that new men with less connection to the city of Rome and its traditional aristocracy now began to hold high office. The urban prefect at the time of Constantine's *vicennalia* was Acilius Severus, who came from a Spanish family and was a correspondent of the Christian rhetorician Lactantius. His predecessor, Locrius Verinus, was also a Christian; though his family was Etruscan, it had no known senatorial ancestors.¹¹² When Constantine had first taken control of Rome from Maxentius, he had appointed prefects who had served the previous regime, thereby signaling his interest in reconciliation with the city's aristocracy; by the mid 320s, Constantine was more interested in rewarding his own supporters and ensuring that new men had access to the most prestigious offices at

¹¹¹ *Panegyrici latini* 4(10).35.2, "ex omnibus provinciis optimates viros curiae tuae." On the reform of the senatorial order, see Heather (1998).

¹¹² *PLRE* 1:834, "Acilius Severus 16," 951-52, "Locrius Verinus 2."

Rome.¹¹³ In fact, the prefect at the time of his last visit in 315, Rufius Volusianus, had been removed from office and had probably been exiled by decree of the senate shortly thereafter.¹¹⁴ The poet Optatianus Porfyrius, a high-ranking senator of African origin, was also in exile in the early 320s, perhaps caught up in the same trouble as Volusianus; according to Jerome, it was his book of poems, presented to Constantine for his *vicennalia*, that secured his release from exile.¹¹⁵ The exile of prominent senators in the years between Constantine's visits stood in sharp contrast to the promise of clemency he had made when he liberated the city from Maxentius, and contributed to the mood of apprehension which surrounded Constantine's visit in 326.

Thus the prospects for Constantine's belated visit were less than auspicious. Crispus, the heir apparent, was awkwardly absent; some inscriptions that had mentioned Crispus were now altered to reflect his disgrace. It was about this time that the city of Sorrento, south of Naples, chiseled out his name from a list of the Caesars, leaving the names of only two Caesars side-by-side with an abbreviation which indicated there should be three.¹¹⁶ Once Constantine arrived in Rome, there were still more surprises for the city. Constantine's two half-brothers, Flavius Dalmatius and Julius Constantius, who had been living in apolitical seclusion for years, were suddenly recalled and were even

¹¹³ Potter (2004) 386-91. The policy of appointing supporters of the previous regime was now transferred to the east, where, for example, Julius Julianus became consul in 325, despite having served Licinius for nearly ten years as praetorian prefect. Julianus' daughter, Basilina, was soon married to Constantine's half-brother Julius Constantius, a union which produced the emperor Julian: *PLRE* 1:478-49, "Julius Julianus 35."

¹¹⁴ Barnes (1975c) 47, Volusianus relieved on August 20, 315 and identification of Ceionius Rufius Volusianus and Ceionius Rufius Albinus as the senators in the horoscope discussed in Firmicus Maternus, *Mathesis* 2.29.10-20.

¹¹⁵ Barnes (1975b) 176, 186, linking the exiles of Volusianus and Porfyrius; Jerome, *Chronica* s.a. 328, "Porphyrius misso ad Constantinum insigni volumine exilio liberatur" (Jerome's date, however, is unlikely to be correct).

¹¹⁶ *ILS* 1:160, no. 710, "ddd. nnn. [Crispi] Constantini Constanti beatissimorum [Caesarum]."

seen at Constantine's side.¹¹⁷ Once again, there seemed to have been a shift, as abrupt as it was opaque, in the internal politics of the Flavian family.

At some point in the course of Constantine's visit, "the people assailed him with shouts of ridicule."¹¹⁸ Although it is impossible to know what excited this displeasure, it may have had to do with Constantine's departures from traditional religious practices, especially that of animal sacrifice. The pagan historian Zosimus—writing long afterward and with great bitterness—reports that Constantine refused to accompany his army to a traditional sacrifice on the Capitoline hill and thereby "aroused the hatred of the senate and people."¹¹⁹ Instead, Constantine promoted alternative expressions of religiosity. The Christian historian Eusebius reports that, during the decennial celebrations of 315, Constantine had offered "prayers of thanksgiving to God, the Emperor of all," as the equivalent of "sacrifices that did not include fire or smoke." Constantine's precise blend of pagan and Christian at Rome remains unclear. Unlike the accounts of Zosimus and Eusebius, for example, who deny that he engaged in traditional animal sacrifice, Constantine's arch contained depictions of sacrifice to various deities, in which the heads of second-century emperors had been remodeled into the head of Constantine. On the other hand, it is significant that a sculpted panel which had shown Marcus Aurelius sacrificing before the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitoline hill was not reused on Constantine's arch. The senators who oversaw the design of the arch evidently

¹¹⁷ Libanius, *Orat.* 19.19, 20.24, with Wiemer (1994) for the identification of these half-brothers and the dating of this episode to Constantine's visit in 326.

¹¹⁸ Libanius, *Orat.* 19.19, "τοῦ Ῥωμαίων γάρ ποτε δήμου βοαῖς αὐτὸν ἀσελγεστέραις βεβληκός."

¹¹⁹ Zosimus, *Historia nova* 2.29.5, "εἰς μῖσος τὴν γερουσίαν καὶ τὸν δῆμον ἀνέστησεν." Constantine's failure to sacrifice on the Capitoline has been assigned to 312 by Straub (1955) and to 315 by Paschoud (1971), but see now Wiemer (1994) 517-18.

did not think this scene suitable for Constantine; the omission of this panel would then reflect the same selective participation in pagan rites that so disgusted Zosimus.¹²⁰

Whatever did or did not happen, it does appear that Constantine's visit was marred by tensions, probably caused by the confusion surrounding Constantine's religious and dynastic policies. The visit had been awaited with eager expectation only a couple of years before. The exiled poet Porphyrius had hailed the approaching twentieth anniversary, and the tenth of Constantine's sons Crispus and Constantine II, in several of his poems.¹²¹ In the end, the visit was apparently a disappointment for both sides. Although there is no evidence that Constantine cut short his visit to Rome—he stayed from late July to late September, as he had in 315—he had had to endure the same kind of abuse in Rome that had greeted Diocletian upon arrival for his twentieth anniversary in 303, and had caused him to leave early in a rainstorm rather than wait thirteen days to enter on his ninth consulship in Rome.¹²²

According to Zosimus, Constantine was so irritated by his shabby treatment in Rome that he decided to found a new city as a counterweight to Rome; after beginning and abandoning a site near ancient Troy, he settled on Byzantium, which he founded anew as Constantinople.¹²³ Although this explanation cannot be true, since Constantinople was founded in November 324, before Constantine's last visit to Rome, the "uneasy atmosphere" that clouded Constantine's visit to Rome in 326 may help to

¹²⁰ Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 1.48, smokeless sacrifices; for the roundels on the arch, containing scenes of sacrifice to Silvanus, Diana, Apollo, and Hercules, see L'Orange and von Gerkan (1939) 167-9. The unused Antonine panel showing a Capitoline sacrifice is discussed by Ruysschaert (1962-63a) 96-100, who argues that its omission was deliberate; for an image, see Ruysschaert (1962-63b) 108 Figure b. For a recent discussion of Constantine's attitudes to sacrifice, see Van Dam (2007) 27-34.

¹²¹ Publilius Optatianus Porphyrius, *Carm.* 5 versus intexti, 9.35.36, 19 versus intexti.

¹²² Barnes (1982) 77, dates of Constantine's visit to Rome; Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 17.1-3, Diocletian's hasty departure in 303.

¹²³ Zosimus, *Historia nova* 2.30.

explain why he did not return to Rome to celebrate his thirtieth anniversary in 335-36.¹²⁴ Instead, Constantine celebrated this rarest of imperial anniversaries in Constantinople, this time failing to visit Rome at either the beginning or the end of his thirtieth year.¹²⁵ As in 325, when Constantine was managing the Council of Nicaea, so again Church politics detained Constantine in the eastern provinces. In 335 he was busy issuing summons for the Council of Tyre, which met from July to October and resulted in the exile of bishop Athanasius of Alexandria.¹²⁶ He was also increasingly preoccupied with both the succession and with Persia, his plans for which were closely intertwined. In September 335 he elevated Dalmatius and Hannibalianus, the two sons of Flavius Dalmatius, his half-brother, to full membership in the ruling college; Dalmatius became a Caesar, joining Constantine's three sons, while Hannibalianus was designated "king of kings," thereby announcing openly his intention to invade Persia.¹²⁷ Thus Constantine's thirtieth year, much like his twentieth, saw him deeply engaged in Church politics and organizing the administrative and military logistics required to conquer and consolidate new territories in the east. In such grand designs, Rome had little role to play.

Constantine closed his thirtieth year exactly where he had started it—in Constantinople. A second Council, this time meeting at Constantinople itself, witnessed the final triumph of the anti-Athanasius faction in July 336, notwithstanding the death of Arius on the very eve of the *tricennalia* celebrations.¹²⁸ Already in town for the Council, the bishop Eusebius stayed for the anniversary festivities, to which he contributed a

¹²⁴ Wiemer (1994) 517, uneasy atmosphere.

¹²⁵ Eusebius, *Oratio de laudibus Constantini* 2.5 claimed that Constantine was the only emperor to reach 30 years (he omitted Augustus). Constantine is attested in Constantinople from March to October 335 and again from July 336 to April 337: Barnes (1982) 79-80.

¹²⁶ Parvis (2006) 101, date, 123-27, preliminaries and meeting of Council.

¹²⁷ Potter (2004) 446-47, 459-61.

¹²⁸ Parvis (2006) 127-33.

lengthy discourse, delivered in the palace before the emperor, which compared Constantine's empire to Christ's kingdom.¹²⁹ One of the more striking themes in Eusebius' speech is the extent to which the bishop praised Constantine for breaking with tradition. "He does not, in imitation of ancient usage, defile his imperial mansions with blood and gore, nor propitiate the infernal deities with fire and smoke, and sacrificial offerings."¹³⁰ The contrast in the treatment of sacrifice in Rome and Constantinople is striking. In Rome, senators had built a triumphal arch decorated with numerous scenes of Constantine performing sacrifice to the old gods; in Constantinople, an orator actually praised him for breaking with the ancestral religion. Eusebius' speech could not have been given in the old capital, but its fresh new ideas were apt for Constantine's new city in the east. The anniversary festivities at Constantinople were further embellished by the marriage of Constantius, now Constantine's second oldest son, to the daughter of Julius Constantius, Constantine's half-brother.¹³¹ Just as Constantine's twentieth year had been devoted to a Church council and the removal of Crispus, his eldest son, so too his thirtieth year again showed that Constantine was preoccupied with arranging both the succession and the internal affairs of the Church in the eastern provinces. Both questions took precedence over paying homage to Rome's customary preeminence, and both underscored how marginal the old capital had become in Constantine's new empire.

In spite of Constantine's increasingly eastern orientation in the last decade of his reign, senators at Rome still hoped that he would celebrate his thirtieth anniversary in Rome in 335. In preparation, the urban prefect at the time oversaw a dedication to

¹²⁹ Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 4.46, delivery in the palace.

¹³⁰ Eusebius, *Oratio de laudibus Constantini* 2.5.

¹³¹ Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 4.49, Julian *Ep. ad Athenienses* 272D.

Constantine in the Roman Forum; it recognized him for “enhancing the state throughout the world by his deeds and designs.” The dedication was authorized by a decree of the senate, and was inscribed on a large base that supported an equestrian statue, placed directly opposite the senate house and adjacent to the arch of Septimius Severus.¹³² The placement of this statue was not fortuitous; in fact, there had once been an equestrian statue of Severus himself in this same spot. Among the many dreams and portents which had inspired Severus to hope for the throne, the most stirring was a dream he had after first learning that Pertinax had become emperor following the murder of Commodus on New Year’s Eve, 192. Severus dreamed that he saw a splendid horse wearing the imperial regalia carrying Pertinax right down the Sacred Way into the Roman Forum. When it reached the northwest corner of the Forum, the horse threw Pertinax, knelt down, picked up Severus, and carried him back into the middle of the Forum. In the middle of the third century, there was “still a huge bronze statue on that spot to commemorate the dream.”¹³³ In all likelihood, not just the location, but the actual statue of Severus was remodeled into a monument for Constantine.¹³⁴

When Constantine had first entered Rome as emperor in 312, senators had feared that this new ruler might turn out to be a second Severus. Constantine had come to power at York, in northern England, the same city where, as it happened, Severus had died.¹³⁵ Like Severus, Constantine had swept down from the north, eliminated his rivals in civil

¹³² *ILS* 1:157, no. 698, “ob amplificatam toto orbe rempublicam factis consultisq(ue).” For the location of this statue, see Verduchi (1995). Hispellum’s request for permission to build a temple to Constantine’s family was probably also timed to prepare for Constantine’s expected return to Italy for his 30th anniversary: *ILS* 1:158-59, no. 705, with Van Dam (2007) 53-54.

¹³³ Herodian, *Historia* 2.9.5-6.

¹³⁴ Coarelli (1995) 232, “È probabile che successivamente la statua fosse trasformata in un monumento di Costantino.”

¹³⁵ *Historia Augusta, Severus* 19.1.

wars, and seized the traditionally civilian city by armed force. Both senate and emperor had taken pains in those early days to place distance between Constantine and the unhappy precedent of Severus. By 335, however, senators had concluded that Constantine was like Severus after all. The most disconcerting aspect of this resemblance was Constantine's decision to relocate to Constantinople, founded in November 324. This decision came less than two months after Constantine had defeated Licinius, the last obstacle to Flavian domination. Constantinople was not a new foundation, however; it was merely a new name for the city of Byzantium, an ancient settlement which had been rebuilt by none other than Septimius Severus. Byzantium had been Licinius' main base, just as, 130 years before, it had been a stronghold of another eastern challenger, Pescennius Niger. Its natural defensibility and nearly impregnable fortifications had compelled Severus to lay siege to it for nearly three years. When he finally captured it, Severus razed it to the ground, degraded its status to that of a village subject to the city of Perinthus, and refounded it as Colonia Antoniniana, in honor of his son and adopted family name.¹³⁶ After destroying the city, Severus rebuilt it on a grand scale, equipping it with colonnaded streets, porticoes, a forum, a public bath, and a circus. Although many of these projects remained unfinished at his death, they stamped a characteristically Roman imprint on what had been a Greek city, and laid the groundwork for its subsequent adoption by Constantine, who initiated his own transformation of the city by

¹³⁶ Cassius Dio, *Historiae Romanae* 75(74).10-14, siege of Byzantium and subsequent subordination to Perinthus. The name Colonia Antoniniana is first found in the sixth-century Byzantine historian Hesychius of Miletus, who reports that the name reverted to Byzantium after the death of Severus' son Antoninus (Caracalla): Dagron (1974) 15-19, with the form of the adjective discussed at 17 n.6. Despite the late date of this source, already by c. 400 Caracalla was said to have intervened with his father to restore the city's privileges: *Historia Augusta, Caracalla* 1.7.

finishing the projects begun by Severus.¹³⁷ Constantine and Severus had both recognized the strategic importance of the city on the Bosphorus, and Constantine's plans for his new city grew out of Severus' earlier redevelopment of the site. Little wonder, then, that disillusioned senators back at Rome responded to Constantine's steady drift eastward by reinterpreting Constantine as the reincarnation of Severus. In the minds of senators, these two emperors, and their statues, had become interchangeable.

¹³⁷ For Severus' projects and Constantine's completion of them, see Bassett (2004) 18-26: After building the walls, Constantine "turned his attention to the adornment of its monumental core, focusing first on the potential of the languishing Severan projects" (p.23).

Chapter 3

Missing Emperors

The diminishing centrality of Rome in the fourth century was reflected in the trajectory of Constantine's visits to the city, and indeed, was in part a result of that emperor's decision to establish himself in cities closer to the northern frontier. After defeating Maxentius in 312, Constantine had returned to Rome to celebrate the beginning of his tenth year in power in 315. Then another eleven years elapsed before, in 326, Constantine returned for ceremonies at the end of his twentieth year. The atmosphere surrounding this visit had been tense, marred by Constantine's recent execution of his eldest son and heir apparent. Although Constantine's decision to celebrate his *vicennalia* twice was in part a concession to Rome's unique status, it was nonetheless true that Rome was greeting its emperor a year late and after he had already rung in the anniversary year in Nicomedia, the city once favored by Diocletian. The thirtieth anniversary year saw the dropping of all pretence, as Constantine marked both the beginning and the end of the year in Constantinople. Only one occasion remained which might bring Constantine back to Rome; upon his death near Nicomedia in May 337, however, his body was interred in Constantinople. "The Roman people certainly received this news with

indignation, for it considered that it was by his arms, laws, and merciful rule that the city of Rome had, so to speak, been renewed.”¹

This perceived snub spoke volumes about the relative status of the two cities. Henceforth Rome was on its own. In a continuation of Rome’s marginality in the last decade of Constantine’s reign, no emperor would visit Rome in the twenty years between 337 and 357. The absence of the emperors left a void in Roman public life. Senators were left to ponder the consequences. One strategy was to reassert the centrality of Rome, its traditions, and, most of all, its senate, even in a world in which distant emperors and armies possessed the real political power. Another was to turn inward, with greater attention to local traditions unique to the city of Rome, and thereby to think about alternatives to emperors as the embodiment of the city’s history and identity.

“So greatly does concern for the city of Rome diminish day by day”

After Constantine’s death, control of Italy fell to his youngest son, Constans. Constantine had already provided for his son’s succession even before his death. In a rescript dated between 333 and 335, Constantine had agreed that the Umbrian city of Hispellum would be permitted to call itself Flavia Constans. Its new name not only expressed Constantine’s desire to establish a Flavian dynasty, but it also introduced his youngest son, the newest member of the imperial college, to the subjects of the provinces that he was destined to rule in his own right after his father’s death. Despite this change

¹ Aurelius Victor, *Caesares* 41.17, “funus relatum in urbem sui nominis. quod sane populus Romanus aegerrime tulit, quippe cuius armis legibus clementi imperio quasi novatam urbem Romam arbitaretur.” The mourning at Rome reported by Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 4.69 could refer to the same mix of genuine regret and perceived insult. The circumstances of Constantine’s burial in Constantinople are still the subject of debate, with some scholars holding that his body was interred in a mausoleum built for that purpose, others that it was buried in the Church of the Holy Apostles and later moved to the mausoleum: see Van Dam (2007) 338-42 on the theological implications of this question, and 339 n.28 for earlier literature on Constantine’s burial arrangements.

of name, Constans never warmed to Rome or central Italy. Instead, his world, like his father's, was that of the northern provinces. He had grown up in Constantinople, where he was educated in Latin rhetoric.² His victory over his older brother Constantine II in 340 seems to have caught the Roman aristocracy by surprise. Avianius Symmachus, the prefect of the grain supply, hastily rewrote a dedicatory inscription, clumsily substituting Constans' name for Constantine's. The urban prefect Fabius Titianus made the unusual decision to leave Rome while in office in order to appear in person before the emperor at Aquileia. This quick adjustment of political loyalties was now an essential survival skill for senators at Rome, whose remoteness from the centers of imperial power made them vulnerable to sudden changes of fortune.³ Thereafter Constans spent his whole reign moving among imperial residences in the western Balkans, northern Italy, and the Rhineland frontier. In his thirteen years as an emperor, it is doubtful whether he ever set foot in Rome.⁴

The continuing absence of imperial authority in Rome in the 340s contributed to the realignment of Roman culture and politics. Aurelius Victor, a historian born in Africa but probably living in Rome during these years, lamented the lapse of an ancient Roman tradition in 348. Beginning with Augustus, emperors had marked the close of an age

² Van Dam (2007) 112-7, Constans and Hispellum, 363-5, date of rescript. Constans may have been taught by Ausonius' uncle: see Ausonius, *Professores* 16.13-5, with *PLRE* 1:98, "Arburius 4," though Green (1991) 353 identifies the unspecified Caesar as Dalmatius the younger; for Constans' attainments in Latin rhetoric, see Libanius, *Orat.* 59.34.

³ For Avianius' dedication at Ostia, see Gasperini (1988), who dates the name change to the aftermath of Constans' victory, and pairs it with another dedication by Avianius to Constans found *trans Tiberim* in Rome (*ILS* 1:163, no. 726); the Ostia inscription is reprinted in *AE 1988* (1991) 61, no. 217. Titianus was absent from Rome from May 5 – June 10, 340: Mommsen (1892) 68.

⁴ Constans' movements are listed by Barnes (1993) 224-6. A Christian source (*Passio Artemii* 9 = Philostorgius, *HE* 3.1^a) reports that Constans was visiting Rome when his territory was invaded by Constantine II, but this is impossible, since Constans was in the Balkans early in 340. Barnes (1975a) 327-8 and (1993) 315 n.47 suggests that Constans may rather have visited in summer or autumn 340, but on balance, the evidence for such a visit is scantier than for any of the other known visits by emperors to Rome in the fourth century.

(*saeculum*) by presiding over a religious festival known as the Secular Games (*Ludi Saeculares*). According to one definition of a *saeculum*, this festival should have been celebrated in 348 to mark the 1100th anniversary of the founding of the city. Yet the occasion “was attended by none of the customary rites: to such an extent does concern for the city of Rome diminish day by day.” In truth, however, this was not the first time the festival had been omitted, for according to a different method of counting, these Games should have been held in 314. Constantine’s failure to celebrate the festival—which could have been adjusted to coincide with his visits to Rome in 312 or 315—elicited a long description of the rites from Zosimus, a later pagan historian who blamed the lapse of these pagan rites for the subsequent decline of the Roman empire. Although Victor did not explicitly link the lapse of the Games with the troubles of the empire, he did associate it with neglect of the city of Rome and its traditions; since the Games were closely associated with emperors, Victor was indirectly criticizing them for disregarding the importance of Rome.⁵

Despite the absence of Constantine, it was not inconceivable that the Secular Games of 348 could have been celebrated in his name by other leaders who were present in Rome. After all, Rome’s annual birthday festival, the Parilia, celebrated on April 21, was held every year even without the emperor. It is possible to imagine two candidates for such a visible role. First, there was the prefect of Rome, whose prestige, if not his power, increased in direct proportion as the emperor’s visibility diminished. Moreover, the

⁵ For Victor’s birth and years in Rome, see below. Aurelius Victor, *Caesares* 28.2, “mea quoque aetate post mille centesimus [sc. annus] consule Philippo excessit nullis, ut solet, sollempnibus frequentatus: adeo in dies cura minima Romanae urbis.” Zosimus, *Historia nova* 2.1-7, origins of Secular Games and Constantine’s failure to continue them. On the two different cycles of these Games, see Beard, North, and Price (1998) 1:205-6.

prefect in 348, Ulpus Limenius, was a known pagan, and thus presumably would not have objected to overseeing the required sacrifices to the Olympian and underworld deities. Limenius, however, was an easterner: he had been proconsul of Constantinople in 342 and was thus a member of the eastern senate, not Rome's. The appointment of eastern provincials to the prefecture of Rome was unusual, but it may reflect the fact that Constans' formative years had also been spent in Constantinople; Limenius was probably a trusted associate of many years. He was not, however, a man who would have been invested in Rome's distinctive traditions.⁶

Second, there were other members of the imperial family living in Rome in the 340s, an anomaly in the fourth century. These family members, Christians all, were not interested in celebrating the Secular Games, but their presence in Rome suggested a potential for them to become involved in politics. This potential was realized in the tumultuous events of 350. Early in this year, Constans met his end in Gaul at the hands of Magnentius, a rebellious Roman general who thereby seized control of the western provinces while Constantius II was preoccupied on the Persian frontier. The most politically active of these imperial siblings was Constantina, a daughter of Constantine and a sister of Constans and Constantius. Constantina had first been married to her cousin Hannibalianus, who had been designated "king of kings" and was to be installed as the new ruler of Persia. After Hannibalianus was killed in the purge of Constantine's collateral relatives in 337, Constantina evidently retired to Rome. There despite (or because of) her widowhood, she continued to be an influential player on the imperial

⁶ For Limenius, see Chastagnol (1962) 128-30 and *PLRE* 1:510, "Limenius 2." As proconsul in 342 he lodged a charge of magic and treason against Libanius and forced his departure from Constantinople; his prefecture in Rome lasted from June 347 – April 349.

stage. She may have played a role in encouraging the general Vetranio to oppose the usurpation of Magnentius in 350; Magnentius himself sought her as a bride until Constantius married her off to Gallus, his new Caesar in the east, in 351.⁷

In addition to Constantina, there was also Eutropia, a half-sister of Constantine and mother of a young man, Julius Nepotianus, who was therefore Constantine's nephew. Several months after Magnentius established his authority in Rome, Nepotianus proclaimed himself emperor, supported by a band of gladiators; he survived for several weeks before he was suppressed by Magnentius' officers. Nepotianus was castigated by ancient sources as a bloodthirsty tyrant who reigned for less than a month. The swiftness of his fall has obscured what his propaganda might have looked like. After all, Nepotianus was a member of the imperial family and very likely the son and grandson of consuls. Thus by his ancestry he embodied a rare combination of dynastic legitimacy and senatorial nobility—a true senatorial emperor. The coins minted at Rome during his brief reign advertised this appeal. Gold coins minted for Constantius and Nepotianus showed the city-goddess Roma seated on a throne and holding a globe surmounted by a Christian Chi-Rho symbol. By the end of his month in power, his coins carried the name Flavius Nepotianus Constantinus on the front and a seated Roma on the back, a succinct expression of his potential appeal as simultaneously a Constantinian and a senatorial emperor. If he had survived a little longer, historians today might be reevaluating Nepotianus in much the same way as they now do Maxentius.⁸

⁷ *PLRE* 1:222, "Constantina 2," with Bleckmann (1994) on her political influence. On Hannibalianus, see Chapter 2 above.

⁸ *PLRE* 1:316, "Eutropia 2," 624, "Nepotianus 5." The sources for the revolt of Nepotianus are listed by Potter (2004) 691 n.160. According to Aurelius Victor, *Caesares* 42.6-8, who may have been an eyewitness, the streets ran with blood. For Nepotianus' coins, see the summary in Kent (1981) 240-1, with

Amid the turmoil of the early 350s, it was significant that neither Magnentius nor Constantius II came to Rome. There was little need—the defeat of Nepotianus was managed by a court official—and with armies in the field in northern Italy, little opportunity to visit Rome. Even after the dust settled, Constantius did not come to Rome for several years, although he was using Milan as his base for most of that period. In his absence, urban prefects set up dedications affirming the city’s loyalty to the regime, a task made all the more urgent because Rome had actually defected to Magnentius for more than two years. Although the inscriptions usually identify the prefect alone as being responsible for the dedications, their placement in the Roman Forum suggests that the prefect was functioning as an “epigraphic spokesman” for the whole senate. For example, after he was appointed prefect by Constantius in 352, Naeratius Cerealis supervised the dedication of an equestrian statue, which was placed in the northwest corner of the Roman Forum by the arch of Septimius Severus. In all likelihood, Cerealis was readying this impressive monument in case Constantius decided to visit Rome. Either of two occasions might be envisioned: the celebration of a triumph over Magnentius, or the festivities which inaugurated his thirtieth year in imperial power, which would begin in November 353. It would prove to be a prescient choice of monument in light of the admiration Constantius would later express for the statue of Trajan on horseback which commanded Trajan’s Forum. Moreover, it made a nice pair in the Roman Forum with the equestrian statue of his father. Constantine’s horse had been prepared in anticipation of a visit to celebrate his thirtieth anniversary; Cerealis may have had this precedent in mind when he dedicated Constantius’ horse in 352/53, just in

examples at 261, nos. 166-7 and 265-6, nos. 200-3; for his consular ancestry, see Barnes (1982) 108, identifying him as the son of Virius Nepotianus (cos. 336) and grandson of Virius Nepotianus (cos. 301).

time for his thirtieth year to begin in November 353. The inscription honored Constantius as the “restorer of the city of Rome and of the world, and the extinguisher of pestiferous tyranny,” a tacit reference to Magnentius, who was killed in spring 353. Thus the statue both appealed to Constantius’ desire to appear as a military conqueror and proclaimed the city’s loyalty to its legitimate sovereign.⁹

Constantius, however, failed to appear in Rome for another four years. Instead, he celebrated his thirtieth anniversary in Arles, in southern Gaul. To mark the occasion, the emperor provided theatrical shows and circus races, sparing no expense. Imperial provision of entertainment with “ostentatious magnificence” had traditionally been the prerogative of Rome, but these privileges were now being lavished on a provincial city. Constantius’ principal objective in the winter of 353/4 was to convene a council of bishops at Arles, which was to extend the authority of previous councils to the newly-conquered western provinces. This policy recalled the example of his father, who in 314 had also summoned bishops to a council at Arles, with the aim of resolving the Donatist schism in the provinces of north Africa, recently acquired with the defeat of Maxentius. Also like Constantine, Constantius now marked his thirtieth anniversary in a city far from Rome; if Constantinople was New Rome, then Arles could be “little Gallic Rome.”¹⁰

⁹ On the war between Magnentius and Constantius II, see Barnes (1993) 101-6; on the symbolic importance of urban prefects, see also below. For Constantine’s horse, see Chapter 2 above; for Constantius’, Chioffi (1995). Chastagnol (1962) 135-9, Cerealis was prefect from September 352 – December 353. *ILS* 1:164, no. 731, “restitutori urbis Romae adque orb[is] et extinctori pestiferæ tyrannidis.”

¹⁰ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestæ* 14.5.1, thirtieth anniversary in Arles, “theatralis ludos atque circenses ambizioso editos apparatus,” though the text as transmitted erroneously places the celebrations in October, not November 353: see Barnes (1993) 314 n.32. As part of these festivities, Constantius may have installed an obelisk in the circus, thereby making the circus at Arles resemble the Circus Maximus in Rome: Henck (2001) 300, but see also Charron and Heijmans (2001), who argue, not entirely convincingly, that the obelisk was erected under Constantine. On Constantine’s council of Arles, see Potter (2004) 407-9, and on Constantius’, Barnes (1993) 115-6. Ausonius, *Ordo urbium nobilium* 74, “Gallula Roma Arelas,” with Klingshirn (1994) 33-71 on the development of Arles in late antiquity and Loseby (1996) on the transition from the late-antique to the early medieval city.

Although Constantius did not visit Rome during his tricennial year, he lingered in the west for several more years, during most of which he was based in Milan. His proximity to Rome implied that a visit was possible at any point, and prompted other prefects in the 350s to prepare dedications in anticipation that the emperor would make the journey south. Since these dedications were presumably reported to the emperor, they amounted to invitations to visit. For example, Flavius Leontius, prefect in 356, set up a statue along the Sacred Way welcoming Constantius as “victor in the whole world.” His successor in office, Memmius Vitrasius Orfitus, prefect for the second time in 357-59, set up at least three statues of Constantius in the Roman Forum, the bases of which were found near the arch of Severus, and praised Constantius as the “enlarger of the Roman empire” and again as “victor in the whole world.” The recurrence of this second phrase in the dedications by Leontius and Orfitus suggests that these senators knew Constantius liked the appellation, and in fact, the emperor did use a similar formula, “master of the whole world,” when signing his letters; Leontius and Orfitus doubtless hoped that Constantius would be pleased to see these monuments with his signature phrase on them. It may also be significant that the language of these dedications changed subtly over the years. In the immediate aftermath of the victory over Magnentius, Cerealis had praised Constantius as the “restorer of the city of Rome,” but several years later, Orfitus invoked him as the “enlarger of the Roman empire.” Constantius’ field of activity had expanded; the city of Rome, it seemed, was not large enough for an emperor who aspired to mastery of the whole world.¹¹

¹¹ *CIL* 6.31397, “toto orbe victori.” *CIL* 6.1161, 1162, 31395, all with the same text, including the phrases “propagatori imperii Romani” and “toto orbe victori.” “Propagator imperii” had once been an epithet

Looking outward: Aurelius Victor and the view from Rome

Notwithstanding the flurry of dedications in the 350s, Constantius did not actually come to Rome until 357. By that time, apart from Nepotianus' fleeting few weeks in power, it had been thirty-one years since an emperor last set foot in Rome. The intervening period coincided with the formative years of a young man born in north Africa who came to Rome to complete his education and gain a place in the imperial bureaucracy. Sextus Aurelius Victor may have witnessed the unhappiness which greeted the news that Constantine had been buried in Constantinople, as well as the tumultuous months in 350 that saw Magnentius and Nepotianus fight for control of the city. Admittedly, it is difficult to trace the nature of Victor's connection to Rome, for little is known about his life. In 361, he attained senatorial rank when he was appointed governor of a province in the western Balkans. Late in his life, however, Victor returned to Rome as prefect of the city, suggesting that this provincial of humble origins had acquired sufficient status to mingle with the city's highest aristocracy. Although little is known about Victor's presence in Rome, his brief historical work, *Emperors*, can be read as a defense of the traditional importance of the city of Rome. Victor's response to the increasingly marginal status of Rome in the third and fourth centuries was to explain the success and failure of emperors in terms of their education, and especially their acquaintance with the city's values and traditions. In this way Victor argued that Rome and its values, embodied in the senate, remained central to the fate of the empire.¹²

applied to Mars on coins of Maxentius: Sutherland (1967) 375, Rome 189. Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 15.1.3, "scribendoque propria manu orbis totius se dominum appellaret."

¹² For Victor's life and career, see *PLRE* 1:960, "Victor 13," and Bird (1984) 5-15, who suggests (p.6) that he was in Rome from c. 337 – c. 354. For his prefecture of Rome, see Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae*

Victor's interest in Rome was most conspicuous in his inclusion of details concerning the city's buildings and topography. Some of these items will have appeared in Victor's source(s), but it was nevertheless his decision to select and reproduce them.¹³ For example, he recorded that Domitian rebuilt the Capitolium, Caracalla built a magnificent set of baths, and Aurelian built a temple to the sun-god Sol.¹⁴ At the same time, Victor also mentioned topographical details which do not appear in other accounts, and may have been the result of his greater familiarity with the city. Thus he knew that Trajan dedicated a set of baths to his general and friend Licinius Sura, that Hadrian built a performance venue called the Athenaeum, and that Philip built a reservoir across the Tiber. He also knew that the revolt of Rome's mint-workers under Aurelian had resulted in seven thousand casualties, and that the resistance had been centered on the Caelian Hill. Occasionally, these remarks verge on the editorial, and indicate that Victor's work may have been written with a Roman audience in mind. The baths which Commodus constructed at Rome were "scarcely worthy of Rome's might," while the unseasonable Tiber floods that greeted Gallienus' nomination as Caesar correctly portended the ruin which he brought to the empire.¹⁵

21.10.6 and *ILS* 1:575-6, no. 2945, with Chastagnol (1962) 232-3, who dates his tenure of the office to 388/9; see also Chapter 7 below.

¹³ The problem of Victor's sources is a long-standing one. The dominant view is recapitulated by Bird (1984) 16-23: that Victor's principal source for events down to perhaps 337 or 357 was a lost work of imperial biographies, known today for convenience's sake as the *Kaisergeschichte*. An entirely different thesis underlies the edition and commentary by Dufraigne (1975), who doubts the existence of the *KG* and argues that Victor used a combination of multiple extant sources.

¹⁴ Aurelius Victor, *Caesares* 11.4, Capitolium, 21.4, baths of Caracalla, 35.7, temple to Sol. Since these items also appeared in Eutropius' *Breviarium ab urbe condita* (7.23.5, 8.20.1, 9.15.1), it is likely that they were in a common source. For Victor's interest in the buildings of Rome, see Bird (1984) 60-5.

¹⁵ Aurelius Victor, *Caesares* 13.8, baths of Sura, 14.3, Hadrian's Athenaeum, 17.3, Commodus' baths *Romae potentia vix digna*, 28.1, Philip's reservoir, 32.3, Tiber floods, 35.6, Caelian Hill.

The attention paid to these local details suggests that Victor perceived a relationship between what happened in Rome and the fate of the empire generally, so that events in Rome were not of merely local significance. In particular, he evaluated emperors according to how they had treated the senate, and explained the empire's difficulties as a function of the senate's loss of influence in imperial affairs. Again, in some cases Victor merely repeated judgments which had long been established in the Latin historical tradition. For example, he attributed whatever good Claudius had accomplished to his reliance on senatorial advisors and generals, and blamed his failures on his subservience to his wives and freedmen. He condemned Domitian for treating the senate with excessive arrogance in demanding to be addressed as lord and god. In other cases, Victor offered his own distinctive praise of emperors who allowed themselves to be influenced by senators. He alone claimed that Trajan, at the end of his life, was on his way back to Rome "at the request of the senators," and that Severus Alexander's retention of the jurists Ulpian and Paul was the result of his "respect for the nobles and zeal for justice."¹⁶

Victor's most significant contribution to senatorial historiography was his assertion that the little-known emperor Tacitus, who ruled for a few months in 275-6, had been designated by the senate. According to Victor, this choice followed a six-month interregnum in which the senate and the army had engaged in respectful and mutually deferential dialogue. This fanciful tale bore little semblance to reality: the hiatus had been much briefer, and was the result of warring factions within the army rather than a

¹⁶ Aurelius Victor, *Caesares* 4.1-2, Claudius' advisors and generals, 11.2, Domitian's arrogance, 13.11, Trajan's return *rogatu patrum* with Bird (1994) 85 n.19, 24.6, Alexander "quantus erga optimos atque aequi studio esset edocuit."

transfer of power to the senate. In spite of such inconvenient details, this episode, however misconstrued, underpinned Victor's perspective on Roman history. The nomination of Tacitus had been welcomed by all because "the nobles had reclaimed the right of choosing the emperor from the brutish military." In Victor's mind, the election of Tacitus marked a high point; thenceforth "the power of the military increased and the right of appointing the emperor was snatched from the senate up to our own times." To be sure, senators were partly responsible for their own powerlessness, because they had failed to press their advantage to reclaim their positions in the army, a right of which they had been stripped by Gallienus in the mid-third century. Instead, senators preferred to indulge their appetites for leisure and wealth, and forever ceded power to the increasingly barbarous soldiers. Victor's analysis was flawed—the senate had not enjoyed a resurgence under Tacitus, nor had Gallienus been motivated by antipathy to the senate—but it was nevertheless an attempt to explain what he perceived as a decline in the quality of emperors, which he attributed to the loss of senatorial influence.¹⁷

Even at moments when Victor's critique went beyond the narrow question of the senate's influence on policy, his diagnosis of the empire's ills nevertheless exhibited elements of traditionally senatorial ideas. This perspective underlay his numerous complaints about the power and corruption of the soldiers, and his belief that good character and education were essential to emperors' success. Victor's criticisms of the

¹⁷ Aurelius Victor, *Caesares* 35.9-36.1, interregnum and senate's designation of Tacitus, with his judgments at 36.1, "cunctis fere laetioribus, quod militari ferocia legendi ius principis proceres recepissent," and 37.5, "abhinc militaris potentia convaluit ac senatui imperium creandique ius principis ereptum ad nostram memoriam." For Victor's role in elaborating this fiction, see Syme (1971) 238, 241 and Paschoud (1996) 252. Potter (2004) 258, changes in governmental structure under Gallienus, 274-5, accession of Tacitus. Victor's statements on the senate are discussed by Bird (1984) 24-40, who writes: "what Victor would have liked to see was a just, cultured emperor of good character who would show deference to the senate" (p.38).

armies were numerous. When the Praetorian Guard made Claudius emperor, it negated an act of liberation comparable to Brutus' assassination of Tarquin. He noted with approval that Septimius Severus had disbanded the Guard cohorts, and that Constantine had taken measures to demilitarize the city of Rome. He was conspicuously favorable to Probus, perhaps because he approved that emperor's alleged remark that, once peace was restored everywhere, soldiers would be unnecessary. He did not fail to note whenever the Guard butchered civilians in Rome. Victor's bitter complaints about the power of the soldiers, both in Rome and in the frontier armies, were the result of his belief that their power had increased at the expense of the senate's. Soldiers and senators had long been rivals for influence in Rome, and Victor's sympathies were plainly with the civilian elite.¹⁸

By the same token, Victor evaluated emperors in terms of their fulfillment of aristocratic ideals, foremost their character and education. The Julio-Claudian emperors were "so cultivated in literature and eloquence" that their learning would have been sufficient to compensate for their lesser flaws. Predictably, Marcus Aurelius was praised for his excellence in philosophy and oratory, but Victor went beyond this conventional opinion to express his view that "when he was emperor, the liberal arts flowered to such an extent that I consider this to have been the glory of his reign." In a transparent attempt at flattery, he praised the reigning emperor Constantius II for gaining glory through the power of his eloquence alone, an allusion to the staged surrender of the usurper

¹⁸ Aurelius Victor, *Caesares* 3.14, Claudius, 37.3, soldiers redundant, 26.5 and 40.24, massacres by the Guard. For Severus' and Constantine's measures, see 20.1 and 40.25, with Chapter 2 above on the ideology of Rome as a civilian city. On Victor's hostility to the military, see Bird (1984) 41-52, who notes (p.41) that "his antipathy towards the army is revealed by over a score of negative comments."

Vetranio.¹⁹ He reserved special contempt for uneducated emperors, criticizing Maximinus as “practically illiterate” and Domitian’s desire for tyranny “stupid.” To some extent, this may have reflected social snobbery, for in a personal aside, unusually revealing by the standards of ancient historians, Victor disclosed that he was the son of a poor, uneducated father in the countryside, who had nevertheless improved himself through his studies. Yet Victor’s emphasis on the importance of education also went to the heart of his prescription for effective emperors. He traced the beginning of the decline in the quality of emperors to the period after Severus Alexander; after 235, emperors were more desirous of fighting each other than external foes, and they “threw the Roman state into a steep decline, as it were, and men were turned loose on imperial power indiscriminately, good and bad, noble and base-born, and many of barbarian origin... Fortune had entrusted public affairs even to the lowest in birth and education.” Not surprisingly, Victor’s prescription for reversing this decline required the selection of emperors who embodied senatorial virtues: “it is an established fact that learning, refinement, and courtesy are essential, particularly in emperors, since without these qualities natural gifts are despised as though they were unfinished or crude.”²⁰

¹⁹ Aurelius Victor, *Caesares* 8.7, “praecipueque Caesarum gens adeo litteris culti atque eloquentia fuere,” 16.10, “tantumque illo imperante florere artes bonae, ut illam gloriam etiam temporum putem.” For Constantius’ eloquence, see 42.2-3; his victory over Vetranio, gained by forensic oratory, was also praised by Julian, *Orat.* 1.31B-33C, 47C.

²⁰ Aurelius Victor, *Caesares* 25.1 Maximinus *litterarum fere rudis*, 40.17, Alexander *dominatui stolidè incubuerat*. For Victor’s humble origins, see 20.5, “qui rure ortus tenui atque indocto patre in haec tempora vitam praestiti studiis tantis honestiorem.” His diagnosis is given at 24.9-11, “Romanum statum quasi abrupto praecipitavere, immissique in imperium promiscue boni malique, nobiles atque ignobiles, ac barbariae multi... fortunae vis ... etiam infimis genere institutoque publica permisit,” and his prescription at 40.13, “compertum est eruditionem elegantiam comitatem praesertim principibus necessarias esse, cum sine his naturae bona quasi incompta aut etiam horrida despectui sint.” On Victor’s emphasis on education, see also Bird (1984) 71-80.

Although Victor's explanation was not especially sophisticated, it amounted to one of the first theories of Roman decline, and linked several developments. The power of the frontier armies to create their own emperors had raised uneducated soldiers to imperial power and marginalized the traditional senatorial elite at Rome. As it happened, the publication of Victor's *Emperors* coincided with a rare moment when a different kind of emperor was making a bid for power. Doubtless Julian's usurpation of imperial rank and rapid progress into the western Balkans in summer 361 was initially embarrassing to Victor, who was living at Sirmium and just putting the finishing touches to his *Emperors*, which praised Constantius and criticized commanders who launched civil wars.²¹ Yet Victor and Julian reached a quick rapprochement. Victor met him first at Sirmium, and soon after, a second time at Naissus. At this second meeting, Julian promoted Victor to be governor of the province that included Sirmium (Second Pannonia). If Victor was seeking promotion from the new emperor of the West, his plan was successful; his new post carried with it senatorial rank, and Julian bestowed the further honor of a bronze statue. The location of this statue is unknown, but the fact that it was granted by imperial permission suggests that it may have been set up at Rome in the Forum of Trajan, where many other senators, including other writers, were similarly honored in the fourth century. With his new rank, Victor became a member of the senate whose involvement in imperial affairs he considered essential for the restoration of the empire; with his new

²¹ For the date of the *Caesares*, see Nixon (1991), who argues that it appeared in spring 361 and emphasizes Victor's agreement with official opinions emanating from Constantius' court; Bird (1994) xi proposes that a "postscript" criticizing Constantius' officials was added "later that summer" [of 361].

statue, he took his place alongside other senators who embodied his ideal of civilian leadership by the educated elite.²²

Nevertheless, this sudden rapport between Julian and Victor was based on more than mutual convenience; the two men shared many of the same ideas about what the empire required. Victor's flattery of Constantius in *Emperors* was not a serious obstacle; after all, Julian himself had praised Constantius in orations which he had written as a Caesar.²³ Julian and Victor seem to have thought in the same terms. Julian was a rare emperor of the fourth century who had received an advanced education in the liberal arts, having studied philosophy at Athens. He, too, believed that the empire could be restored through moral revival and a return to earlier practices. This principle underlay his program of fiscal and cultural renewal: lower taxes and a less burdensome bureaucracy would promote a revival of local elites, who would then breathe new life into civic institutions—including the pagan cults. Victor's ideas were perhaps less systematic, but he too had lamented the greediness of tax collectors and decried the lapse of ancient rites such as the Secular Games. His belief that "there is nothing good or bad in the state that cannot be reversed by the character of its rulers" would have been congenial to Julian, who sought to curb the expenditure of his court and presented himself in the *Misopogon* as a moral exemplar.²⁴

²² For Julian's meetings with Victor, see Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 21.10.6-8. The statue of Victor is assigned to the Forum of Trajan by Lugli (1965) 68, no. 392, but it could also have been erected in Victor's province, perhaps at Sirmium; for statues of senators in the Forum of Trajan, see Chapter 4 below.

²³ Nixon (1991) acknowledges (p.119) that Julian and Victor had common interests in culture and religion, but underestimates (p.125) the role that shared ideas about the restoration of the empire may have played in their rapprochement. For Julian's panegyrics, see his *Orat.* 1-3, the first two addressed to Constantius, the third to Constantius' queen Eusebia.

²⁴ For Victor's criticisms of the bureaucracy, see *Caesares* 9.12, 13.6, 33.13, with Bird (1984) 52-9, and on the Secular Games, see above. Good character: *Caesares* 13.7, "adeo boni malive in republica nihil est,

With so many ideas in common, it is easy to imagine that Julian and Victor would have had much to discuss. According to Ammianus, their meeting at Naissus coincided with Julian's decision to write a letter to the senate at Rome. In this letter Julian denounced Constantine as an "innovator" who upset established customs, and accused Constantius of "abuses and faults." The sequence of Ammianus' narrative suggests the possibility that Victor advised Julian to craft his approach to the senate in these terms, posing as the defender of traditional practices against the innovations introduced by his relatives. To Victor's mind, he may have succeeded in exerting precisely the kind of influence that senators in his day rarely enjoyed. If so, however, both Julian and Victor misjudged opinion at Rome, for the letter was received with unanimous indignation in the senate. By contrast, Julian's criticism of Constantius' "faults" found a cautious echo in Victor's province: a new dedication appeared on an old milestone set up on the main road, praising Julian "for the eradication of the faults of former times." Although no dedicator is named in this inscription, it could easily have been the work of Victor himself. If so, it would have made a fitting postscript to *Emperors*, which concluded with a complaint that Constantius had been careless in his appointment of officials, including provincial governors. By contrast, Julian promised to be an emperor who, "through the fairest of laws and his injunctions and—what is even more forceful—through the manifest appearance of his own manner of life" might abolish "the majority of faults."²⁵

quod in diversum traduci nequeat moribus praesidentium." Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 17.3, tax reforms in Gaul, 22.4.9-10, paring of court establishment, 22.9.12, curial service; on his fiscal reforms, see Bowersock (1978) 74-8 and Athanassiadi (1981) 96-120.

²⁵ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 21.10.7-8, Julian's letter to the senate, censuring Constantine as "novatoris turbatorisque priscarum legum et moris antiquitus recepti" and alleging "probra quaedam ... et vitia" against Constantius. *ILS* 3.2:XXVI, no. 8946, "ob deleta vitia temporum preteritorum," with Arce (1984) 147-8, pointing out the parallels with Julian's and Ammianus' criticism of Constantius' administration, and Conti (2004) 109, for the possibility that Victor was responsible for this dedication.

Turning inward: local narratives of Rome in the Codex of 354

In *Emperors*, Aurelius Victor sought to argue that Rome was still an important player on the imperial stage. The best emperors were those who possessed the traditional values of Rome's aristocracy, treated the senate with respect, and showed their regard for the city by adding to its physical grandeur. Victor's ideas looked both outward, in the hope of reconnecting Rome with its absent emperors, and backward, for they represented a style of emperorship that had become obsolete by the fourth century. The vacuum created by the emperor's absence created both a need and an opportunity for new ideas, which in turn might give rise to new narratives of Rome's history. The first of these presented a new variant on the city's oldest theme—its senators, who, after all, predated the emperors by hundreds of years. The second marked a new departure, and would prove to be the more enduring; it saw the formation of Christian narratives built around the memory of the city's bishops and martyrs.

Both of these new alternatives found expression in a unique text compiled in the year 354. This text is sometimes called the Codex-Calendar of 354, but it might more accurately be dubbed an Illustrated Almanac.²⁶ It consisted of a number of illustrations depicting themes of imperial and astrological significance, together with lists recording series of emperors, magistrates, and bishops, and concluded with a brief chronicle of Rome's history. Quite apart from its historical content, the Codex was an artistic

For Victor's belief that an emperor could abolish faults, see his comment on Vespasian: *Caesares* 9.5, "legibus aequissimis monendoque, quodque vehementius est, vitae specie vitiorum plura aboleverat."

²⁶ Because of its illustrations and composite nature, it is impossible to refer to one standard edition containing all material in the Codex. The text of all sections except the Calendar is printed in Mommsen (1892), but the illustrations are omitted. For the Calendar, see Mommsen's edition in *CIL* 1² pp. 254-79, now superseded by Degraffi (1963) 237-62. The illustrations are most accessible in Salzman (1990), where they are reproduced in black-and-white; she calls the Codex an "Illustrated Almanac" (p.4) and a "calendar-almanac" (p.51).

achievement in its own right, with the earliest known full-page illustrations to be preserved in a Western codex. They were executed by Furius Dionysius Filocalus, a master calligrapher and engraver who later carved the epigrams of bishop Damasus commemorating the martyrs of Rome. The content and quality of the Codex make it plain that it was prepared for a wealthy Christian of senatorial rank, presumably the Valentinus to whom the work was dedicated. Although the precise identification of Valentinus is debatable, the most likely candidates are both members of an aristocratic family, the Symmachi, more often described by modern scholars as one of the leading pagan families in the senate.²⁷

Various aspects of the Codex have attracted a great deal of scholarly attention, including the Calendar, which has been studied for what it reveals about relations between pagans and Christians in fourth-century Rome, and the lists of bishops and martyrs, crucial sources for the early history of the Roman Church. Yet the Codex exhibited more than a coexistence of pagan and Christian society and culture; it also expressed multiple ways of thinking about Rome's past. Its *Chronicle of the City of Rome* continued to narrate the city's history according to the succession of emperors. At the same time, the Codex also listed the consuls who had held office from the founding of the Republic to 354. Emperors long—and consuls far longer—had been the figures used for calculating the passage of the years and, by extension, for writing the history of Rome. In addition, however, the Codex contained new kinds of lists, including one of the

²⁷ Salzman (1990) 11, earliest illustrations, 25-56, description of the contents, 199-202, identity of Valentinus, 202-5, Filocalus; for the latter's involvement with bishop Damasus, see also Chapter 5 below. Valentinus may have been M. Aurelius Valerius Valentinus (*PLRE* 1:936, "Valentinus 12"), uncle of the orator Aurelius Symmachus, or Avianius Valentinus (*PLRE* 1:936, "Valentinus 7"), Symmachus' brother. Salzman rules out Mommsen's identification, the Valentinus who was later *dux* in Illyricum (*PLRE* 1:935, "Valentinus 3"), because his career does not suggest that he was part of the senatorial aristocracy at Rome.

prefects of Rome and another of the city's bishops. Prefects and bishops were new figures in Roman historical thinking. Collectively the several lists of officeholders in the Codex embodied parallel strands of the city's history and represented alternatives for thinking about the identity of Rome in 354. Moreover, they proved to be a seedbed of historical raw material for later writers creating new narratives of Rome's history.²⁸

Urban prefects and Roman history

The withdrawal of the emperor and his court from the city of Rome had important implications for the traditional magistracies coveted by Roman aristocrats. In the Republic, senators' hopes had focused on the consulship, the highest regular office and the one which distinguished its holders and their descendants as "nobles." In order to make this highest rank more widely available, and expand the pool of candidates available to fill the consular governorships, Augustus had instituted the practice of appointing replacement (suffect) consuls; by the Severan period, the number of consuls per year had grown to twelve. As a result of changes in the provincial structure and the senatorial career in the third century, however, the suffect consulship, like the quaestorship and praetorship, lost its prestige. Thus by the fourth century, only the two ordinary consuls (*consules ordinarii*), so called because they took office at the beginning of the year and gave their names to it, continued to enjoy the exalted status conferred by holding a consulship. Ausonius, a Gallic aristocrat of the late fourth century, compared himself favorably with Fronto, a famous orator of the second century, because his consulship was ordinary while Fronto was a suffect "appointed mid-year for a span of

²⁸ Salzman (1990) focuses on the illustrated sections and on the Calendar, with a view to analyzing the transformation of pagan Rome into a Christian city (pp.19-22). On the Christian lists, see below. For the text of these lists, see Mommsen (1892) 50-61, list of consuls, 145-8, chronicle of emperors, with discussion of each in Salzman (1990) 35-9 and 50-6.

two months and lasting for only one-sixth of the year.” At the same time, senators at Rome faced increased competition for this honor, since senior officials in the imperial service, both civilian and military, could be rewarded with a consulship. The competition from court officials meant that even nobly-born senators of Rome could not be sure of reaching the consulship.²⁹

Most constricting, however, was emperors’ predilection for assuming consulships themselves. Between 284 and 395, half of all ordinary consulships were held by emperors or members of their families. Furthermore, since there were often two or more emperors ruling simultaneously, there were scarcely enough ordinary consulships available to satisfy all the emperors, let alone the senators. One contemporary observer used emperors’ attitude toward the consulship as an index of their willingness to share power; thus Constantius II was said never to have taken a private citizen as his colleague in the consulship, while Julian was praised for being the first emperor to do so since Diocletian. Julian himself commented, perhaps thinking of Constantius, that the consulship was the only Republican office that it still pleased emperors to hold for only one year at a time. When the Codex of 354 depicted the two consuls of the year, it ended up showing two emperors, Constantius and Gallus Caesar. The year 365 was characteristic of the fourth century as a whole in more ways than one: the two consuls were the emperors Valentinian and Valens, the former taking office in Milan, the latter in Constantinople. Thus the ordinary consulship ceased to be an office primarily associated

²⁹ For the definition of *nobilis* under the Republic and the empire, see Barnes (1974), who argues that a *nobilis* in the fourth century was any senator descended from an ordinary consul, prefect of Rome, or praetorian prefect. Christol (1986) and *CLRE* 1-4, third-century changes in the senatorial career; Chastagnol (1982a) 168-80, senatorial career in the fourth century. Talbert (1984) 21, numbers of suffect consuls; Ausonius, *Gratiarum actio* 7.32, “sed consulatus ille cuius modi? ordinario suffectus, bimenstri spatio interpositus, in sexta anni parte consumptus.” Ordinary consulships were so rarely bestowed on senators at Rome that they elicited great exultation: see, for example, Symmachus, *Orat.* 4.

with the city of Rome or its aristocracy, and instead became an honor closely associated with the imperial courts.³⁰

As the consulship receded from their grasp, Roman aristocrats redirected their aspirations to an office that was still within reach, and one which, moreover, allowed them to display their status in the city of Rome. The office of urban prefect had been “thought up” by Augustus in order to permit more senators to take part in the administration of the state. At first, the appointment was something of a sinecure, awarded to a senior ex-consul as a crowning distinction to his career. As the Principate matured, the prefect’s powers grew. His chief task was the maintenance of public order, for which he commanded the urban cohorts, a police force of 1500 men; in the second century, his authority was extended also to the fire brigades. His powers of jurisdiction, limited at first, steadily expanded until his court gradually supplanted those of the praetors. Yet the urban prefect, a civilian magistrate, had always been overshadowed by the prefect of the praetorian cohorts, the final arbiter of power in the city of Rome. The relative power of the two prefects in Rome can be appreciated by considering the events of 193. After the assassination of Commodus on December 31, 192, the elderly urban prefect Helvius Pertinax was made emperor; he survived for a few months, until he was murdered by the praetorian guards and replaced by Didius Julianus, the praetorian prefect.³¹

³⁰ *CLRE* 4, imperial consulships, 21, “it became normal for the consul to be inaugurated at court.” Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 16.10.12, Constantius, 23.1.1, Julian, 26.5.4-6, consuls of 365; for Julian’s remark, see his *Orat.* 3.108B. Salzman (1990) Figs. 13-4, illustrations of Constantius and Gallus.

³¹ Suetonius, *Augustus* 37, “quoque plures partem administrandae rei publicae caperent, nova officia excogitavit: ... praefecturam urbis.” For a sketch of the prefecture in the early empire, see Chastagnol (1960) v-ix. On Roman senators’ predilection for the urban prefecture, note Salzman (1990) 41-2, “since the office of consul was effectively closed to them, Western aristocrats habitually filled the position of

Constantine's suppression of the praetorian guards in 312 enabled the urban prefect to emerge as the most powerful official in Rome. Moreover, the administrative reforms of Diocletian and Constantine, which imposed a regular provincial structure on Italy for the first time, turned the urban prefect into an important imperial administrator, responsible for Rome and the surrounding territory within a radius of one hundred miles, i.e. the equivalent of a provincial governor, with Rome as his "province." He had charge of public works and the food supply, presided at meetings of the senate, and possessed appellate jurisdiction. The prefect's competencies were local, but in deference to the ancient majesty of Rome, he enjoyed the highest grade of rank (*illustris*) within the senatorial order. The prefect was thus an unusual imperial official: in his responsibility for public works, for example, he received the same kinds of directives as other provincial governors, but he reported directly to the emperor, not to a vicar or praetorian prefect. At the same time, in his capacities as the presiding officer of the senate and "judge of the sacred appeals in place of the emperor," and in overseeing the food supply, he assumed functions which had traditionally been handled by the emperor himself. The prefect thus functioned as an "intermediary" in a range of administrative interactions between emperor and senate and between emperor and people.³²

Quite apart from his formal competencies as an administrator, the urban prefect was invested with great symbolic importance. First, as its chief executive, he was the magistrate most closely identified with the city of Rome. Thus any prefect who died in

urban prefect"; see also Chapter 5 below. The term "urban prefect" (*praefectus urbi*) is here used always to refer to the prefect and prefecture of Rome, unless specified otherwise.

³² Chastagnol (1960) is fundamental for all aspects of the prefect's administrative powers and responsibilities, and for the apt description of the prefect as "le préfet intermédiaire" (pp. 66-80). Urban prefects and provincial governors were both directed to concentrate on repairs rather than new construction: compare, for example, *CTh* 15.1.11 and 15.1.31; Ward-Perkins (1984) 32, 40.

office was apparently entitled to a public funeral. Second, he embodied the relationship between the emperor and the city of Rome, and especially between the emperor and the senate. This symbolic role functioned in both directions. As the head of the senate, the prefect was well positioned to express its loyalty to the current regime, for example by setting up public dedications to the emperor in the Roman Forum. At the same time, the emperor could use his power to appoint the prefect as a signal of his desire for continuity and stability. Such reassurance was especially welcome during times of civil war. When Magnentius defeated and killed Constans in Gaul in January 350, he thereby acquired control over the city of Rome. To say that Magnentius had little familiarity with Rome's complex senatorial politics would be an understatement. Indeed, he was a career soldier, quite possibly of barbarian birth. To establish his authority over Rome, he turned to experienced senators who had loyally served the house of Constantine. Magnentius' first prefect was Fabius Titianus, who had already been consul (337), urban prefect (339-41), and praetorian prefect in Gaul (341-49). Titianus was the first of three men to hold a second urban prefecture under Magnentius. He was followed by Aurelius Celsinus and Valerius Proculus, who emerged from retirement more than ten years after his first prefecture and ordinary consulship (340).³³

The reappointment of prefects such as Titianus and Proculus is a phenomenon requiring explanation. Magnentius' position was similar to Constantine's in 312; each had gained control of Italy with the help of a Gallic army, and neither had much first-

³³ Cameron (2002), public funeral. For the urban prefect as the epigraphic spokesman of the senate, see above, and as the nominee of the emperor, see Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 14.6.1, who termed the prefecture a *delata dignitas*. On Magnentius' background, see Potter (2004) 471, who notes that he was "the first man to claim the throne whose recent ancestors could legitimately be said to have been born beyond the frontiers (as he may have been himself)." For the prefects reappointed by Magnentius, see Chastagnol (1962) 107-11 and 131, Titianus, 112-4 and 131, Celsinus, and 96-102 and 134, with Barnes (1982) 119-20, Proculus.

hand knowledge of Rome. His response was to follow Constantine's example by reappointing prefects who had served the previous regime. It has been argued that, during times of civil war, senators at Rome threw their support behind competing claimants in the hope of winning plum appointments to high office. Titianus does appear to have become disenchanted with Constans, whom he had served for the last eight years as praetorian prefect in Gaul. His defection, however, probably had other motives: on a subsequent embassy to Constantius for Magnentius, he accused Constantine and his sons (presumably, Constantine II and Constans) of having brought about the ruin of the cities through their careless rule. On other occasions, the support of high-ranking senators may have been the result of compulsion, and tended to be reluctant, since the noblest senators had the most to lose by any change in regime. In any case, both Titianus and Proculus had already held the highest offices, including the urban prefecture and the consulship; to side with an illegitimate regime could gain them little but embarrassment and possibly worse.³⁴

In the end, Titianus' reputation was ruined by his decision to side with Magnentius. During his tenure as urban prefect, he had set up a dedication to Magnentius in the baths of Titus. In the wake of Magnentius' defeat, the names of both Titianus and Magnentius were deliberately erased from the inscription accompanying this dedication. Titianus, by serving a usurper, suffered the same fate of oblivion when his name was

³⁴ For Constantine's reappointment of Maxentius' prefects, see Chapter 2 above. For opportunistic senators, see Humphries (2003), commenting on the appointments of Titianus and Cerealis: "In both cases, therefore, support for rival emperors contesting the throne had brought to these senators the highest office to which members of the Roman aristocracy ordinarily aspired" (p.39). But see Delmaire (1997) 126, "les ralliements sont souvent tièdes, parfois contraints, et les plus grands sont souvent les plus réticents à s'engager." Even when a senator did gain high office through the support of a usurper, he had to tread carefully "out of fear for the tyrant's precarious situation" (Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 27.6.2, referring to Rusticus Julianus).

erased. The erasure of Titianus' name showed how perilous usurpations might be for the highest-ranking members of the Roman nobility, and implies that senators at such times may have been more interested in conserving their status than in taking risks. Indeed, many other senators remained loyal to the house of Constantine, and some even withdrew from Rome to join Constantius at Sirmium. One of these senators may have been Naeratus Cerealis, whom Constantius appointed prefect of Rome after regaining control of Italy. Cerealis' appointment, however, stemmed more from his close relationship to the imperial house than from any signal service he had rendered during the war with Magnentius.³⁵

In contrast to high-ranking senators, who had much to lose by regime change, new emperors were eager to have the support of the nobles, who might lend them a veneer of legitimacy. Indeed, an emperor such as Magnentius, who had few contacts among the aristocracy, had little choice but to turn to experienced senators as his representatives in Rome. The contrast with the practice at Constantinople is instructive. There were fewer civil wars in the east in the fourth century, and second prefectures were virtually unknown there. Moreover, emperors exerted more direct control over Constantinople than they did over Rome, both because they were more often present themselves and because New Rome had no tradition of autonomous government by an aristocracy of its own. The usefulness of the prefect as a symbol of relations between the emperor and the aristocracy at Rome had largely supplanted the importance once attached

³⁵ *CIL* 6.1166-7 = *ILS* 1:166, no. 741, Titianus' dedications; on erasure in epigraphy, see Flower (2000). Cerealis: *PLRE* 1:197-9, "Cerealis 2"; he was the uncle of Gallus Caesar and of Constantius' first wife. For senators joining Constantius at Sirmium, see Julian, *Orat.* 1.48B and 2.97B-C. For another example of a senator who found himself in distress after a usurpation, see Chapter 7 below on Q. Aurelius Symmachus, with Sogno (2006) 68-76.

to the consulship. Even as Magnentius was reappointing senior ex-prefects in Rome, he designated as his fellow consul in 351 an obscure military officer named Gaiso, whose chief qualification for the honor had been to plunge the assassin's dagger into the breast of Constans. There could be no clearer demonstration that the consulship had become a reward for conspicuous service or loyalty to the emperor. The talents of Rome's senators were better suited to the civilian, administrative duties of the urban prefecture.³⁶

The increasing importance of the urban prefecture, together with the relative inaccessibility of the consulship, prompted senators to think in different terms about their own identity. Since time immemorial, senators had aspired to immortality by entering their names in the consular *fasti*. While some members of the urban nobility still gained this ultimate distinction, most would rise no higher than the prefecture. Not surprisingly, senators adapted their strategies of remembrance to keep themselves front and center. Thus the Codex of 354 now included a list of urban prefects. To be sure, this list did not replace the list of consuls, but appeared alongside it. These two lists served different purposes for the user of the Codex. While the consular list was essential for accurate record-keeping, the list of prefects could not have served any meaningful chronographic function, since the year was not dated according to the prefect, and prefects did not have annual terms anyway. Instead, the presence of this list must reflect the increased prestige of the urban prefecture in Rome. Not only did this list embody a new ideal among the

³⁶ Only one man (*PLRE* 1:211-12, "Clearchus 1") was twice prefect of Constantinople in this period, and his reappointment was not connected with a civil war (nor was that of Themistius, who was both proconsul and prefect). *Epitome de Caesaribus* 41.23, Gaiso's assassination of Constans, with his consulship at *CLRE* 236. Julian, *Orat.* 3.108A, consulship as a reward for personal service or loyalty to the emperor.

urban aristocracy, it also represented a new and emphatically local understanding of the city's history and identity.³⁷

The list of urban prefects preserved in the Codex has a number of peculiarities that further distinguish it from the list of consuls. First, the list of prefects itself had to be synchronized with a list of consuls in order to provide any chronological sense. Thus each entry began with the pair of consuls in the left column, followed by the prefect(s) who held office during that year. The consuls named in the list of prefects, however, did not match precisely the consuls given in the separate list of consuls. In particular, the consuls listed with the prefects were not “corrected” to match the official erasures of consuls who were later deemed illegitimate. Since such corrections emanated from the imperial court, the list of consuls must reflect a different source from the list of prefects. In keeping with the character of these two offices in the fourth century, the list of consuls derived from the court bureaucracy, while the list of prefects must reflect a source at Rome. The local sources which underlay the list of prefects probably came from the same milieu that produced other Rome-focused documents around this time. For example, the Chronicle of Rome, which was also part of the Codex, provided an abbreviated history of the city of Rome; though organized by imperial reign, it related only emperors' activities in Rome. Likewise, the *Curiosum* and *Notitia*, containing a list

³⁷ For the text of the list of prefects, see Mommsen (1892) 65-9, with discussion in Salzman (1990) 41-2, who notes that the list of prefects “was clearly not for chronographic purposes,” but reflected “the increased status of this office in fourth-century Rome” (p.41).

of notable buildings and monuments in each region of the city, were also compiled in the fourth century, which led to their later inclusion in the Codex.³⁸

The second oddity about the list of prefects is that it only went back to the year 254; Rome may have been eternal, but as the city of prefects, it was relatively young. By contrast, the (ordinary) consuls were listed all the way back to the founding of the Republic in 509 BCE. The other lists in the Codex—not just of the consuls, but also of the emperors, kings, and bishops—all provided a complete series from the beginning of the office. In light of the Roman reverence for all things old, it is worth asking why there was not more of an effort made to confer an ancient pedigree on the urban prefecture. In fact, this is precisely what Augustus had done when he created the office. According to Tacitus, who was probably citing the precedents Augustus claimed to have discovered in the historical record, the first prefect had been appointed by Romulus in the eighth century BCE; two other prefects had also been appointed by the kings. When Augustus revived this long-dormant post—much as he restored the custom of celebrating the Secular Games—he left prefects of Rome to watch over the city while he was away. The position was offered to Messalla Corvinus when Augustus was leading campaigns in Gaul in 26 BCE, and again to Statilius Taurus in 16 BCE, when he was in Spain. Thus the prefect of Rome was by origin a substitute not for the consuls, but for the emperor, whenever he was away from Rome for an extended period. So long as the emperor lived in Rome, the prefect remained relatively unimportant. “It was precisely the absence of the emperor that favored the growing importance of the senate-city relationship, a link

³⁸ For a discussion of the sources of the various lists in the Codex, see Salzman (1990) 283-6. Much about the regionary catalogues, including which came first, remains obscure, but see Nordh (1949) 58-67; on the *Notitia* and Chronicle and their relationship to the Codex, Salzman (1990) 50-6.

that is particularly reflected in the increasingly strong role played by the urban prefecture in the city's administration." In this perspective, there was no need to trace the holders of the prefecture before the third century, when the prefect began to assume many administrative functions in the city. The starting date of 254 could in fact be considered a historical interpretation in its own right, reflecting a judgment that this was the point at which prefects began to be important—and by extension, when emperors began to distance themselves from the city of Rome.³⁹

The formation of Christian narratives

The urban prefect was not the only figure emerging as an alternative to emperors in thinking about the history and identity of Rome. If the absence of the emperor had promoted a growing bond and identification between the senators and Rome, it might have a similar effect on the relationship between the Church and Rome. Christian senators in particular, such as the recipient of the Codex, had access not only to senatorial traditions, but also to Christian traditions. Indeed the Codex contained lists of the city's Christian leaders, including one of the bishops of Rome and two others recording the depositions of the city's bishops and martyrs. The significance of these lists lay in the fact that they appeared alongside the lists of Rome's emperors, consuls, and prefects. For the first time, a document produced at Rome placed the city's Christian and secular pasts on an equal footing.

The list of bishops contained in the Codex contained the raw material for a Christian history of Rome. It began with Peter and continued down to Liberius, the

³⁹ On the origins of the urban prefecture and Augustus' reinvention of the office, see Tacitus, *Annals* 6.10-11, with Syme (1986) 211-2, and for Taurus, Cassius Dio, *Historiae romanae* 54.19.6. Lo Cascio (2005) 164, linking the emperor's absence in the third century to the growing importance of senators in Rome.

bishop in office when the Codex was compiled in 354. The list itself was relatively spare: for bishops up to the early third century, the only data included in each entry were the length of the episcopate, the emperors who reigned, and the beginning and ending years identified by consular dates. Thereafter some entries preserved brief notices about schisms, building projects, and persecutions. The potential for this list to become the kernel of a Christian chronicle would eventually be realized in the sixth century, when it became the principal source for the early bishops in the *Book of Pontiffs*.⁴⁰

Although the content of this list pertained only to the Church at Rome, the information and activities recorded were similar to those recorded for emperors in another section of the Codex, the *Chronicle of the City of Rome*. This *Chronicle* was organized by emperor and listed activities specific to the city of Rome, including the amounts of largesse distributed to the population, notable building projects, and a few sensational events. The similarity of the material in the *Chronicle* and in the list of bishops suggests an “implicit comparison of emperor and bishop.” More important than the similarity of content, however, was the Rome-centric perspective that shaped these lists. Just as the *Chronicle* recorded only what emperors had done in Rome, the list of bishops reflected Christian traditions that were especially important in Rome. The most crucial of these was the claim that Peter had been the first bishop of Rome. Thus the Roman list began with the notice that after Christ had ascended to heaven, “the most blessed Peter took up the episcopate.” By contrast, although Christian writers not associated with Rome acknowledged Peter’s apostolic mission to Rome and martyrdom

⁴⁰ The text of this list of bishops, often called the Liberian Catalogue after the bishop in office at the time of its recension, is printed at Mommsen (1892) 73-6. On the use of this Catalogue by the author of the *Liber pontificalis*, see Duchesne (1886) vi-x and Davis (2000) xii-xiv.

there, they did not consider him to have been a bishop. Yet by claiming that Peter, the greatest of the apostles, was their first bishop, Roman Christians were able to trace the beginning of their episcopal succession to an earlier date than could the bishops of other important sees such as Jerusalem and Alexandria, thereby buttressing Rome's claim to preeminence.⁴¹

The coalescence of local traditions unique to the Christian community at Rome was even more apparent in the Codex of 354's lists of the depositions (burials) of the city's bishops and martyrs. In each list, the deposition of the bishop or martyr was identified by the day and month as well as by the place of burial. These lists show that the Roman Church was organizing its traditions into a usable past in the mid-fourth century. The list of episcopal depositions, recording the burials of almost all bishops from 254, was first drawn up in 336 and subsequently updated with the names of two additional bishops who died before 354. The list of martyrs' depositions may not be earlier than 354, but it too identified the mid-third century as the origin of liturgical observances associated with certain of the martyrs, most famously a joint commemoration of Saints Peter and Paul. Although the list of martyrs was relatively underdeveloped at this date, it became the basis for subsequent calendars and represented an important step in the Roman Church's growing awareness of its own local history.⁴²

The traditions collected in textual form in the lists of the Codex began to receive monumental architectural expression in the reign of Constantine. Our main source for

⁴¹ On the list's sources and its reflection of the Roman Church's priorities, see Piétri (1976) 389-97; Salzman (1990) 56, implicit comparison. Mommsen (1892) 73, "post ascensum eius beatissimus Petrus episcopatum suscepit"; contrast Eusebius, *HE* 3.2, 5.6.1, with analysis of this claim in Piétri (1976) 395-7 and Salzman (1990) 49.

⁴² For the text of these lists, see Mommsen (1892) 70-2, and for an overview of their contents, Salzman (1990) 42-7 and Thacker (2007) 20-3, the latter emphasizing that martyr cult was still in its early stages at this date.

Constantine's church-foundations is the sixth-century *Book of Pontiffs*, a notoriously difficult document that sometimes credited Constantine with churches that were actually established in the reigns of his sons. Nevertheless, several churches can be attributed to Constantine with certainty. These include St. John Lateran, the seat of Rome's bishop, which was probably dedicated shortly after Constantine captured Rome in 312, and Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, established in the Sessorian Palace, where Constantine's mother Helena lived when she was in Rome. Apart from these two churches, Constantine's other foundations were all connected with the martyrs of Rome. These included most likely the immense five-aisled basilica to St. Peter on the Vatican Hill, a modest church to St. Paul on the road to Ostia, and a funerary basilica on the Via Labicana. Of these, the first two responded to Constantine's interest in the apostles, expressed more vividly in Constantinople, where he arranged to be buried in a church-mausoleum surrounded by cenotaphs of the twelve apostles. The third was built on an imperial estate east of the city and may have commemorated an obscure local martyr named in the list of martyrs in the Codex. It seems clear, however, that the most important element in the complex on the Via Labicana was in fact an imperial mausoleum attached to the narthex of the funerary basilica.⁴³

The role of imperial patronage in the construction of these churches at Rome has implications for thinking about the emperor's relationship with Rome. When Constantine

⁴³ For convenient summaries of Constantine's foundations in Rome, see Curran (2000) 90-114, Holloway (2004) 57-119, and Thacker (2007) 23-30. Later sources, notably *Liber pontificalis* 34.9-27, attributed other churches to Constantine, too, but at least one of these attributions (S. Agnese) can be disproved, one (S. Paolo fuori le Mura) was probably exaggerated in its details, and others (S. Lorenzo, S. Sebastiano, an unnamed funerary basilica on the Via Praenestina) are uncertain; hence modern scholars attribute somewhat differing sets of churches to Constantine. I have confined my remarks here to those churches which have the surest claim to be built by Constantine, although Bowersock (2002) has recently argued that St. Peter's was built by Constantine.

first took control of Rome in 312, he had systematically altered, finished, and appropriated whatever buildings Maxentius had constructed in the center of the city. Thereafter, however, he had not initiated any new secular buildings; by contrast, churches were the only structures that Constantine continued to build in Rome in the later years of his reign. Thus it is clear that church-building in some sense replaced secular building in Constantine's fulfillment of the traditional expectation that emperors would spend lavishly on showy public buildings. Even when he built his churches on land owned by the imperial house, the grandeur of their scale and costliness of their furnishings, not to mention the use of the basilica form, implicitly turned them into public buildings.⁴⁴

One of these churches, built on the Via Labicana, a road leading out of the city to the east, was potentially Constantine's last act of self-representation in Rome. This church, in the form of an ambulatory funerary basilica, was built to accompany a mausoleum for the imperial family. The best evidence for this supposition is the magnificent porphyry sarcophagus recovered from the mausoleum; decorated with reliefs showing a victorious battle with barbarians, the theme suggests that it was originally intended for an emperor. Thus in the mid to late 320s, Constantine probably intended to be buried at Rome. In the event, his mother Helena died first, and it was she who was buried in Constantine's mausoleum and sarcophagus. This gesture seemed to promise that Constantine too would eventually return to Rome to be buried alongside his mother. Helena's burial at Rome thus symbolized both the emperor's absence from Rome and an

⁴⁴ For Constantine's churches as public buildings, see Krautheimer (1983) 23-5; his appropriation of Maxentius' secular buildings is discussed in Chapter 2 above.

implicit pledge to return. Yet when Constantine died in 337, he was laid to rest in a new church-mausoleum in Constantinople.⁴⁵

Before Constantine's death, his place in Rome had been filled by his mother, who had lived in a palace at the eastern edge of the city and been buried in his tomb. Afterward, it was his daughter Constantina's turn to retire to Rome. There she busied herself with building a basilica and mausoleum next to the tomb of St. Agnes on the Via Nomentana, north-east of the city walls. The form of this complex clearly imitated that of Helena's on the Via Labicana. Despite the presence of a dedicatory inscription in which Constantina claimed credit for this foundation, the sixth-century author of the *Book of Pontiffs* attributed the complex to Constantine. It was wishful thinking. Even long after his death, Romans did not want to believe that Constantine had deliberately abandoned their city. Rome was still missing its emperor.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ The church on the Via Labicana may have been built around the remains of an obscure martyr Gorgonius, named in the list of martyrs in the Codex of 354, but the association of this basilica with Saints Marcellinus and Peter apparently does not predate the intervention of Damasus: see Thacker (2007) 26-7, 34-5. Curran (2000) 99-102 emphasizes that this basilica, like St. John Lateran, destroyed a cemetery once used by Maxentius' *equites singulares*. On the burial arrangements for Helena, who died c. 328, see Drijvers (1992) 73-6, and on the whole church-mausoleum complex, Holloway (2004) 86-93; for a color photograph of the empress' sarcophagus, see Faedo (2000) 64 Fig. 6 (mislabeled).

⁴⁶ On Constantina's basilica and mausoleum, see Curran (2000) 128-9 and Holloway (2004) 93-104; for its false attribution to Constantine, see *Liber pontificalis* 34.23, and for Constantina's inscription, *ILCV* 1:344-5, no. 1768.

Chapter 4

Reading Rome

The prolonged absence of the emperors had allowed and encouraged the senators of Rome to develop new ways of thinking about their own importance in their city. Whereas previously it had been emperors who claimed to “restore” whatever of the past was worth preserving—legitimate government, ancestral customs, impressive buildings—now senators began to claim this role for themselves. Senators became the keepers of Rome’s traditions, while emperors largely abandoned the ancient capital in favor of cities that were better placed on strategic lines of communication. On the rare occasions when an emperor did visit Rome, he approached the capital as a stranger and a tourist, curious but often ignorant of what made Rome a unique city. The emperor’s unfamiliarity with Rome presented both a challenge and an opportunity to senators: though they might have to overcome an emperor’s predisposition to discount the relevance of Rome, nevertheless a visit offered a rare opportunity to impress him with Rome’s grandeur, and indirectly to remind him of their own importance as the keepers of Rome’s greatness.

In the span of 63 years between the visits of Constantine in 326 and Theodosius I in 389, there was only one securely attested visit by an emperor to the city of Rome.¹ At nearly the exact midpoint of this period, in the spring of 357, Constantius II came to Rome for the first time as emperor and stayed for a whole month.² The timing of this visit was so unusual that the sources disagree about why Constantius chose this moment to visit Rome. Gold coins issued at Rome in celebration of this visit depicted a shield bearing an inscription marking the emperor's thirty-fifth year in power. In fact, however, Constantius was eighteen months too early, for his thirty-fifth year, by the Roman method of counting, would not begin until November 358. On the other hand, a later Greek chronicler recorded the occasion as the twentieth anniversary of his proclamation as a senior emperor (Augustus), but Constantius had been proclaimed Augustus in September, not in May.³ Ammianus Marcellinus, our main literary source for the visit, says nothing about anniversaries, but says that Constantius wanted to celebrate a triumph over the usurper Magnentius.⁴ Ammianus considered this an improper justification, both because triumphs were supposed to be awarded for defeating foreign enemies, not Roman armies, and because Constantius' deeds fell far short of the glorious precedents of earlier emperors. Besides, Magnentius had been killed in spring 353; it would have been more

¹ Barnes (1975a) argues for a visit by Constans in 340 and by Gratian in 376, but prints the first as questionable in (1993) 225 and retracts the second in (1999).

² For the dates, April 28 – May 29, see Barnes (1993) 222. There is some chance that Constantius may have accompanied his father to Rome in 326 at the age of nine: Barnes (1982) 85.

³ Kent (1981) 276, Rome 287-88, *Felix Adventus Aug(usti) N(ostri)*, 277, Rome 296-8, with shield inscribed VOT / XXXV / MULT / XXXX, with Long (1988) 114-6. *Chronicon Paschale* s.a. 357.2, ed. Mommsen (1892) 239, twentieth anniversary (Constantine had died on May 22, 337). Under the influence of the latter, Mommsen emended the *xxv* of *Consularia Constantinopolitana* s.a. 357 to read *vicennalia*, but the manuscript reading is printed by Burgess (1993) 238. In any case, the dates do not correspond to Constantius' twentieth anniversary, since his *dies imperii* was November 8, and he was not proclaimed Augustus immediately upon the death of his father, but only on September 9, 337 (*Consularia Constantinopolitana* s.a. 337.2, ed. Mommsen (1892) 235).

⁴ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 16.10.1, "Romam visere gestiebat, post Magnenti exitium absque nomine ex sanguine Romano triumphaturus."

fitting for Constantius to visit soon afterward, and combine the triumph with the celebration of his thirtieth year in power. Instead, Constantius had celebrated that anniversary in Arles. Thus the question remains: why did Constantius visit Rome in spring 357?⁵

“Like a graven image of a man”

The visit did not begin auspiciously. Just as Septimius Severus had entered Rome in 193 at the head of an army that had terrified the civilian population of the city, so too Ammianus emphasized the awesome martial splendor of Constantius’ ceremonial entry (*adventus*) into the city.⁶ “Escorted by formidable troops, he was led as though in line of battle.” Columns of infantry marched on either side, their armor and shields glinting in the sun, and cataphract cavalymen appeared here and there, encased in their suits of mail “so that you would suppose them statues polished by the hand of Praxiteles, not men.”⁷ Constantius himself, as was his rule, sat in splendid isolation in a chariot of gold that gleamed with shimmering gemstones whose shifting light surrounded him in a kind of halo.⁸ “He kept his gaze fixed straight ahead, never turning to right or left, and—like a

⁵ *Res gestae* 16.10.3, criticism of Constantius’ triumph, with McCormick (1986) 80-3, who observes that criticism of triumphs gained over domestic foes (see also Claudian, *De sexto consulatu Honorii Augusti* 393-406) was a rhetorical posture that no longer reflected reality in the fourth century. For Constantius in Arles, see Chapter 3 above, and on the council he convened there, see below.

⁶ The description of Constantius’ *adventus* has been cited as characteristic of Ammianus’ narrative technique by MacMullen (1964a) 438-41 and Roberts (1988) 182-5, who develop Auerbach’s (1957) observations on Ammianus’ tendency toward “the graphic and the gestural” (p.46). On Constantius’ *adventus*, see MacCormack (1981) 39-45, who points out that Themistius did not portray the *adventus* as a triumph. For the translation “like a graven image of a man,” see Matthews (1989) 233, who concurs that “it is this military and triumphal aspect of the *adventus* that Ammianus emphasized.” Severus: see Chapter 2 above.

⁷ *Res gestae* 16.10.4, “stipatusque agminibus formidandis tamquam acie ducebatur instructa,” 16.10.8, “Praxitelis manu polita crederes simulacra, non viros.”

⁸ *Res gestae* 16.10.6, “insidebat aureo solus ipse carpento, fulgenti claritudine lapidum variorum, quo micante lux quaedam misceri videbatur alterna.” Constantius never shared his chariot with anyone (16.10.12), except Julian when the latter was confirmed as Caesar (15.8.17).

graven image of a man—never, when the wheel jolted, did he allow his head to jerk.”⁹ Constantius, in short, took on the qualities of his own statues. The elaborate ceremonial of the late empire demanded not so much an appearance as a carefully staged performance. “Although these were affectations,” the point was to convey an impression of superhuman impassivity, “granted to him alone, as was given to be understood.”¹⁰ Constantius’ behavior during his *adventus* was a powerful statement of imperial ideology: the emperor was a military man who did not condescend to notice other human beings and aspired to the timeless eternity of a divinity. Neither his military bearing nor his attempt to seem more-than-human was in keeping with the traditions of Rome, or his own claim to emulate the life and manners of the “citizen emperors.”¹¹

Ammianus’ description is so vivid that we tend to lose sight of a nagging question: since Ammianus was not present at Constantius’ *adventus*, how did he know what the scene really looked like? There are a couple of possibilities. First, Ammianus was doubtless in Rome when Theodosius visited in summer 389; his description of Constantius’ *adventus* could be inspired by what he saw of Theodosius’ procession.¹² Second, the *adventus* was an endlessly repeated ceremony with predictable elements that was repeated many times in many cities around the empire. Ammianus’ portrait, for example, has much in common with the visual representation of Constantine’s arrival in Rome as depicted on the arch of Constantine. In the frieze on the east side of the arch,

⁹ *Res gestae* 16.10.10, “velut collo munito, rectam aciem luminum tendens, nec dextra vultum nec laeva flectebat et (tamquam figmentum hominis) nec cum rota concuteret nutans.”

¹⁰ *Res gestae* 16.10.11, “quae licet affectabat, erant tamen haec et alia quaedam in ceteriore vita, patientiae non mediocris indicia, ut existimari dabatur, uni illi concessae.”

¹¹ *Res gestae* 15.1.3, “is qui ad aemulationem civilium principum formare vitam moresque suos, ut praedicabat, diligentia laborabat enixa.”

¹² For this possibility, see Sabbah (1978) 327-32, who sees in Ammianus’ narrative the influence of Pacatus’ panegyric of 389. More conservatively, Matthews (1989) 11 allows that Ammianus’ description would have taken on enhanced meaning in light of Theodosius’ visit, but need not be based on it.

Constantine was shown being escorted into Rome in military formation, preceded by infantry and mailed cavalry; there was even a dragon standard, as Ammianus says, “with mouth wide open to the breeze, and thus hissing as if roused by rage, leaving its tail winding in the wind.”¹³ The congruence between Ammianus’ description of Constantius and the arch’s portrayal of Constantine extends to the emperors’ activities inside the city walls. Constantius’ procession went straight to the Roman Forum, where he addressed the nobles in the senate house and the people from the rostra. The arch of Constantine, too, represented Constantine as passing directly from his *adventus* to the rostra, for he was depicted as still wearing his military cloak while standing on the platform surrounded by senators in togas. In the culminating scene of the arch, however, Constantine is shown seated and wearing a toga, dispensing largess to the people. The emperor’s physical movement into the city was accompanied by a simultaneous transformation from military conqueror to civilian emperor.¹⁴

Ammianus represents Constantius as undergoing much the same kind of transformation. Although Ammianus, as a soldier himself, had a certain respect for pomp and circumstance—he criticized Julian for forgetting the dignity proper to an emperor at state functions—Constantius’ parade was “excessively drawn out.” Worse, Constantius’ display of military might was out of place in a city that was “living in peace, and neither

¹³ Arch of Constantine, east frieze: L’Orange and von Gerkan (1939) 72-8, with photographs at Tafeln 3, 12, and 13; Ammianus, *Res gestae* 16.10.7, “dracones...hiatu vasto perflabiles, et ideo velut ira perciti sibilantes, caudarumque volumina relinquentes in ventum.”

¹⁴ *Res gestae* 16.10.13, “allocutus nobilitatem in curia, populumque e tribunali.” L’Orange and von Gerkan (1939) 78-89, with photographs at Tafeln 5, 14, and 15, Constantine on rostra (northeast frieze); 89-102, with photographs at Tafeln 5, 16, and 17, Constantine dispensing largess (northwest frieze). For Constantine’s iconographical evolution from military to civilian, see Van Dam (2007) 47.

expecting nor desiring to see such a spectacle.”¹⁵ Emperors were supposed to wear their military power lightly if at all within the city limits; the sight of soldiers in the city was invariably disquieting, for it evoked memories of unhappy civil wars.¹⁶ Likewise, Constantius’ unapproachable demeanor was again the opposite of what was valued by Romans. When Constantine had visited Rome, he had been praised for his accessibility and cheerful countenance.¹⁷ The basic miscalculation that Constantius had made was to behave in Rome as he would anywhere else in the empire. His awesome military procession was better suited to a show of force against the Persians or Germans, while his contrived imperturbability was nothing more than his usual practice in the provinces—“his provinces,” in what must have seemed to the senators a grotesque inversion of Maxentius’ slogan, “his city.”¹⁸

After the awesome display of military power and imperial majesty of the arrival ceremony, Ammianus abruptly inverted the imperial image once Constantius reached the city center. Standing in the Roman Forum, “he was awestruck, and wherever he looked, he was dazzled by the concentration of marvelous sights.”¹⁹ His undisguised surprise was the opposite of the affected imperturbability he had exhibited shortly before during his *adventus*. It was reminiscent of Galerius’ shock at the immensity of Rome when he

¹⁵ *Res gestae* 16.10.2, “ut pompam nimis extentam, rigentiaque auro vexilla, et pulchritudinem stipatorum ostenderet agenti tranquillius populo, haec vel simile quicquam videre nec speranti umquam nec optanti.” For his criticism of Julian, who “jumped up in an undignified manner” to run “at full speed” to greet a friend, see 22.7.3.

¹⁶ See Chapter 2 above on the terror created by Septimius Severus’ occupation of Rome in 193.

¹⁷ *Panegyrici latini* 4(10).34.4, “faciles aditus, quid? ... vultum ipsum augusti decoris gravitate, hilaritate admixta, venerandum quiddam et amabilem reidentem, quis digne exsequi possit?”

¹⁸ *Res gestae* 16.10.6, “et tamquam Euphraten armorum specie territurus aut Rhenum,” 16.10.9, “talem se tamque immobilem qualis in provinciis suis visebatur ostendens.” The Rhine and Euphrates were the two frontiers on which Ammianus himself had seen active service. For Maxentius’ use of *urbs sua*, see Chapter 2 above.

¹⁹ *Res gestae* 16.10.13, “obstipuit, perque omne latus quo se oculi contulissent, miraculorum densitate praestriatus.”

laid siege to it in 307; Galerius had assumed that Rome was not much larger than the provincial cities he was familiar with, and Constantius, too, was “amazed at the crowds in which the whole human race had flocked to Rome.”²⁰ Perhaps Constantius genuinely was overcome by the moment; more likely, however, he had been advised that the military style of imperial display was incompatible with the traditions of Rome. His speeches to the senate and people were a sign of his respect for the ancient institutions of the Roman state. In his interactions with the plebs, he tempered his demeanor to accommodate the local custom of giving games and receiving acclamations from the spectators. He did not, for example, “allow the games to be ended at his own discretion, as in other cities, but permitted them to play out, as was the custom.” By these gestures, Constantius acknowledged the uniqueness of Rome and associated himself with the traditional qualities of the citizen emperors.²¹

After Constantius addressed the senate and people, he allowed himself to drink in the marvels with which Rome was crowded. As he surveyed the hills and vales of Rome, “he thought that wherever his eye landed first soared above all the rest.”²² According to Ammianus, Constantius then embarked upon a tour of the most impressive buildings in

²⁰ For Galerius, see Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 27.2, “quippe qui numquam viderat Romam aestimaretque illam non multo esse maiorem quam quas noverat civitates”; for Constantius, Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 16.10.6, “stupebat qua celebritate omne quod ubique est hominum genus confluerit Romam.” Cameron (1989) 428, “the unifying theme of 16.10 is perhaps less the impact of Constantius on Rome than the impact of Rome on Constantius.”

²¹ *Res gestae* 16.10.13, he took delight in the banter of the crowd (showing considerably more patience than Diocletian had in 303); 16.10.14, “non enim (ut per civitates alias) ad arbitrium suum certamina finire patiebatur, sed (ut mos est) variis casibus permittebat.” It is doubtful that Ammianus’ characterization corresponds to any genuine difference in circus games at Rome. MacCormack (1981) 42-3 describes the change in the emperor’s demeanor as signifying the end of the arrival ceremony and the integration of the emperor into the local community. On the expectation that emperors in Rome would behave as citizens, see Straub (1939) 188.

²² *Res gestae* 16.10.14, “quicquid viderat primum, id eminere inter alia cuncta sperabat.”

Rome.²³ Ammianus gives a list of ten sites apart from the Roman Forum, the palace, and the Circus Maximus: the temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline hill, unnamed public baths, the Colosseum, the Pantheon, the triumphal columns, the temple of the City, the Forum of Peace, the theater of Pompey, the Odeon and the Stadium of Domitian, and finally, set apart from the rest, the Forum of Trajan.²⁴ This list is more than a little odd. It omits, for example, all triumphal arches and basilicas, even though Constantius presumably might have liked to visit the arch or basilica dedicated to his father. It also omits the Christian churches of St. John Lateran and St. Peter. Moreover, Ammianus himself was not present in Rome in 357. Therefore, it is important to recognize this list as an imaginary construction, Ammianus' version of what Constantius saw.²⁵ Very little justification is given for each stop on this tour: usually, if any reason is given, it is simply the sheer size of these buildings, especially their height, which is said to impress the emperor. Thus Ammianus orients his version of Constantius' tour around the simple idea of physical grandeur, the easiest aspect for any tourist to appreciate.

Ammianus' list of sites visited by Constantius can be divided for convenience into three categories (allowing that there is inevitably some overlap among them): temples, entertainment venues, and monuments of conquest. The first stop mentioned by Ammianus was the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus ("Best and Greatest") on the Capitoline hill. It is not surprising that Ammianus would place it first, for he thought that

²³ Theodosius, too, visited public buildings in 389, as well as private homes: *Panegyrici latini* 2(12).47.3.

²⁴ *Res gestae* 16.10.14. For comparison, in the mid fifth century, Polemius Silvius listed seven wonders (*mira praecipua*) of Rome. His list partly overlaps with that of Ammianus: Janiculum, sewers, aqueducts, Forum of Trajan, Colosseum, Odeon, and baths of Caracalla (ed. Mommsen (1892) 545).

²⁵ For the arch of Constantine and the Basilica Nova, the latter begun by Maxentius but rededicated to Constantine in 312, see Chapter 2 above. The Basilica was known as the Basilica Constantiniana in the *Notitia urbis Romae* of the mid fourth century: Nordh (1949) 78. For Constantius' involvement with the Christians of Rome, see below. Marlowe (2004) 237-38 rightly remarks that Ammianus' list is an attempt to identify "cultural patrimony," but does not take into account the author's idiosyncratic selections.

the temple “surpassed all else by as much as the divine surpasses the earthly”; even the renowned temple of Serapis in Alexandria took second place to the Capitolium, the symbol “by which revered Rome exalts itself to eternity.”²⁶ Ammianus also mentioned the “Temple of the City,” or as it is known today, the temple of Venus and Roma, “probably the largest and most splendid temple of Rome.”²⁷ The temples of Jupiter and of Venus and Roma were two of the most important symbols of the city’s identity.²⁸ Finally, Ammianus says that Constantius saw the Pantheon, “like a rounded quarter of heaven, vaulted over in beautiful loftiness.”²⁹ Although the Pantheon has often been interpreted as a temple, based on Cassius Dio’s guess (which he himself doubted) that this nickname derived from the Greek “many gods,” it was in fact a free-standing imperial audience hall.³⁰

Most of the sites on Constantius’ tour were entertainment venues built to accommodate thousands of citizens at a time. Thus the emperor visited some unspecified baths described only as “built up to the measure of provinces.”³¹ Ammianus’ description was doubly apt, for not only were some of the imperial *thermae* truly immense, but his

²⁶ *Res gestae* 16.10.14, “Iovis Tarpei delubra, quantum terrenis divina praecellunt,” 22.16.12, “Capitolium, quo se venerabilis Roma in aeternum attollit.”

²⁷ Richardson (1992) 409.

²⁸ Both Maxentius and Constantine had sought to associate themselves with the temple of Venus and Roma: see Chapter 2 above.

²⁹ 16.10.14, “Pantheon velut regionem teretem speciosa celsitudine fornicatam.” *Regio* is a technical term of augury; it does not, as the Loeb has it, refer to one of Rome’s administrative districts, which are by no definition round. The resemblance of the cupola to the vault of heaven also occurred to Cassius Dio, *Historiae romanae* 53.27.2.

³⁰ Cassius Dio, *Historiae romanae* 53.27.2, etymology of Pantheon: he thought the name derived from the vault’s resemblance to the heavens. For the Pantheon’s use as an audience hall, see 69.7.1, listed with the palace and the Forum as places where Hadrian held court, and *CTh* 14.3.10 (368 or 370), for an imperial constitution read *in Pantheo*. For a history of the building and this interpretation as an *aula*, see Ziolkowski (1999).

³¹ *Res gestae* 16.10.14, “lavacra in modum provinciarum exstructa.” Some scholars, perplexed by this comparison, have doubted the text and proposed emending *provinciarum* to *piscinarum* or *provincialium* <*urbium*>: see Barnes (1998) 206. No emendation is necessary, however: if the houses of the rich could be said to be as large as medium-sized cities (Olympiodorus *Fr.* 41.1 (Blockley)), then there was nothing incongruous in comparing *thermae* to whole provinces.

comparison was crafted to match the provincial perspective of Constantius. The largest bath complexes in Rome were those of Diocletian and Caracalla, which were nearly the same size in surface area, though Diocletian's may have had more seats.³² The baths of Caracalla were considered one of the marvels of Rome by Polemius Silvius in the fifth century.³³ Ammianus also had Constantius visit the Colosseum, known in antiquity as the Flavian Amphitheater. The amphitheater's distinguishing feature, then as now, was its "massive bulk" and towering height, "to which human eyesight can scarcely mount."³⁴ Like the baths of Caracalla, the amphitheater appeared on Polemius Silvius' list of the seven wonders of Rome. Unfortunately, the history of the amphitheater in the fourth century is a near-complete blank.³⁵ The last three venues—the theater of Pompey and the Odeon and the Stadium, both built by Domitian—are listed by Ammianus without further identification of their most impressive features.

Finally, Ammianus specifies three sites which might best be described as monuments of imperial conquest.³⁶ The first of these are the honorific columns, "soaring eminences topped by mountable platforms bearing the images of earlier emperors." The regionary catalogues of the mid-fourth century and Polemius Silvius, in the fifth, list two columns, those of Trajan and "Antoninus" (the latter referring to Marcus Aurelius

³² Olympiodorus *Fr.* 41.1 (Blockley): those of Caracalla had 1600 seats of polished marble, those of Diocletian nearly twice as many, though this claim has been doubted.

³³ Polemius Silvius, *Laterculus a. 449* 4, ed. Mommsen (1892) 545.

³⁴ *Res gestae* 16.10.14, "amphitheatri molem solidatam lapidis Tiburtini compage, ad cuius summitatem aegre visio humana conscendit."

³⁵ Chastagnol (1966) 5.

³⁶ Admittedly, virtually any monument in Rome might be so described, including the Colosseum, if G. Alföldy's (1995) reconstruction of the dedicatory inscription is correct. I have chosen to classify these buildings according to their function and primary ideological association in the fourth century.

Antoninus, not Antoninus Pius).³⁷ Ammianus has only the briefest mention of the Forum of Peace, an expansive complex of buildings just north of the Roman Forum laid out by Vespasian after his conquest of the Jews. Finally, Ammianus' version of Constantius' tour reaches its culmination at the Forum of Trajan, "a structure without parallel in the whole world." This "gigantic complex" was "insusceptible of description." The gods themselves admired it; mortals would never equal it. Dumbstruck, Constantius confessed his despair of ever attempting anything to rival Trajan's Forum: he would settle for copying the equestrian statue of Trajan that sat on the Forum square.³⁸ At this point, Ammianus reports a conversation between the emperor and one of his courtiers, a Persian prince-in-exile who had fled to Roman territory many years before. Hormisdas, himself a cavalry commander in the Roman army, pointed out the incongruity of copying the statue alone, since the statue derived much of its effectiveness from its placement in such an expansive "stable" as Trajan's Forum.³⁹ Instead, Constantius resolved to set up an obelisk in the Circus Maximus as his monumental legacy to the eternal city.⁴⁰ Constantius had made an impressive show on parade with his armored cavalry, but he was no match for the great bronze emperor on horseback.

Although it is tempting to take Ammianus' account of Constantius' tour as a faithful reporting of a historical event, it is important to remember that this tour is a narrative construction of Ammianus. Since Ammianus was not present, he would not

³⁷ *Res gestae* 16.10.14, "elatosque vertices qui scansili suggestu consurgunt, priorum principum imitamenta portantes." Nordh (1949) 104, Polemius Silvius, *Laterculus a. 449*, ed. Mommsen (1892) 545.

³⁸ 16.10.15.

³⁹ Cameron (1989) 427, Hormisdas commanded cavalry for Constantius and Julian, 430, Trajan's Forum as the *stabulum* for his equestrian statue. Edbrooke (1975) 415 and Blockley (1980) 36-37 argue that Hormisdas was subtly suggesting that Constantius emulate Trajan and expand the frontiers of the Roman empire, i.e. by attacking Persia (and restoring Hormisdas to the Persian throne). The point of such witticisms, of course, is that they can have multiple meanings.

⁴⁰ 16.10.17, 17.4.12-23.

have known precisely which buildings Constantius visited, let alone what the emperor and Hormisdas said to each other in the Forum of Trajan. Ammianus used the fact that Constantius was given some kind of tour of Rome in order to construct his own image of what Constantius may have seen. In selecting these sites, he placed the emphasis on sheer physical grandeur, reflecting Rome's traditional role as the center which received the spoils of empire. When Ammianus mentions a tour guide, it is the Persian prince Hormisdas. Constantius asked what Hormisdas thought of Rome because he wanted to know how it compared to the wealth of the Persian Empire and its capital at Ctesiphon.⁴¹ Throughout his reign, Constantius was on the strategic defensive against Sapor II, an aggressive campaigner who repeatedly threatened Roman positions in northern Mesopotamia.⁴² Even in Rome, Constantius had Persia on his mind.

Strolling down memory lane

Since Constantius remained in Rome for a whole month, he had the opportunity to take more than one tour, and he doubtless saw more buildings than Ammianus mentions in his account. In fact, an administrative document of 384 hints at an entirely different kind of tour, in which Constantius was accompanied through the streets of Rome by senators who told him about the history of the buildings he saw. Constantius

followed a joyful senate through all the streets of the eternal city, gazed on the shrines with a pleased expression, read the names of the gods inscribed on their roofs, inquired about the origins of the temples, expressed admiration for their founders, and, though he himself followed different rites, he preserved these [pagan rites] for the empire.⁴³

⁴¹ Cameron (1989) 433.

⁴² Potter (2004) 467-71, 504-05.

⁴³ Symmachus cited Constantius' respect for the traditional cults as part of his appeal to Valentinian II to restore the altar of Victory to the Curia: *Rel.* 3.7, "per omnes vias aeternae urbis laetum secutus senatum, vidit placido ore delubra, legit inscripta fastigiis deum nomina, percontatus templorum origines est, miratus est conditores, cumque alias religiones ipse sequeretur, has servavit imperio." For a discussion of the famous dispute concerning the altar of Victory, see Chapter 7 below.

The flavor of this tour was quite distinct from what happened on Ammianus' tour. Whereas Ammianus had used a non-Roman, Persian noble to escort Constantius through the city, Symmachus recalled a tour in which the guides had been senators, true Romans who could tell the emperor about the history of the buildings and the city.⁴⁴ Moreover, Ammianus had confined his remarks on the emperor's demeanor to alternately emphasizing his contrived show of majesty and then his subsequent amazement at the size of Rome and its monuments. In contrast, Symmachus remembered Constantius engaging the senators in friendly dialogue, and being interested in the history of the buildings he saw, not just their size. It was relatively difficult for senators at Rome to gain access to emperors in the fourth century: not only did emperors live elsewhere, but Roman senators were no longer the most important advisors in the palace. This tour, then, was a rare opportunity for senators to show off the highlights of their city, present their version of Rome's history, and thereby remind him of their own importance as the keepers of Roman memories. Even if senators had shown Constantius the same buildings as Ammianus reports, they would have evoked different meanings in the monuments. What follows is an attempt to imagine a senatorial tour of Rome, drawing on the sites mentioned by Ammianus, but showing how they could be used to display to Constantius senators' own understanding of their role and importance in Rome.

If, as Ammianus says, Constantius' awakening to Rome's magnificence began in the Roman Forum, his delight would not have been restricted to the ancient structures there. On the contrary, there were a number of dedications in the Forum in honor of Constantius himself. These statues had been prepared in the hope and expectation that

⁴⁴ For a broader exploration of Ammianus' attitudes toward senators at Rome, see Chapter 5 below.

Constantius would visit Rome to celebrate his thirtieth anniversary or his triumph over Magnentius. In the event, Constantius had kept Rome waiting for several years, but now he would have been pleased to see himself praised as the “extinguisher of pestiferous tyranny” and “victor in the whole world.” Yet the emperor was not the only person named in the inscriptions which explained the dedications, for they also recorded the act of dedication by the urban prefect. The credit for these dedications went to the prefect, but the spatial context of the statues—their placement in the Roman Forum, the political center of the city—and their clustering around moments of anticipated imperial visits suggests that the prefect was acting on behalf of senate as a whole. Thus the dedications were publicity not only for the emperor, but for the prefect as the leader and “epigraphic spokesman” of the senate.⁴⁵

Adding the evidence of inscriptions from the Roman Forum shows how a tour conducted by senators would be considerably richer than the superficial observations, focused on the size and height of buildings, reported by Ammianus. If Ammianus’ tour had been given by senatorial docents, they would have had their own reasons for bringing Constantius to these buildings, and would have used them to impress on Constantius their own importance in the city of Rome. Moreover, each stop had the potential to become a dialogue between emperor and senate, with all the room for education, disagreement, and awkwardness that such interactions always had. On the Capitoline hill, for example, Constantius would have been shown not just the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, but specifically the temple as it had been rebuilt by Domitian after the fire of 80. Domitian as usual had spared no expense: columns of Pentelic marble, gold-plated doors, and a

⁴⁵ For the dedications to Constantius in the Roman Forum, and the urban prefect as “epigraphic spokesman,” see Chapter 3 above.

roof of gilded bronze that by itself had cost 12,000 talents.⁴⁶ Just as conspicuous (and characteristic) to Domitian's contemporaries was that emperor's fondness for inscriptions so lengthy that they ran off the façade of his buildings, and his habit of inscribing his name and his alone on all buildings he restored, without any mention of the original builder.⁴⁷ Since Constantius is said to have read the inscriptions on temples and asked about their builders, he could have asked his senatorial guides about Domitian's inscription. This question would have been tricky to answer. Perhaps Constantius had just signified his admiration for such a magnificent temple and the man who built it; on the other hand, the senators may have shared the opinion of Aurelius Victor, who was shortly to write that Domitian had treated senators "worse than arrogantly," and that, after his death, "the senate decreed that his name be erased."⁴⁸ Perhaps, then, if Domitian's inscription were still in place, there would have been a visible erasure in need of explanation. Why had the senate treated thus a man who had built such a marvel in honor of Rome's highest god? It was through precisely these exchanges with Constantius that the senators had to make choices about what story to tell of their city's history. These were also precious opportunities for senators to try to influence Constantius' behavior by selecting elements of previous emperors' behavior for him to emulate or avoid.

Domitian's habit of taking credit for all buildings in Rome, for example, could be turned into a negative example by comparison with Hadrian's laudable retention (or re-inscription) of Agrippa's original dedication on the architrave of the Pantheon; even the second inscription in smaller letters, recording (minor) repairs by Septimius Severus and

⁴⁶ For these elements, see Richardson (1992) 223.

⁴⁷ Pliny, *Panegyricus* 54.4, "excessurosque templorum fastigium titulos" (probably referring to Domitian); Suetonius, *Domitian* 5, "sub titulo tantum suo ac sine ulla pristini auctoris memoria."

⁴⁸ Aurelius Victor, *Caesares* 11.2, "plus quam superbe utens patribus," 8, "radendumque nomen decrevit."

Caracalla in 202, could be an effective reminder of emperors' duty to look after Rome's buildings.⁴⁹

Apart from its obvious grandeur and symbolic importance, the senators had a special reason for making sure that Constantius paid his respects at the temple of Jupiter. Thirty years before, Constantine's unwillingness to ascend the Capitoline hill had contributed to disaffection between Constantine and Rome; now the senators made sure the son saw what the father had skipped.⁵⁰ The visit to the temple of Jupiter proved to be expedient for senators and emperor alike. Constantius' ability to look upon the temple with equanimity and even pleasure may have been calculated to create a favorable comparison with Constantine's uneasiness at the prospect. On at least one other occasion, Constantius advertised his respect for Rome by distancing himself from his father, for he claimed that the obelisk which he set up in the Circus Maximus had once been intended by Constantine as an adornment for Constantinople.⁵¹

The senators had yet another reason for wanting to show Constantius the most famous temples in Rome. Notwithstanding that Constantius was a devout Christian, all Roman emperors still carried the title, until 383, of *pontifex maximus*, the chief priest of the traditional (pagan) Roman state religion.⁵² One of the functions of the *pontifex maximus* was to fill vacancies in the various colleges of priests that continued to carry out

⁴⁹ *CIL* 6.896.1, "M(arcus) Agrippa L(ucii) f(ilius) co(n)s(ul) tertium fecit," 896.2, "Pantheum vetustate corruptum cum omni cultu restituerunt." The original example of conspicuously declining credit for building improvements was Augustus, *Res Gestae* 20.1, "sine ulla inscriptione nominis mei," referring to the Capitolium and theater of Pompey.

⁵⁰ By a strange coincidence of history, one of the best views of this temple is provided by a panel from an arch of Marcus Aurelius that was not reused in the decoration of the arch of Constantine, perhaps because it showed a pagan sacrifice; for a discussion of the panels of this arch, see Ruyschaert (1962-63b), with an image of the Capitoline sacrifice panel at p. 108 Figure b. See also Chapter 2 above.

⁵¹ *ILS* 1:165, no. 736, "hoc decus ornatum genitor cognominis urbis l'esse volens"; see below.

⁵² Zosimus, *Historia nova* 4.36, with chronological clarification in Cameron (1968).

their functions through the fourth century; these priesthoods, in turn, were filled by the most illustrious senators, who continued to record their priestly positions alongside their political offices as markers of their elite social status within the senatorial class.⁵³ The prefect Symmachus pointed out in 384 that Constantius had in fact fulfilled his responsibilities as chief priest during his visit to Rome in 357. “He subtracted nothing from the privileges of the sacred [Vestal] virgins; he refilled the priesthoods with nobles; he did not withhold the subsidies for the Roman rites.”⁵⁴ Constantius’ acknowledgement of his role as chief priest may have been one goal the senators had in leading him around to see the temples. By associating themselves with the buildings that so dazzled Constantius, senators were able to secure one of their most ancient prerogatives and thereby reaffirm their own prominent status in the city.

Just as senators used visits to the temples to remind Constantius of their functions as priests, they could also highlight their visibility in the city by showing off their stewardship of the largest public venues. Ammianus claimed that Constantius visited some of the immense public bath complexes, but did not specify which one(s). If the senators included baths on their tour, however, we may hazard a guess about where they brought Constantius, for public baths in the fourth century were regularly housing statue dedications by urban prefects. In the 350s, Constantius was honored with statues by the prefects Orfitus and Leontius in the baths of Decius on the Aventine hill.⁵⁵ Since these

⁵³ For priesthoods as indicators of social standing rather than religious enthusiasm, see Cameron (1999) 110. The listing of pagan priesthoods in honorific inscriptions was almost exclusively confined to private contexts: see Niquet (2000) 178, “In den Inschriften öffentlicher Ehrenmonumente scheint das religiöse Bekenntnis eines Senators in nachkonstantinischer Zeit nicht mehr zum Ausdruck gekommen zu sein.”

⁵⁴ Symmachus, *Rel.* 3.7, “nihil ille decerpit sacrarum virginum privilegiis, replevit nobilibus sacerdotia. Romanis caerimoniis non negavit impensas.”

⁵⁵ *CIL* 6.1159, Orfitus, 1160, Leontius, with La Follette (1994) 15-22. For the prefect’s role in maintaining the city’s waterworks, see Chastagnol (1960) 357-63.

dedications immediately preceded Constantius' visit in 357, and since Orfitus was urban prefect for the second time during this visit, Orfitus may have brought Constantius to see the statues he himself had dedicated to the emperor. Other baths received similar statues in these years. An urban prefect dedicated two statues to Magnentius in the baths of Titus in 350-51, and another dedicated several more to Valentinian and Valens in the baths of Caracalla in 365-66.⁵⁶ The proliferation of these dedications in public baths in the fourth century indicates that these were prime venues for conspicuous display; a lower-class Roman might be more likely to encounter the emperor's statue in a bathhouse than in the Roman Forum. This sort of publicity put the emperor's name before the plebs and advertised his provision for their leisure. At the same time, such dedications promoted the urban prefect as the city's point of contact with the emperor and as the official responsible for the smooth functioning of the city's vast infrastructure.

The largest entertainment venues were of course the Circus Maximus, the Colosseum, and the various theaters, of which Pompey's was the largest and longest in use. So long as emperors had lived in Rome, their provision of public entertainment had been the most important means by which they advertised their role as patrons of the plebs. In their absence, senators became the most distinguished members of the audience, and increasingly assumed responsibility for producing the games—especially those in the Colosseum. The Colosseum in the early empire had been one of the most important venues for interaction between the emperor and his people. In the late empire,

⁵⁶ *CIL* 6.1166-67 = *ILS* 1:166, no. 741, Magnentius, 6.1171-73, Valentinian and Valens, with Marvin (1983) 368-69.

this quasi-political function was taken over by the Circus, the “people’s assembly.”⁵⁷ The Colosseum in turn became an important venue for senators to display their wealth and status. The processes by which the Colosseum became a space for senatorial munificence and display reached their logical conclusion in the late fifth century. After the last Roman emperor abdicated in 476, senators had the Colosseum to themselves, and many of them claimed permanent possession of their seats by inscribing their names on them; the imperial box was superseded by “box seats” reserved for senatorial families.⁵⁸

It is impossible to know precisely how a “senatorial tour” of Rome might have been conducted; however, it is reasonable to suppose that the urban prefect, as the chief magistrate of the city, would have taken charge of such a tour. Since the prefect was also responsible for overseeing the maintenance of buildings and the placement of statues, he would have had special reason to guide Constantius to sites where he could show off his own construction, repairs, and dedications, all of which advertised his own status in the city. Thus it is no surprise that the senators would have brought Constantius to see the Forum of Peace. Not only was it an impressive complex of buildings, it also housed the headquarters of the urban prefecture. One wall of this office contained a vast marble plan of all the buildings in the city.⁵⁹ Constantius, in effect, could have seen the whole city just by visiting the offices of the urban prefect. The scale of this plan and the size of the prefect’s staff would have made clear that it was really the urban prefect who was the

⁵⁷ For the importance of the emperor’s interaction with the people at the Colosseum, see Wiedemann (1992) 165-80. People’s assembly: Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 28.4.29, “eisque templum et habitaculum et contio et cupitorum spes omnis Circus est maximus,” with Cameron (1976) 157-92. Pliny, *Panegyricus* 51.4-5 praised Trajan for using the public seats at the Circus and being visible to the people: “dabitur non cubiculum principis sed ipsum principem cernere in publico, in populo sedentem.”

⁵⁸ For senators giving games in the Colosseum, see Chapter 5 below; the inscriptions were dated to 476-80 by Chastagnol (1966) 56.

⁵⁹ Anderson (1984) 116-17.

“ruler of a free city” in the fourth century.⁶⁰ Thus the senatorial tour was also a polite rejoinder to Constantius’ display of superhuman majesty during his *adventus*. It was an opportunity for senators to present their own understanding of Rome and its history. In their Rome, the emperor was no transcendent autocrat. Senators were now the ones responsible for administering the city, preserving its monuments and infrastructure, and keeping its traditions.

Reading the Forum of Trajan

The Forum of Trajan is presented by Ammianus as the culmination of Constantius’ tour of the buildings and monuments of Rome. The focus of Ammianus’ description is the sheer size of the complex, which allegedly overwhelmed Constantius to the point that he confessed his inadequacy to match Trajan’s achievement. The Forum thus becomes a narrative device by which to emphasize the complete reversal in Constantius’ behavior. During his *adventus*, Constantius, despite being quite short, had stooped when passing under lofty gates, as if to demonstrate that the city of Rome was too small for an emperor who thought in terms of the “whole world.” Once he came to the Forum of Trajan, however, Constantius “stood fast in amazement, turning his attention to the gigantic complex around him.” Standing in the expansive Forum square, it was Constantius who seemed small, and Rome which seemed hopelessly vast. Even Rome’s vaunted reputation had not adequately prepared Constantius for the experience of being there and seeing its immensity.⁶¹

⁶⁰ For the prefect’s powers and responsibilities, see, in brief, Barrow (1973) 1-9 and Chastagnol (1997) 116-19, and, comprehensively, Chastagnol (1960), who estimated that the *officium urbanum* had a staff of about 1000 (p.228). Symmachus, *Rel.* 4.2, prefect as *moderator urbis liberae*.

⁶¹ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 16.10.10, “nam et corpus perhumile curvabat portas ingrediens celsas,” 15, “haerebat attonitus, per gigantes contextus circumferens mentem,” 17, “imperator de fama

The grandeur of the Forum was not only a testament to Rome's might; it was also the most tangible means by which Romans remembered the greatness of Trajan. Already in the third century, the military officer Decius, who hailed from Pannonia and had no family connection to Trajan whatsoever, had changed his name to Trajan Decius as soon as he arrived in Rome and was officially declared emperor. Presumably he hoped that his illustrious predecessor's name would lend him respect in the eyes of the senate and augur well for his battles against barbarian tribes.⁶² Constantius himself harbored hopes of emulating Trajan. Early in his reign, a courtier had dedicated to Constantius a work on the itineraries followed by Trajan and Alexander the Great in their invasions of Persia. Since Constantius "had already prepared and successfully begun a Persian expedition," he was showing himself to be an "emperor better than the good emperors."⁶³ It was thus especially appropriate that Constantius, when he visited Trajan's Forum, should be thinking about the feasibility of copying his predecessor, and measuring himself against what he saw before him. Like his cousin Constantius, Julian too fancied himself a worthy successor to Trajan. In a satirical dialogue about earlier Roman emperors, Julian presented Trajan as a Roman counterpart to Alexander the Great, and praised him for excelling all other emperors in clemency.⁶⁴ The memory of Trajan's conquests in the

querebatur, ut invalida vel maligna, quod augens omnia semper in maius, erga haec explicanda quae Romae sunt obsolescit." For Constantius and the "whole world," and his change of attitude, see above.

⁶² Syme (1971) 220, 222, on Decius and the memory of Trajan in the Danube provinces. The emperor Galerius was also said to have been driven by the memory of Trajan, but in the opposite direction, for he allegedly wanted to avenge Trajan's imposition of the census on his rebellious ancestors and even rename the empire "the Dacian Empire": Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 23.5, 27.8.

⁶³ For a thorough discussion of the author and date of the *Itinerary of Alexander*, see Lane Fox (1997), who argues that it was written by Flavius Polemius in 340. This Polemius was consul in 338 and also translated the *Alexander Romance* into Latin. *Itinerarium Alexandri*, ed. Tabacco (2000) 1.1, "domine Constanti, bonis melior imperator," "orso feliciter iam accinctoque Persicam expeditionem itinerarium principum eodem opere gloriosorum, Alexandri scilicet Magni Traianique componerem."

⁶⁴ Julian, *Caesares* 327b-328b, 335d. Julian's admiration for Trajan was picked up by Ammianus, who compared the two emperors more than once: 16.1.4, 23.5.17, 24.3.9, with Lightfoot (1990) 125. Julian's

east was still visible in the Persian landscape: Julian's army came across a tribunal of Trajan at Ozogardana on the Euphrates.⁶⁵ Notwithstanding occasional references to his excessive drinking or delight in actors, Trajan was remembered in the Danube provinces and in the east as the paradigmatic warrior-emperor.⁶⁶

While later emperors admired Trajan for his conquests, he was remembered rather differently in the west. As late as the fourth century, the senate still expressed its praise for emperors with the ritual acclamation, "more fortunate than Augustus, better than Trajan." This chant recalled Trajan's title *Optimus* ("Best"), and thus expressed the senate's hope that the reigning emperor would prove "better than the best" of emperors.⁶⁷ This title had been awarded to Trajan by the senate and people of Rome because he conducted himself "not as a tyrant, but as a citizen, not as a master, but as a father."⁶⁸ The senatorial memory of Trajan as the exemplar of imperial modesty also circulated indirectly through a collection of speeches known as the *Latin Panegyrics*. Although these speeches were composed by Gallic orators in the late third and fourth centuries, they were modeled on a *Panegyric* of Trajan written by the younger Pliny.⁶⁹ Two of

characterization of Trajan was in keeping with Trajan's own claims that he had advanced farther than Alexander, and had sacrificed to his spirit in Babylon: see Cassius Dio, *Historiae romanae* 68.29-30.

⁶⁵ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 24.2.3, "principis Traiani tribunal ostendebatur." Ammianus provides several comparisons between Julian and Trajan, and gives us to understand that the comparison was promoted by Julian himself.

⁶⁶ Syme (1971) 89-112, reputation of Trajan in the fourth century, 105, references to Trajan's drinking. Ammianus, *Res gestae* 30.9.1 cited him and Marcus Aurelius as shorthand for praiseworthy emperors.

⁶⁷ Eutropius, *Breviarium ab urbe condita*, 8.5.3, *felicior Augusto, melior Traiano*. Eutropius remarks that Trajan is always a *magnificentissimum exemplum* in contexts of praise. "Better than the best" was in fact a compliment paid to Trajan himself by Pliny, *Panegyricus* 92.4, *meliozem optimo*. For the title *Optimus Princeps*, see Bennett 106-08, though I do not agree that the title is evidence of a change in the constitutional relationship between senate and emperor.

⁶⁸ Pliny, *Panegyricus* 2.3, "non enim de tyranno, sed de cive; non de domino, sed de parente loquimur," 88.4, "iustisne de causis senatus populusque Romanus Optimi tibi cognomen adiecit?"

⁶⁹ Pliny's *Panegyricus* was transmitted in the manuscripts as the first of the *XII Panegyrici Latini*, and a few sections were also found in the same palimpsest as the orations of Symmachus: see MacCormack (1975) 149, who remarks that the use of Pliny's speech by these later orators is "an indication of the

these later orations were spoken in Rome and praised emperors for exhibiting many of the same virtues for which Pliny had praised Trajan. The most important of these was Trajan's willingness to behave more humbly than his imperial status entitled him. In the minds of senators, for an emperor to condescend to behave as a senator was the highest compliment to themselves, because it allowed senators to claim equality with the emperor. Thus Trajan had been *Optimus* because he behaved in the manner of a "citizen and a senator," while Theodosius "showed himself to all as an emperor, but to individuals as a senator."⁷⁰ When Trajan had entered Rome for the first time as emperor, he processed on foot, embraced senators, and mingled with the crowd—the same "triumph over imperial arrogance" for which Theodosius would be praised in 389.⁷¹

The consensus of emperors and senators around the memory of Trajan had an important visual component as well, for Trajan's Forum was likewise claimed by both emperors and senators. According to Ammianus, Constantius was so awestruck by this space that he despaired of ever equaling it. Instead, he focused on the single most conspicuous element of this complex. Constantius' desire to copy the equestrian statue of Trajan in the forum square arose from his understanding of this forum as a monument that symbolized imperial triumph over foreign enemies—an especially appealing message to an emperor whose victories had mostly come in civil conflicts.⁷² There can be little doubt that Trajan's Forum was originally designed to celebrate that emperor's

conscious preservation of tradition in late antique Rome." On the *Panegyrici Latini* as a corpus of texts, see Nixon and Rodgers (1994) 3-8, and L'Huillier (1992) 21-29: "la place prééminente du panégyrique de Trajan dans le recueil le constitue comme modèle aussi bien pour l'éditeur de ces textes que pour les auteurs qui connaissaient fort bien cette œuvre" (pp. 21-22).

⁷⁰ Pliny, *Panegyricus* 2.7, "iam quid tam civile, tam senatorium, quam illud additum a nobis optimi cognomen?"; *Panegyrici latini* 2(12).47.3, "te omnibus principem, singulis exhibueris senatorem."

⁷¹ Pliny, *Panegyricus* 22.2, "quendam triumphum ... de superbia principum egisti"; *Panegyrici latini* 2(12).47.3, "nunc de bellis, nunc de superbia triumpharis."

⁷² Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 16.10.1-2, 21.13.7, 21.16.15.

military glory; the complex was laid out by Trajan's chief military engineer, and may even have been meant to imitate the form of a legionary camp.⁷³ The artistic imagery of the forum reinforced the message of military conquest. Gilded bronze triumphal chariots were stationed above the three entrances to the forum and to the basilica. In the attic of the east and west colonnades were pedestals inscribed with the names of the military units that had fought in Dacia and bronze representations of those units' standards; between these pedestals was another inscription, insistently repeated along the colonnades, proclaiming the forum to have been built "from the spoils." Perhaps most strikingly, statues in the guise of Dacian prisoners supported an upper cornice, as though to signify that they felt the full weight of Rome's empire.⁷⁴

In its design, Trajan's Forum was modeled on the earlier Forum of Augustus. Each forum used exedrae to extend the framing colonnades, and the ornamentation of the attics was similar, featuring shield-portraits alternating with atlantes—Dacians in the later forum, Caryatids in the earlier—that supported the cornice.⁷⁵ Moreover, the two forums had corresponding programs of honorific statuary. Augustus had portrayed his Julio-Claudian ancestors; Trajan displayed busts of earlier emperors and empresses.⁷⁶ Augustus had also included statues of illustrious senators, the generals and *triumphatores* who had raised Rome to world power from the humblest beginnings. All these men,

⁷³ Cassius Dio, *Historia romana* 69.4.1; Zanker (1970) 505-06.

⁷⁴ For this reconstruction of the attic of the colonnades, see Packer (1997) 1:96-104, 425-7, and for the symbolism of the Dacian prisoners supporting the cornice, Zanker (1970) 512.

⁷⁵ For the architectural correspondences between the two forums, see Packer (1997) 1:276-79.

⁷⁶ For a slightly different view, see Zanker (1970) 517-20, followed by Hölscher (1984) 10-12, who believes that the *summi viri* of Augustus corresponded to the earlier emperors in Trajan's Forum, and that each set was placed in the exedrae of the two forums. Packer (1997) 1:105 n.38, however, suggests that the several colossal heads (of Livia, Agrippina Minor, Vespasian, and Nerva) found in the Forum of Trajan probably came instead from the *imagines clipeatae* on the façades of the attic above the colonnades, thus breaking the idea of a spatial correspondence between the *summi viri* and Trajan's imperial predecessors.

however, were heroes of the Republican past; by implication, their glory had reached an appropriate culmination in Augustus, much as the list of *triumphatores* he inscribed on his Parthian arch in the Roman Forum did not leave room for any names to be added after 19 BCE. Notwithstanding Augustus' directive that future *triumphatores* receive a bronze statue there, the prime real estate was already occupied, and there was little room for additional statues.⁷⁷ One of the functions of Trajan's new Forum was to handle the overflow of statues that could not find room in the Forum of Augustus. The result was that, by default, Augustus' Forum became primarily associated with the heroes of the distant past, while the Forum of Trajan would become the most important venue for dedications in honor of contemporary senators.⁷⁸

Statues of distinguished senators began to be placed in the Forum in its earliest phase. According to Cassius Dio, Trajan himself decided to set up statues of Licinius Sura, Sosius, Palma, and Celsus, his closest advisors and most trusted generals. The bays of the central triumphal arch may have contained niches for these statues—a visual demonstration of Trajan's willingness to share the credit with senators.⁷⁹ Hadrian followed suit, setting up in the Forum many statues of senators both deceased and living.⁸⁰ Marcus Aurelius likewise honored several distinguished senators who had

⁷⁷ Suetonius, *Augustus* 31.5, duces "qui imperium p. R. ex minimo maximum reddidissent"; Cassius Dio, *Historia romana* 55.10.3, future *triumphatores*; Claridge (1998) 160, overcrowding in the Forum of Augustus. On the so-called *summi viri*, see Zanker (1988) 210-15 and Spannagel (1999) 317-44, and on the Forum's role in publicizing Augustus' *auctoritas*, Galinsky (1996) 197-213. *Fasti Triumphales*: Eck (1984) 138.

⁷⁸ Anderson (1984) 161. Gowing (2005) 146-54 also contrasts the two forums' different constructions of the past (distant vs. recent) but does not discuss the place of senators in Trajan's Forum or its function as an honorific venue for contemporary figures.

⁷⁹ Packer (1997) 1:85-91, 282.

⁸⁰ Cassius Dio, *Historia romana* 68.15.3, 16.2, Trajan; 69.7.4, Hadrian, who may have honored two praetorian prefects (69.18.1).

perished in his Germanic and Marcomannic wars.⁸¹ In keeping with the martial atmosphere of the complex, most of these men were represented in military dress. Thus the senate authorized a “statue-in-arms” for Claudius Fronto, a governor of military provinces and a legionary commander in Lucius Verus’ Parthian campaign who died in battle against the Germans. Likewise Vitrasius Pollio, who had married into the imperial family, was honored with two statues: one in “military dress” in the Forum of Trajan, the other in “civilian dress” in the temple of the deified Antoninus Pius. No rule excluded the representation of civilians: Aufidius Victorinus, consul in 183, was specifically awarded a statue in civilian dress. Thus senators could be recognized for distinguished service of any kind. Notwithstanding the powerful symbolism of imperial military triumph inherent in its original design, the emperors of the second century had come to use the Forum of Trajan as a place to advertise the collaboration and partnership between emperor and senators. The wording of the dedicatory inscription often emphasized this consensus by specifying that the statue had been authorized by the senate, but on the motion of the emperor.⁸²

The military and civilian virtues of Trajan would make him a singularly useful exemplar for emperors and senators alike in the fourth century. Emperors dreamed of matching his military success, while senators praised his respect for them. The figure of Trajan seemed to offer an exemplar of imperial behavior that emperors and senators could agree on. The popularity of his Forum confirmed and contributed to this positive

⁸¹ *Historia Augusta, Vita Marci* 22.7.

⁸² *ILS* 1:240-41, no. 1098, “Huic senatus auctor[e] imperatore M. Aurelio Antonino ... armatam statuam [poni] in foro divi Traiani pecunia publica cen[suit].” *ILS* 1:244-45, no. 1112, “[Huic senatus] auctoribus im[peratoribus Antonino et] Commodo ... statuas duas, u[nam habitu milita]ri in foro divi Tra[iani], alteram habi]tu civili in pron[ao aedis divi Pii pon]endas cen[suit].” *CIL* 6.41140, Aufidius Victorinus.

memory of Trajan; everyone, it seemed, wanted to be associated with him, and his Forum was the most direct link to his now-distant greatness. Attracted by Trajan's glorious military reputation, several later emperors were honored with statues in Trajan's Forum. Aurelian, one of the most successful of the third-century emperors, allegedly received a silver statue in the Forum after his death.⁸³ Constantine received several statues there during his reign, all dedicated by senators. One of these dedications praised Constantine as the "bravest, most merciful, and most glorious *princeps*"; the unusual choice of this term to designate the emperor, instead of the usual "Augustus," may have been intended to foster a link in the mind of the viewer between Constantine and Trajan, the "Optimus Princeps."⁸⁴ Another inscription records a dedication by Rufius Volusianus, consul and urban prefect in 314, which praised Constantine as the "founder of eternal security." This epithet was nearly identical to one of the short inscriptions in the central passageway of Constantine's arch, and supports the hypothesis that Volusianus, in his capacity as urban prefect, was perhaps supervising the arch's construction at this time.⁸⁵

The links between Constantine and Trajan were reinforced even more grandly by the spoliation of architectural elements from Trajan's Forum to be reused on the arch of Constantine. High up on the short east and west sides of the arch, and again on the east and west sides of the central doorway, the arch's planners placed four large sculpted panels depicting scenes from Trajan's Dacian wars; in the two panels in the central doorway, Trajan's head was re-carved to become Constantine's. Although their original

⁸³ *Historia Augusta, Vita Taciti* 9.2, but see Paschoud (1996) 227 on the general unreliability of this biography.

⁸⁴ *CIL* 6.1143, "[fo]rtissimo [cle]mentissimo e[t] [gl]oriosissim[o] [p]rincipi." On Trajan's title *Optimus Princeps*, see above n.6.

⁸⁵ *ILS* 1:156, no. 692, "fundatori etiam securitatis aeternae," Forum of Trajan; *ILS* 1:156, no. 694, "fundatori quietis," arch of Constantine. Volusianus and the arch: Marlowe (2004) 206.

location is unknown, it is usually assumed that these panels had been part of a “great frieze” located somewhere in Trajan’s Forum. More certainly, eight free-standing statues of Dacian prisoners were removed and reinstalled in the attic of Constantine’s arch. The reuse of these elements conveyed the message that Constantine, like Trajan, was victorious over his enemies; moreover, it helped to reinterpret his victory over Maxentius in terms of a Roman triumph over barbarians.⁸⁶

The efforts by senators at Rome to honor Constantine by associating him with Trajan reflected what they knew of Constantine’s own thinking about Trajan, for the earlier ruler seems to have made an impression on him. Significantly, it was Constantine’s presence in Rome in 312-13 that seems to have prompted these thoughts. It was during this period that Rome’s mint struck bronze coins for Constantine whose reverse showed a legionary eagle between two standards, with the legend “the Senate and People of Rome to the Best Princeps,” which quoted Trajan’s trademark appellation and copied one of his most common coin types. This coin issue coincided with the two hundredth anniversary of Trajan’s dedication of the Forum in 112 and of the Column in 313. Moreover, Constantine’s hairstyle as represented in coin portraits may have been derived from Trajan’s.⁸⁷ In all probability, Constantine was shown around Rome in a tour(s) not unlike that given to his son Constantius in 357. It was then that Constantine noticed how many buildings bore Trajan’s name, prompting him to crack the joke that

⁸⁶ Ruyschaert (1962-63a) 89, Trajanic panels; Packer (1997) 1:437-8 argues that the Dacians originally stood on the attic façade of the Basilica Ulpia in Trajan’s Forum. For senators’ likely involvement in the design of the arch, see Elsner (2000) 171 n.28, Marlowe (2004) 202-56, and Chapter 2 above.

⁸⁷ Sutherland (1967) 390, nos. 345-52, struck also for Constantine’s fellow Augusti in the East. The issue may also have responded to Maxentius’ revival of the title Princeps, which he used on gold and silver coins of 306-07: Sutherland (1967) 367-70, passim. Alföldi (1963) 57-69, Trajanic image of Constantine, but Wright (1987) 505 traces the hairstyle instead to Augustus. Dedication dates of Trajan’s Forum and Column: Packer (1997) 1:5 n.11.

“Trajan” was like “wall ivy.”⁸⁸ Although no source specifically records it, Constantine must have been just as impressed as Constantius by Trajan’s Forum, if not as cautious about attempting to match it. His plans for the building of Constantinople included a round forum, at the center of which stood a towering porphyry column bearing a colossal bronze statue of himself, perhaps inspired by the memory of Trajan’s Column in Rome.⁸⁹

Strangely, however, despite the inherent appeal of Trajan’s memory to later emperors, Constantine and Theodosius were the only emperors of the fourth century to be honored with statues in Trajan’s Forum. By far the majority of statues whose inscribed bases have been found there were dedicated to senators in the fourth and fifth centuries; approximately thirty such inscriptions, some of them admittedly quite fragmentary, have been assigned to the Forum of Trajan.⁹⁰ This pattern of dedications recalled a phenomenon of the second century, when Marcus Aurelius honored his chief lieutenants with statues there, following the precedent set by Hadrian and Trajan himself. Beginning in the fourth century, however, the surviving evidence for this practice increases dramatically; as usual, it is impossible to say for sure whether the practice genuinely became more common, or whether the pattern of survival has favored the inscriptions of a later period. Nevertheless, those inscriptions that can be dated do begin in the 330s, and become more frequent from the middle of the fourth century into the fifth. The temporal distribution of these inscriptions thus suggests that the Forum of Trajan may have become increasingly perceived as a “senatorial” space in the course of the fourth

⁸⁸ *Epitome de Caesaribus* 41.13, *herbam parietariam*; the same joke is reported, without attribution to Constantine, by Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 27.3.7.

⁸⁹ Zanker (1970) 536, “Konstantin errichtete das Denkmal in enger Anlehnung an die Trajanssäule auf dem neuen Forum seiner neuen Reichshauptstadt.”

⁹⁰ See now Niquet (2000) 264-69, incorporating the most recent inscriptions edited by *CIL*.

century. As it became apparent that the emperor's absence from Rome was more or less permanent, the practices of honorific dedication changed. Senators were honored more publicly than at any time since the late Republic.

The first senator known to have been honored with a statue in Trajan's Forum in the fourth century appears to have been Anicius Paulinus Iunior. Paulinus was consul and urban prefect in 334, when he took charge of Rome's effort to welcome Constantine for his expected thirtieth anniversary visit in 335, handling the details of an equestrian statue to be presented to the emperor in the Roman Forum.⁹¹ In addition to having attained the highest offices, Paulinus was honored for his virtues: "nobility, eloquence, justice, and judgment, for which he is famous in both his private and public life." These were all virtues peculiar to senators, reflecting both their social status and public duties as senators and magistrates. The inscription also records the process by which the dedication came about: "at the request of the Roman People, with the endorsement of the Senate, by the decision of our lords the Augustus, celebrator of triumphs, and the flourishing Caesars, it was decided that a second gilded statue be set up at public expense."⁹² According to the syntax of this sentence, no single agent was responsible for the "decision"; rather, it was the result of a collective process which demonstrated the consensus of the orders of the Roman state—People, Senate, and emperor—much as the second-century dedications had emphasized the agreement of senate and emperor.

The type of consensus publicized in Paulinus' dedication can be understood by adding two more pieces of epigraphic and documentary evidence to the puzzle. First,

⁹¹ See Chapter 2 above. For Paulinus, see *PLRE* 1:679, "Paulinus 14."

⁹² *ILS* 1:268, no. 1221, "ob meritum nobilitatis eloquii iustitiae atq(ue) censurae, quibus privatim ac publice clarus est, petitu populi R(omani), testimonio senatus, iudicio dd(ominorum) nn(ostrorum) triumphatoris Aug(usti) Caesarumq(ue) florentium, statuam secundam auro superfusam locari sumptu publico placuit."

another senator, Valerius Proculus, received a statue in the Forum in 336/37, but the inscription recording it was quite different from that used for Paulinus. Instead of beginning with Proculus' name in the dative, his inscription began with nine lines of imperial names and titles in the nominative. This lengthy introduction marked the start of a letter written by the emperors to the senate of Rome, in which they announced their concurrence with the senate's opinion—presumably that Proculus did indeed merit a statue in the Forum of Trajan. Remarkably, the letter begins with the emperors' greetings “to the consuls, the praetors, the tribunes of the plebs, and their own Senate: if you and your children are well, it is good; we and our armies are well.” This formula was incongruous in the fourth century, by which time these magistrates had ceased to be important at Rome: “tribune” was no more than a name, the praetorship was now an entry-level position, and the consuls more often lived at court than at Rome. What could such a greeting possibly mean in a letter of the fourth century? This language, however, was not meant to be accurate; rather, it evoked ancient tradition, for this was the formula customarily used by generals of the Republic when they composed their dispatches to the senate. Thus the emperor (or his secretary) demonstrated that he was familiar with the traditional language that continued to be used at Rome long after it ceased to reflect reality. The emperors went on to praise Proculus for his “family, conspicuous for its nobility” and for his “virtues, confirmed by his private and by his public life through the offices he has completed.” Thus it was “an easy evaluation” that Proculus should have the same degree of honor from the emperors as he had received from the senate. In short, his statue had been earned in recognition of his service in office and his virtues, the same

qualities for which Paulinus had been praised. Moreover, the emperors' letter provides an example of just the sort of imperial decision mentioned in Paulinus' dedication.⁹³

The second piece of the puzzle comes from an administrative document written 50 years after Paulinus' dedication. During his tenure as prefect of Rome in 384-5, Symmachus had the sad duty of informing the emperors of the death of his friend, Vettius Agorius Praetextatus. Praetextatus was then serving as a praetorian prefect, had been designated for the consulship of 385, and was a man, like Proculus, "of all virtues at home and abroad." In his report, Symmachus reported the request of the senate that the emperors grant permission for "long-lasting statues to pass down to the eyes of posterity a man who was remarkable in our age." This request exemplified the "endorsement of the senate" which Paulinus too had earned. Finally, Symmachus claims that, upon hearing of Praetextatus' death, the people of Rome gave up their customary pleasures of the theater, instead "testifying to his illustrious memory with many an acclamation."⁹⁴ By reading these texts in conjunction with one another, it is possible to reconstruct the process by which a senator, alive or dead, received an honorific statue: the people shouted acclamations for him in the theater, the senate recommended him for the honor, and the emperor granted the senate's request.

⁹³ *PLRE* 1:747-49, "Proculus 11." *AE 1934* (1935) 42, no. 158, "consulibus praetoribus tribunis plebis senatui suo salutem dicunt: si vos liberique vestri valetis bene est; nos exercitusque nostri valemus. Repetentibus nobis insignem nobilitate prosapiam Proculi c(larissimi) v(iri) eiusdemque virtutes privatim et publice decursis officiis cogni[tas] intuentibus, p(atres) c(onscripti), facilis aestima[tio est Pro]culum v(irum) c(larissimum) tantundem glori[am] quam a pa]tribus acceperat." The Republican formula was still being used in 450 in a letter to the senate from Theodosius II and Valentinian III: *Novellae Valentiniani* 1.3.

⁹⁴ *PLRE* 1:722-24, "Praetextatus 1." Symmachus, *Rel.* 10.1, "vir omnium domi forisque virtutum," 2, "recusavit populus sollemnes theatri voluptates memoriamque eius inlustrem multa adclamatione testatus," 12.2, "senatus ... vestrumque numen precatur, ut virum nostra aetate mirabilem statuarum diuturnitas tradat oculis posterorum."

During the fourth century, more and more senators received statues in the Forum of Trajan. Some of the dedicatory inscriptions were relatively brief, recording only the senator's sequence of offices and a brief justification for the statue. Valentinian and Valens granted at least two statues to senators between 364 and 367. One of these honored Saturninius Secundus Salutius, who had served three emperors as praetorian prefect in the East, "for his outstanding services to the state." In the same interval another statue was set up for Flavius Taurus, who had risen from humble beginnings to be praetorian prefect and consul under Constantius. Taurus had earned this honor as a man "approved for his constancy," and the emperors had acted "with the approval of the most excellent senate."⁹⁵ Secundus and Taurus, though senators of the highest rank, never held office in the city of Rome. Both men made their careers at court, yet both received statues in Trajan's Forum: Rome was still the empire's largest stage, and even non-resident senators wanted a place in the Forum's "Hall of Fame."

For emperors to honor their senior officials was, of course nothing new; it was what Trajan and Marcus Aurelius had done in the second century. It was also possible, however, for grateful provinces to apply for a statue on behalf of a former governor who had been unusually fair-minded or effective. Thus Flavius Sallustius, a former *vicarius*, was honored in 364 by the provinces of Spain, as a man "full of fairness and integrity, for the glory of his virtue and services."⁹⁶ Likewise Julius Festus Hymetius was thanked by the province of Africa for going well beyond his duties as proconsul. "By his plans and

⁹⁵ *PLRE* 1:814-17, "Secundus 3"; *ILS* 1:276, no. 1255, "ob egregia eius in rempublicam merita." *PLRE* 1:879-80, "Taurus 3"; *CIL* 6.41336 = *AE* 1934 (1935) 42-43, no. 159, "...adque constantia aeq(ue) probato," "adprobante amplissimo senatu."

⁹⁶ *PLRE* 1:797-98, "Sallustius 5"; *ILS* 1:276, no. 1254 (west porch of Basilica Ulpia), "pleno aequitatis ac fidei, ob virtutis meritorumq(ue) gloriam."

provisions,” he had protected the province from the “devastation born of famine and poverty,” and had “restored the desire [to hold] the provincial priesthood, formerly an object of fear, to the point that it was sought by multiple competitors.” This statue was one of a pair, the other being set up at Carthage; the inscription emphasizes the singularity of these honors, which the province had never requested for any previous proconsul.⁹⁷

At about the same time as the dedication to Hymetius, in the mid-370s, another long inscription was set up for Avianus Symmachus. Unlike Sallustius and Hymetius, Avianus was a senator who lived all his life in Rome, and the offices recorded in his *cursus* identified him as a man of the city, not of the provinces or of the court. He had been prefect of the city, vicar of Rome, and prefect of the grain supply, and he had held two of the ancient priesthoods. Apart from his offices, the inscription drew attention to his service in and to the senate, and the esteem in which he was held by the other members. “He served on many embassies to the divine emperors on behalf of the desires of the most excellent order; usually the first man to be asked for his opinion in the senate, by virtue of his authority, prudence, and eloquence, he fulfilled the greatness of his position in keeping with the dignity of so great an order.” Again, the senate initiated the request for this statue, and the emperors granted the honor; in this case they increased it by adding a second statue to be set up in Constantinople.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ *PLRE* 1:447, “Hymetius”; *ILS* 1:276-77, no. 1256, “ob depulsam ab eadem provincia famis et inopiae vastitatem consiliis et provisionibus ... quod stadium sacerdotii provinciae resituerit ut nunc a competitoribus adpetatur quod antea formidini fuerit.”

⁹⁸ *PLRE* 1:863-65, “Symmachus 3”; *ILS* 1:277, no. 1257, “multis legationibus pro amplissimi ordinis desideriis apud divos principes functo, qui primus in senatu sententiam rogari solitus auctoritate prudentia atq(ue) eloquentia pro dignitate tanti ordinis magnitudinem loci eius inpleverit.” For the findspot of this inscription, see *CIL* 6.8.3, no. 1698 (p.4737), “rep(erta) ‘sub Capitolio ad arcum fuschum’ i.e. fortasse in area fori Traiani”; Niquet (2000) 266 lists the findspot as “Bereich Trajansforum.”

The dedicatory inscriptions for these senators record a range of virtues and services that were considered worthy of public recognition. The most consistent criterion was the holding of high political office, but there was considerable variation in the types of careers represented here: senators might be honored for distinguished service in the provinces, at court, or in Rome itself. Thus the Forum of Trajan collected and displayed examples of senatorial excellence from all over the empire. No less important than the composition of these honorific statues was their audience. When Symmachus, on behalf of the senate, requested a statue for Praetextatus, he based his argument on the idea that the bestowal of public honor encouraged others to strive for recognition. “Imitation is inspired by the ornaments bestowed on good men, and a competition in virtue is fostered by the example of another’s honor.” Symmachus believed that this calculus was at work even in Rome’s earliest days, when “though still in a rustic age, the best citizens were reproduced by skilful hand to be passed down to the memory of future generations.”⁹⁹ With this didactic motive in mind, it is not surprising that so many of the inscriptions mention specific virtues of these men: integrity and fairness in public administration, constancy, eloquence, prudence, public service, nobility of family, virtuous behavior in public and private life.¹⁰⁰ The constant repetition of these virtues, and the visible honors voted to these men, both reflected and reinforced these collective senatorial values. Other senators were supposed to look upon the brightest lights of their order and be inspired to emulate their example.

⁹⁹ Symmachus, *Rel.* 12.2, “ornamentis bonorum incitatur imitation et virtus aemula alitur exemplo honoris alieni. Hinc factum est ,ut rusticis adhuc saeculis optimi quique civium manu et arte formati in longam memoriam mitterentur.”

¹⁰⁰ Niquet (2000) 151-72 discusses the conservatism of the virtues praised.

Amid the dangerous intrigues of high imperial politics, there was no guarantee that good senatorial behavior would meet with its proper reward. In several cases, the historical record had to be corrected later, a process which can be traced in the statues of Trajan's Forum. The above-mentioned Flavius Taurus is a case in point. Taurus had been one of Constantius' closest advisers, entrusted with managing the Council of Ariminum for the emperor in 359; he was also praetorian prefect for six years and consul in 361. When Julian came to power, Taurus was prosecuted and condemned to exile. After Julian's downfall, however, Taurus' memory was rehabilitated by Valentinian and Valens, and received his statue in the Forum between 364 and 367. The inscription recording this honor implies that Taurus had already received a statue there, which was presumably taken down at the time of his disgrace; Valentinian and Valens "ordered that the gilded statue which, with the approbation of the most excellent senate, he had earned not long ago, be returned, in order to perpetuate the memory of a praiseworthy man."¹⁰¹ Likewise, Julius Festus Hymetius had been accused of malfeasance and treason during his governorship under Valentinian, but after the suspicious emperor died in 375, the province of Africa successfully petitioned Valens, Gratian, and Valentinian II in 376 to grant Hymetius statues in Rome and Carthage. This is an especially clear case of Trajan's Forum being used to showcase an example of senatorial virtue, because Hymetius, who was lucky to escape with his life, never reached the highest grade of senatorial rank. The praise he received in his inscription was not just fulsome, but specific, crafted to rebut the allegations that had been made against him. Anyone reading

¹⁰¹ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 22.3.4, exile; *AE 1934* (1935) , no. 159, "statuam sub auro quam adprobante amplissimo senatu iamdudum meruerat ad perpetuam laudabilis viri memoriam reddi iusserunt."

Hymetius' inscription would have learned not only about his achievements as proconsul, but about the qualities of the ideal governor: "his behavior had been pure and proper," and "he had fallen short neither of fairness nor of justice in his verdicts."¹⁰² The rehabilitations of the memories of Taurus and Hymetius by later regimes, and the eagerness with which these revisions were sought, testified to the enduring fame that could be won by senatorial virtue, even in the face of an emperor's hostility. The most famous example of such a restoration was that of Nicomachus Flavianus the Elder in 431; in their letter, the emperors even referred to this alteration in the historical record as "a kind of emendation of his fate." The return of Flavianus "to eternal light" was symbolized by the (re)dedication of his statue in the Forum of Trajan.¹⁰³

Corroborating evidence for the senatorial flavor of the Forum of Trajan in the fourth century is provided, ironically, by an author usually dismissed as a writer of fiction. Writing at the end of the fourth century, the author of the imperial biographies known as the *Historia Augusta* praised the early-third century emperor Severus Alexander for "placing statues of the leading men in the Forum of Trajan, transferring them there from all around." He goes on to add that Alexander carried out a similar project for the Forum of Nerva, setting up statues of all the deified emperors, together with inscriptions recording their achievements—thereby imitating Augustus, who had set up statues and inscriptions of the leading men in his own forum. Augustus had specifically proclaimed that these men and their achievements were to serve as the

¹⁰² Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 28.1.17-23; *ILS* 1:276-77, no. 1256, "quod caste in eadem provincia integreque versatus est, [qu]od neque aequitati in cognoscendo neque iustitiae defuerit,"

¹⁰³ The standard editions of this inscription are *CIL* 6.1783 = *ILS* 1:577-78, no. 2948, but the most recent edition is provided by Hedrick (2000) 3, "memoriam defuncti in lucem aet[ernam] revocare emendatio quaedam eius sortis," with 171-213 on the connection between emendation of texts and emendation of the historical record.

standards against which he and future emperors were to be measured.¹⁰⁴ In actual fact, it is unlikely that Severus Alexander undertook either of these projects; rather, the author's imagination was fired by what he saw going on in Trajan's Forum in his own day. Indeed, the author goes to great lengths to establish his own presence in the Forum by claiming to find archival material in Trajan's libraries. The author may have been drawn to the Forum by its air of scholastic endeavor. It was in these same years around 400 that grammarians and rhetors were conducting classes in the exedrae of the colonnades. The cultural dimension of the Forum was symbolized by the placement here of statues in honor of the great literary figures of the day, including (at least) the rhetor Marius Victorinus and the poet Claudian.¹⁰⁵

Senators' presence in the Forum of Trajan was not limited to their statues. In fact, the Forum hosted a whole range of activities in which senators, especially the urban prefect, played a conspicuous public role. The Forum probably contained the prefect's tribunal, and was the most common place for imperial constitutions to be posted. Some of these laws were addressed to the prefect directly, but all would have been accompanied by an edict of the prefect in order to comply with the requirements for publication and posting. Thus the prefect, as the chief magistrate of the city, was often in the public eye, even when he was only carrying out the instructions issued by a distant

¹⁰⁴ *Historia Augusta, Vita Alexandri* 26.4, "statuas summorum virorum in foro Traiani conlocavit undique translatas," 28.6, deified emperors and Forum of Augustus; for Augustus' proclamation, see Suetonius, *Augustus* 31.5. While certainty about the circumstances of composition of the *Historia Augusta* will never be attained, I follow a broad consensus of scholars who date the work to c. 400.

¹⁰⁵ Syme (1968) 207 characterizes the author of the *HA* as a "rogue *grammaticus*," a label that seems even more apt in light of the intellectual activities going on in his favorite haunt. For grammarians' activity in the Forum, see Marrou (1932), who described the Forum as "un centre d'activité intellectuelle et plus particulièrement scolaire, le siege de l'enseignement des grammairiens et des rhéteurs" (p.99). Jerome, *Chron.* s.a. 353, Victorinus' statue (no base survives); *ILS* 1:578, no. 2949, Claudian. On the Forum's statues of literary figures, see Hedrick (2000) 230-37.

emperor.¹⁰⁶ Finally, a tantalizing hint of senators' economic activities in the Forum is offered by a commentator on the poems of Juvenal, who writes: "Up until the prefecture of Cerealis [352-53] senators kept strongboxes in the Forum of Trajan, in which they deposited silver or money more safely; accordingly, the place in which the strongboxes were kept was called *Opes* (Wealth)."¹⁰⁷ We have no information about how this deposit procedure worked, or why the practice was stopped, but the Forum's use as a senatorial bank would accord with senators' display of their political status evident in the honorific statues. Thus the virtues for which senators were praised in the inscriptions—nobility, office, eloquence—were reflected in the activities of the Forum that swirled around their statues. These economic, political, and cultural activities, no less than the architectural setting, provided the daily context in which the statues were viewed, and further marked the Forum of Trajan as predominantly a senatorial space in the fourth century. Senators accumulated both financial capital and cultural capital in the Forum of Trajan.

Understanding the senatorial character of Trajan's Forum throws a new light on Constantius' visit to the Forum in 357. According to the historian Ammianus, it was the awesome size of this complex and its associations with the glorious Trajan that had so impressed Constantius. But if senators were escorting the emperor around the city, they would certainly have had their own reasons for bringing him to the Forum of Trajan, where senators held center stage and were honored for their achievements. Constantius may have taken the hint. An inscription records that he ordered the restoration of a statue

¹⁰⁶ Anderson (1984) 164-7, prefect's activities in the Forum of Trajan. For a list of laws posted in the Forum of Trajan, see Lugli (1965) 73-78, nos. 408-27, nine of which date to the fourth century; Matthews (2000) 185-7, publication edicts of governors and prefects.

¹⁰⁷ Schol. Juv., *ad Sat.* 10.24, ed. Wessner (1931) 163-4, "usque ad Cerealem praefectum in foro Trajani arcae habuerunt senatores, in quibus argentum aut pecunias tutius deponabant, propterea et locus ipse, in quo erant arcae positae, 'Opes' dictae sunt."

to Flavius Eugenius, who had held high office under Constans in the 340s, but whose statue had apparently been pulled down during the reign of Magnentius in the early 350s. Now Eugenius was to have his gilded statue “restored at public expense to its own place” in the Forum of Trajan.¹⁰⁸ It is quite possible that Constantius rectified this insult to Eugenius during his visit in 357, when he could have seen the damage that had been done to the statue. In the end, Constantius, too, was reading and reacting to Trajan’s Forum. His first instinct was to copy Trajan’s equestrian statue, a symbol of imperial triumph, but after recognizing the Forum’s importance as a showcase of senatorial honor, he decided instead to pay homage to a senator’s service.

Competing constituencies

Constantius may have been too overawed by Trajan’s Forum and equestrian statue to contemplate matching it, but there was one predecessor he thought he could outdo: Constantine, his own father. Faced with Rome’s expectation that every emperor should contribute to the physical splendor of the city, and perhaps thinking of his own fondness for the chariot races, he decided to set up an obelisk on the central barrier of the Circus Maximus. This was to be no ordinary obelisk, but the largest ever erected in Rome. It had to be shipped from Alexandria, where it had been lying unused for at least twenty years. According to Ammianus, Constantine had cut it from its foundations in Heliopolis in Egypt and shipped it down the Nile as far as Alexandria, where it awaited the construction of a special barge to bring it to Rome. When Constantine died, however, the project was abandoned. Now Constantius brought the work to completion, raising the

¹⁰⁸ *ILS* 1:274, no. 1244, “statuam sub auro in foro divi Traiani ... sumptu publico loco suo restituendam censuerunt”; this inscription is dated to 355/60 by the emperors’ titles.

obelisk on a huge base, on which was carved a long, magniloquent inscription in hexameter verse proclaiming his glorious achievement.¹⁰⁹

This inscription laid bare the political and cultural tensions of the fourth-century empire. Allegedly, Constantine had “wished this ornament to be an adornment of the city of his cognomen,” but Constantius now took credit for bringing the obelisk to Rome instead of to Constantinople. This claim is flatly contradicted by Ammianus, who specifically states that only the fact that it was being sent to Rome justified its removal from the temple of the Sun in the first place.¹¹⁰ Writing in Rome several decades after the obelisk was erected, Ammianus would certainly have known Constantius’ inscription, but he rejected its claim that Constantinople was the original destination intended for the obelisk. It is not difficult to see why Constantius apparently invented the idea that Constantine had wanted to send the obelisk to Constantinople: it allowed Constantius to claim that he was showing special favor to Rome, and was more generous to Rome than his father had been. If Constantius thought that there was advantage to distancing himself from his father, it is reasonable to conclude that there were negative memories of Constantine circulating in Rome in 357. Rome’s last experience of Constantine was his visit in 326, which had been marred by popular protest at his refusal to sacrifice before the temple of Jupiter and by the tension and uncertainty surrounding the execution of his eldest son. In the years since, Rome had been disappointed when Constantine failed to

¹⁰⁹ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 16.10.13-14, Constantius gives games in the Circus, 17, decides to set up an obelisk, 17.4.12-23, Constantine’s plans for the obelisk and its subsequent transport, manner of erection, and translation of its hieroglyphics. Julian, *Misopogon* 340a, Constantius would stay the whole day at the circus.

¹¹⁰ *ILS* 1:165, no. 736, “Hoc decus ornatum genitor cognominis urbis / esse volens, caesa Thebis de rupe revellit.” Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 17.4.12-13.

return for his thirtieth anniversary in 335-36, and then again in 337, when his body was interred in Constantinople instead of being sent back to Rome for burial.¹¹¹

While it is important not to overestimate the importance of Constantinople in its earliest years, it is clear from both the people's reaction in 337 and the inscription on the obelisk that the people of Rome were uneasy about the prestige of the new city in the east. It is not entirely clear whether Constantine intended his city to be a "capital," or even what defined a capital in an age when emperors moved around among different residences and campaigned at the head of their army.¹¹² There can be no doubt, however, that Constantine provided his new city with the full complement of buildings that were necessary for it to become a capital. He also went to exceptional lengths to furnish the public spaces of the city with famous statuary "by stripping bare virtually every other city"; such prestigious sculpture collections were meant to provide Constantinople with an air of antiquity and establish its importance within the empire's hierarchy of cities. This project achieved the desired effect: an illustrated calendar produced at Rome in 354 depicted Constantinople among the four most important cities of the empire, superior to Alexandria and Trier and on a par with Rome.¹¹³

It was not until the last years of Constantius, however, that Constantinople was unequivocally marked out to be a capital city, a Rome in the east. This shift in policy

¹¹¹ On the visit of 326, the execution of Crispus, and Constantine's failure to return for his thirtieth anniversary, see Chapter 2 above; on Rome's unhappiness that he was buried in Constantinople, Chapter 3 above.

¹¹² Vanderspoel (1995) 51-70 argues that Constantinople did not become a capital until the last years of the reign of Constantius, when the eastern senate was made equal to the Roman; see especially his argument (pp. 53-55) that the presence of a senate was the defining characteristic of a capital.

¹¹³ For the four city Tyches depicted in the Calendar and this interpretation of their relative placement, see Dagron (1974) 58-59 and Salzman (1990) 27-28, with illustrations at Figs. 2-5 (following p.26). Bassett (2004) 22-26, Constantine's building program, 37-78, creation and significance of Constantine's sculptural collections. Jerome, *Chronicle* s.a. 334, "Constantinopolis dedicatur paene omnium urbium nuditate."

may have owed something to the influence of Themistius, a philosopher and orator whom Constantius added to the senate of Constantinople in 355. When Constantius decided to visit Rome in May 357, the senate selected Themistius as its ambassador who would meet the emperor in Rome and present him with the city's gift of a golden crown.¹¹⁴ At this point Constantinople's status was still unclear. Constantius had funded new buildings in the city, including baths, a forum, and a library, but he had not actually set foot there since 350, and had spent the years since in the western provinces.¹¹⁵ In this context, Themistius' embassy was a precious opportunity to remind the emperor of the importance of Constantinople. It was a delicate balancing act. He acknowledged the primacy of Rome, calling it the "hearth of empire" and the "metropolis of triumphs," while Constantinople only "ruled in second place." At the same time, he expressed pride in Constantinople's growth, noting that great men were flocking to the city from all around in order to become senators at Constantinople and lavish their wealth on the city.¹¹⁶

Themistius' speech—a very rare example of a Greek speech given in the Roman senate—was apparently popular both with the senators and with Constantius. As a result of his embassy, Constantinople regained the allowance of subsidized grain that Constantine had provided for the city, but which had been suspended since 342. Themistius remained in Rome for some months after Constantius left, and the senators

¹¹⁴ Vanderspoel (1995) 31-49, early life of Themistius; Heather and Moncur (2001) 97-114, adlection to the senate of Constantinople. Some scholars have doubted that Themistius actually went to Rome in person in 357, but this fact is established by Dagron (1968) 205-12 and taken for granted by Vanderspoel (1995) 101 n.143.

¹¹⁵ Vanderspoel (1995) 98-100, Constantius' building program; he notes that Constantius' visit to Rome may have stirred a "feeling of insecurity in the new city" (p.100).

¹¹⁶ Themistius, *Orat.* 3.41c, ruling in second place, 42b, metropolis of triumphs, 42c, hearth of empire, 48a, new senators.

even tried to persuade him to settle in Italy, offering him lands and money. In August 357, however, Constantius decreed that senators who came from the Balkans and old Greece were henceforth to belong to the senate at Constantinople. Themistius now returned to Constantinople to take charge of recruiting the new members for the eastern senate. After his return, he gave a speech in which he portrayed himself as a representative of Greek culture who had overcome the prejudice and resistance of the Roman senators.¹¹⁷ It was indeed a striking reversal. Traditionally, Roman senators had kept aloof from Greek philosophy, at least publicly. Five hundred years earlier, Athens had sent a delegation led by three philosophers to appeal an adverse judgment to the senate at Rome, but they had been forbidden to address the senate in Greek.¹¹⁸ Themistius' speech symbolized the reversal of the power dynamic between east and west. Once Greek philosophers had come to Rome to hear the terms of their subjection; now it was Rome itself that had been conquered, first by a western usurper (Magnentius) and then by an eastern emperor whose most influential adviser in the senate was a Greek philosopher. Two years after Constantius visited Rome, the chief magistrate of Constantinople was changed from a proconsul to a prefect, on the analogy with Rome.¹¹⁹ Even as he was hinting at his favor to Rome in the inscription on the obelisk, Constantius was actually preparing to turn Constantinople into a true capital city. Already in a speech given on January 1, 357 Themistius had pointed out that Constantius and Constantinople

¹¹⁷ Dagron (1968) 208-12, success of Themistius' embassy, (1974) 119-46, development of the senate under Constantine and Constantius II.

¹¹⁸ Gruen (1990) 176. Embassy of 155 BCE: Aulus Gellius, *Noctes atticae* 6.14.8-9, Plutarch, *Vita Catonis* 22.4. The use of Latin (as against Greek) could be enforced in the senate to make a point: Suetonius, *Tiberius* 71. Conversely, to allow Greek was a mark of special favor: Cassius Dio, *Historiae romanae* 60.8.3.

¹¹⁹ Dagron (1974) 213-39, noting that the changeover from proconsul to prefect was "au centre de l'évolution qui fait de Constantinople une capitale" (p.213).

had “grown up together,” suggesting that ruler and city were united by a special bond. Now Themistius’ speech in Rome seemed to hint that Constantius was planning to raise the profile of Constantinople still further.¹²⁰

The presence of Themistius in Rome showed that the senators of Rome faced competition from other constituencies for Constantius’ attention in 357. Notwithstanding Themistius’ regard for the old capital, he was intimately involved in the implementation of policies that turned Constantinople into a genuine alternative to Rome in the eastern provinces. Even in Rome, senators were no longer unchallenged as the most visible leaders of the city. When Constantius visited in 357, the most important issue of public contention was the division within the Christian community over who was the rightful bishop of Rome. This schism had its origins in the ecclesiastical politics of the early 350s, when Constantius had attempted to compel Liberius, the bishop of Rome, to endorse the Council of Sirmium of 351 and its deposition of Athanasius, the bishop of Alexandria. Subsequently, Liberius had refused to attend the Council of Arles in 353/4, or a further council convoked at Milan in 355, both of which had threatened exile for any bishop who refused to recognize the Council of Sirmium. Frustrated by Liberius’ intransigence, Constantius finally ordered the prefect of Rome to arrest the bishop and send him to Milan for questioning. After further fruitless pressure was exerted on him,

¹²⁰ Themistius, *Orat.* 4.58b, “βασιλεῖ δὲ εἰκότως συναυξάνεται πόλις ἢ τῆς βασιλείας ἡλικιωτίς,” playing on the fact that Constantine had promoted Constantius to imperial rank at the same time he founded Constantinople (November 324); Heather and Moncur (2001) 123, change in policy.

Liberius was sent into exile in Thrace in the autumn of 355, and a new bishop, Felix, was consecrated in his place.¹²¹

When Constantius came to Rome in 357, Liberius was still in exile, and Felix was manifestly unpopular.¹²² Like Themistius and the senators of Rome, the Christian community took advantage of the rare appearance by the emperor to lobby for the bishop's return. According to one historian of the Church, the people loudly demanded Liberius when Constantius made his triumphal entry into Rome.¹²³ It is striking that Ammianus' far more detailed account of Constantius' arrival says nothing about these acclamations. Nor does Ammianus report any demonstrations of support for Liberius during Constantius' month in Rome. It may be that Ammianus' brief mention of the "outspokenness" of the crowd in the Circus conceals acclamations in support of Liberius. Another Christian historian explicitly locates acclamations of this nature in the Circus. After Constantius announced his decision in the Circus to restore Liberius, but to entrust the Roman church to Liberius and Felix jointly, the people responded sarcastically that each circus faction would now have its own bishop; then all shouted defiantly with one voice, "One God, one Christ, one bishop."¹²⁴ If Ammianus omitted these details, it may have been because they did not match his image of Rome. In his description of Constantius' visit to Rome, Ammianus placed the emphasis on the martial character of the *adventus* ceremony, the better to criticize the emperor for celebrating an ill-deserved

¹²¹ This summary relies on Barnes (1993) 109-20, esp. 115-18. For the arrest of Liberius by the prefect Leontius, see Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 15.7.6-10. On the implications of this schism for the Christian topography of the city, see Curran (2000) 129-37.

¹²² *Collectio Avellana* 1.2, "universo populo displicuit," Theodoret, *HE* 2.14, boycott.

¹²³ Sozomen, *HE* 4.11; see also *Collectio Avellana* 1.3, "venit Romam Constantius imperator; pro Liberio rogatur a populo."

¹²⁴ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 16.10.13, *dicacitate plebis*; Theodoret, *HE* 2.14, support for Liberius in the Circus.

triumph. Likewise, when he listed the buildings Constantius visited during his tour, he failed to mention any Christian place of worship, although it is scarcely conceivable that Constantius did not visit the impressive basilicas of St. Peter or St. John Lateran.

Ammianus was more interested in the ancient symbolism of the senate and people than in their involvement with contemporary Christian politics. In fact, however, Liberius had supporters in the senatorial class. After Constantius arrived in the city, a delegation of senatorial women approached the emperor to plead for their bishop's return. According to one Christian historian, it was this appeal that prevailed. Still, Constantius portrayed his decision as a concession to the crowd, much as he advertised the obelisk as a mark of honor to Rome. In truth, Liberius had at last capitulated to his demands, and was allowed to return to Rome in 357 or 358.¹²⁵

It is entirely possible that Constantius' main reason for visiting Rome in May 357 was to settle the continuing unrest in the Roman Church by announcing the return of Liberius. This hypothesis would explain the timing of the visit better than the erroneous calculations of an imperial anniversary or the much-delayed triumph over Magnentius.¹²⁶ The brilliance of Ammianus' depiction of the emperor's arrival as a military triumph has obscured the multiplicity of meanings which contemporaries read into this imperial visit. Ammianus did not mention either the speech of Themistius or the schism within the Roman church. More surprisingly, he did not illuminate the senatorial character of Constantius' tour of Roman buildings. Whether Constantius visited Rome for traditional

¹²⁵ For the peculiar character of Ammianus' description of Constantius' visit, see above. Theodoret, *HE* 2.14, senatorial women; the story is doubted by McLynn (1994) 35 but accepted by Curran (2000) 286. *Collectio Avellana* 1.3, Liberius' restoration announced to the people, probably in the Circus; Liberius' return is dated to August 357 by Barnes (1993) 138, to 358 by Lizzi Testa (2004) 126-27.

¹²⁶ The ecclesiastical motive for the visit often goes unnoticed: see, e.g., Vanderspoel (1995) 101 n.138.

reasons or to settle a Christian schism is impossible to say. In either case, different constituencies used the opportunity of this first imperial visit in thirty-one years to lobby the emperor. The group with the most ancient claim to favored status was Rome's senators, who drew on the city's historical and monumental traditions in order to remind Constantius of their own importance. Nevertheless, the visit of 357 showed that Rome's senators now had to compete for public honor with new rivals. It was a sign of the times that Constantius ordered the removal of the altar of Victory from the senate house, notwithstanding the offense this caused to a substantial element of senatorial opinion. There could be no better demonstration of both the limits of senatorial influence and the rise of new competitors for cultural prestige in Rome.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ Symmachus, *Rel.* 3.4, removal, 6, offense. For a discussion of the altar of Victory affair, see Chapter 7 below.

Chapter 5

Writing Rome

Only nine years after Constantius visited Rome and restored bishop Liberius to his see, the city was once again rent by Christian riots as rival factions fought over the episcopal succession. If Constantius' appearance in 357 had first raised the possibility that senators might have to compete with Christians for the emperor's attention in Rome, the riots of 366 showed that the city's Christian politics had matured into a force that was fully capable of both disrupting and participating in the traditional management of the city by the senatorial elite. Damasus, the bishop who emerged from the riots, was the first bishop to show that he could deploy the same strategies of publicity and self-promotion as the senators. In contrast to the atmosphere of 357, when senators and Christians seemed to have different agendas and speak a different language, the years of Damasus saw each become involved in the other's politics, a convergence reflected also in the development of similar cultural forms through which each group thought about its own history and identity. Both senators and Christians, by creating new narratives of Rome's history that placed themselves front and center, were figuring out how to think about a Rome without emperors.

These new conceptions of Rome's history were not necessarily expressed in the literary form of history-writing. Instead, one common and apparently popular genre was

the poetic epigram, used by both senators and churchmen. At the time of its earliest appearance in Rome, aristocrats had adapted the conventions of Greek epigram to one of their most characteristic institutions, the commemoration of illustrious ancestors. The epigram became the form used for the verse *elogium*, a short poem which encapsulated an ancestor's virtues or achievements, and which could accompany the display of an *imago*, a wax ancestor mask, in the *atrium* of an aristocratic house, or be inscribed as an epitaph at the family tomb. The *elogium* was thus an important vehicle in the creation and transmission of memory in aristocratic culture.¹

This ancient family custom was given a public, literary form by two works (both now lost) written in the triumviral period of the 30s BCE. The first of these was by Marcus Terentius Varro, a high-ranking Roman senator and expert on many aspects of Rome's history. His work, called either the *Hebdomades* (*Sevens*) or *Imagines*, consisted of 700 portraits of famous men, both Greek and Roman, including poets, philosophers, architects, senators, and others.² Varro composed a brief epigram to pair with each portrait. He probably undertook this work in connection with his supervision of the library that Julius Caesar was planning to build in Rome. Caesar's death interrupted these plans, and brought Varro into danger; living under proscription for several years, he finished the work in 39 BCE, when it probably became the basis for the decorative program of the public libraries founded by Asinius Pollio. Pollio equipped his libraries with portrait statues of famous authors, which he placed in the Atrium Libertatis or "Hall

¹ Van Sickle (1987), epitaphs of the Scipios as the first examples of epigram at Rome; Flower (1996) 159-84, relationship between tomb epitaphs and the *imagines* in Roman aristocratic houses.

² The principal testimonia are Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 35.11; Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 3.10-11; Ausonius, *Mosella* 305-07; Symmachus, *Ep.* 1.2, 1.4. The meager remains of Varro's epigrams are collected at Courtney (1993) 184-85. For discussions, see Momigliano (1971) 96-97 and Horsfall (1989) 102.

of Liberty” (probably connected with the Forum of Caesar), including one of Varro himself, a unique honor for a man still living.³ The placing of portraits in the Atrium Libertatis was a deliberate imitation of the aristocratic practice of keeping *imagines* in the atria of their homes: all Romans were now entitled to think of these famous men as their ancestors. Shortly after Varro published his work, another Roman aristocrat, Pomponius Atticus, the friend of Cicero, published a second *Imagines*. Atticus, too, assembled a collection of portraits accompanied by epigrams of several lines apiece, which he finished between 39 and 32 BCE. Perhaps to meet demand for more material about the specifically Roman heroes, Atticus restricted his subjects to “those who surpassed the rest of the Roman people in honor and in the grandeur of their deeds.”⁴ Atticus, in short, wrote only about Roman senators, in keeping with the senatorial antiquarianism that characterized his other works.⁵

Although only a few lines of Varro’s *Imagines* survive, and none from Atticus’, it is likely that these works provided a direct model for the most distinctive feature of Augustus’ new Forum. In niches set into the walls of the Forum’s colonnades, Augustus placed statues of famous Romans of the past, each with a brief *titulus* or label on the statue-base giving his name and a longer *elogium* on the wall below recording his

³ Isidore, *Etymologiae* 6.5, Pollio’s library “additis auctorum imaginibus in atrio,” Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 7.115, Varro’s *imago*. Pliny’s praise of Varro’s *Imagines* follows a discussion of portrait statues in libraries (35.9-10). On Pollio’s library in the Atrium Libertatis and Varro’s likely involvement with the project, see Osgood (2006) 252.

⁴ Geiger (1985) 82, date; Cornelius Nepos, *Atticus* 18.5-6, with Horsfall (1989) 101-02, subjects of Atticus’ work. The only other testimonium is Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 35.11, “imagine amore flagrasse quondam testes sunt Atticus ille Ciceronis edito de iis volumine....” For further discussions, see Momigliano (1971) 98 and Osgood (2006) 293-94.

⁵ Among his other lost works were a *Liber annalis* or record of magistrates, treaties, and laws from the founding of the city, and genealogies of several noble families: Cornelius Nepos, *Atticus* 18.1-4, with Horsfall (1989) 99-102. For the influence of Varro and Atticus on Nepos, see Geiger (1985) 81-82.

achievements.⁶ This format was similar to that already used in the tomb of the Scipios, and was likely the same one used by Varro and Atticus in their *Imagines*.⁷ The inscriptions of these great men of the Republic recorded their most important public achievements, especially the offices they had held and the nations they had conquered.⁸ This ancient tradition of aristocratic commemoration still pervaded senatorial culture in the fourth century. Distinguished senators continued to receive honorific statues, now clustered in the Forum of Trajan, accompanied by inscriptions that proclaimed their offices and virtues. One senator even planned to imitate Varro by writing his own *Imagines*, a collection of epigrams that honored distinguished senators of his own time.

“The good men of my age”

Late in 374 or early in 375, one of Rome’s most distinguished senators, Avianus Symmachus (father of the more famous orator), withdrew from the city after his house across the Tiber was burned by a mob.⁹ During his exile from the city, Avianus took advantage of his enforced vacation from political affairs to turn his mind to literary pursuits.¹⁰ He began work on a project inspired by the *Imagines* of Varro, whom he called the “father of Roman learning.” Avianus planned to commemorate “the good men

⁶ For this reconstruction of the *summi viri* in the Forum of Augustus, see Degraasi (1937) 1-8.

⁷ On the relationship between the Forum of Augustus and the *imagines* displayed in *atria*, see Flower (1996) 224-36, with the comparison to the tomb of the Scipios at p.233. Galinsky (1996) 206, following Degraasi (1945), argues that the selection of heroes was influenced by Vergil’s *Aeneid*, Luce (1990) that the material was independent of Livy and probably came from the compilation of the *Annales Maximi*. Neither considers the influence of Varro or Atticus.

⁸ For texts of these inscriptions, see Degraasi (1937).

⁹ The circumstances of Avianus’ flight are related by Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 27.3.4. For the chronology of his flight and of the letters exchanged between him and his son (Symmachus, *Ep.* 1.1-1.12), see Lizzi Testa (2004) 375-79, revising Seeck (1883) LXXIII-LXXIV, who placed the riot and letters in the autumn of 375. A new interpretation of this riot is proposed by Lizzi Testa (2004) 327-43, who believes that it resulted from a disagreement about the proper allocation of wine at a time of shortage, whether to release supplies to alleviate retail prices, or to use it to pay the guilds responsible for the production of lime at a time when building materials were in high demand as the city rebuilt after extensive flooding.

¹⁰ Symmachus, *Orat.* 5.1, “curarum vacuus animum litteris excolebat.”

of [his] age” in a large-scale work originally conceived as a set of eighty *elogia*, though only five have come down to us. Like the works of Varro and Atticus, Avianius’ collection “reflected the need to root the identity of a governing class in the soil of a glorious past and in the pride of illustrious pedigrees.”¹¹ Each poem began with a man’s name, followed by a six-line epigram in hexameter verse, imitating the placement of a *titulus* and an *elogium* to identify the ancestor masks displayed in senatorial houses.¹²

Although Avianius’ poems have been condemned as “cold and flavorless” on stylistic grounds, they provide a rare example of how a senator of Rome thought about history in the fourth century.¹³ Like the statues and inscriptions in the Forum of Trajan, Avianius’ *elogia* held up a mirror to senatorial society, defining a set of exemplars whose virtues rendered them worthy of remembrance and imitation.¹⁴ Moreover, like the senators honored in the Forum, the senators commemorated in the poems had diverse backgrounds and careers. The one trait they shared was that all had been prefects of the city, Rome’s highest magistracy and one which Avianius himself had held a decade before. Since the urban prefect was the leader and symbol of the city, the history of Rome could be written in terms of a history of its prefects. His decision to compose

¹¹ Symmachus, *Ep.* 1.2.2, “a nobis quoque accipe bonorum aetatis meae exarata nuper *elogia*” and Varro as “illum Romanae eruditionis parentem,” 8, plan of eighty epigrams. Lizzi Testa (2004) 361, identity of governing class; she emphasizes (pp. 361-62) the exclusivity of this group in light of the expansion of senatorial rank, but see below on the diversity of the senators included.

¹² Flower (1996) 182-83, “The close association of verse *elogia* with statues in the Forum of Augustus and especially with portraits in books by Varro and Atticus suggests that the two-part *elogium* could also be found accompanying an *imago* in the *atrium*.”

¹³ Seeck (1883) XLIII, “frigida et ieiuna.” Avianius’ epigrams are found at Symmachus, *Ep.* 1.2.3-7, or in Courtney (1993) 451-53. There is a superb discussion of the *elogia* in Lizzi Testa (2004) 355-72, who agrees that they were designed not just to praise individuals, but to define “un’immagine collettiva di ceto” (p.370). Whereas she emphasizes Avianius’ political motives—to vindicate the recognition of merit in appointments to office, and to recall predecessors who had resisted the dilution of senatorial prestige—I read the *elogia* as a cultural statement, a meditation on the centrality of senators to Roman history.

¹⁴ On the Forum of Trajan as a senatorial space, see Chapter 4 above. Lizzi Testa (2004) 363 points out that Avianius’ *elogia* coincided chronologically with the celebration of senatorial values in the Forum’s inscriptions, and that they were “quasi aspetti omologhi di un medesimo processo di autorappresentazione.”

elogia for other prefects naturally reflected his own identity as a prefect; the former prefects thus became his “ancestors” in Rome’s highest office. It was also an implicit rejection of other potential subjects of history, such as Roman emperors or Christian martyrs, both of whom were being celebrated by other authors of epigrams during this same period. Thus Avianius’ *elogia* of prefects were an expression of a specifically senatorial conception of Rome’s history and identity in the fourth century.¹⁵

Avianius’ poems have earned the censure of modern critics in part because they are somewhat repetitive, many of the same virtues gracing one prefect after another. But when the uniformity in the poems is compared with what we know of these five individuals, it becomes clear that their resemblance was, to a degree, contrived, the result of Avianius’ wish to portray them in similar terms. Among the five prefects there were differences, for example, in family status, geographical origins, and religious affiliation.¹⁶ These disparities were deliberately subsumed in a language of praise that emphasized shared characteristics rather than the significant differences which existed among members of the senatorial order. Belying Roman senators’ reputation for snobbery, Avianius’ *elogia* suggested that such differences could be set aside in favor of celebrating the status and virtues that were common to all members of the aristocracy of office.¹⁷

Only one prefect was praised specifically for his achievements as prefect.

Aradius Rufinus had been recalled to the prefecture by Constantine only a month after

¹⁵ For the increasing importance, both substantive and symbolic, of the urban prefect in the fourth century, see Chapter 3 above; by contrast, Lizzi Testa (2004) 367 barely mentions the fact that Avianius focused on prefects and does not consider the connection between thinking about prefects and writing about Rome. For the use of epigram in alternative histories, see below.

¹⁶ Novak (1979) 286-302 uses these *elogia* to illustrate the diversity of Constantine’s support in the senatorial class, but does not discuss Avianius’ conception of history.

¹⁷ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 28.4.7, snobbery of Roman aristocrats.

retiring as Maxentius' last prefect, and it was precisely Rufinus' ability to serve Rome in such tumultuous circumstances that Avianius recalled in his *elogium*.

ARADIVS RVFINVS

Princeps ingenio, fortunae munere princeps
Aetatis, Rufine, tuae, cui prospera quaeque
Admiranda tuis aequabat gloria rebus.
Unus amor cunctis et praesidium trepidorum,
Principibus, quorum viguisti tempore, doctus
Aut calcaria ferre bonis aut frena tyrannis.

Leader in character, by fortune's gift leader
of your age, Rufinus: for you a wondrous glory
made your good fortune equal to your deeds.
Loved by all, protector of the fearful,
to the good leaders of your time you skillfully
applied the spur, and to the tyrants, the bit.¹⁸

Rufinus was set apart by his ability to work with good emperors (Constantine) and usurpers (Maxentius) alike, encouraging the former and restraining the latter. Whatever the truth of Rufinus' power, senators in the fourth century cherished the notion that they could wield influence over emperors in Rome, as they had attempted to do when Constantius visited in 357. The very first word in the poem, *princeps*, pointed to this equality of status. Not only did it evoke the early emperors, especially Augustus, who had treated senators with respect, but it even recalled the Republic, when *princeps* was a title bestowed on the most outstanding senator. It is this earlier, Republican meaning which frames the first line in the poem, in which it is Rufinus, not the emperor, who was the leading figure of his age.

¹⁸ Symmachus, *Ep.* 1.2.3. *PLRE* 1:775, "Aradius Rufinus 10," Chastagnol (1962) 59-63, nos. 22, 24. The dates of his prefectures, provided by the Chronographer of 354, were February 9 – October 27, 312 and November 29, 312 – December 8, 313. An Aradius Rufinus was also prefect in 304-5, but according to Barnes (1982) 115, this man may have been our Rufinus' father.

The subject of Avianius' second *elogium* was Valerius Proculus, who was probably Rufinus' son. Although Proculus, like his father, had been prefect under both a legitimate emperor and a usurper, Avianius drew attention instead to Proculus' ancient lineage and devotion to the traditional gods.

VALERIVS PROCVLVS

Cum primis, quos non oneravit gloria patrum,
Ponemus Proculum, vitae morumque decore
Haud unquam indignum magnorum Publicolarum.
Olli semper amor veri et constantia, simplex
Caelicorum cultus. Non illum spernere posses,
Et quamquam reverendus erat, non inde timeres.

Among leading men whom their ancestors' glory did not burden,
we place Proculus, a man by grace in life and manners
in no way unworthy of the great Publicolae.
He had love of truth and constancy; he was sincere
in the worship of the heavenly gods. You could not scorn him,
and though he was entitled to respect, you would not fear him.¹⁹

Thus Avianius credited Proculus with descent from the Valerius Publicola who had been consul in 509 BCE and had celebrated the first triumph of the newly-established Republic. This was the same Valerius to whom Maxentius may have sought to link himself by building on the site of the Valerian cenotaph on the Velian hill.²⁰ According to the stories current in the fourth century, Valerius had gained his cognomen Publicola ("Friend of the People") by sponsoring the law that granted a right of appeal (*provocatio*) against the decisions of magistrates. He was also remembered for having been buried at public expense, and for lowering his consular axe at a popular assembly as a mark of

¹⁹ Symmachus, *Ep.* 1.2.4. *PLRE* 1:747-49, "L. Aradius Valerius Proculus signo Populonium 11," Chastagnol (1962) 96-102, 134, nos. 40, 56. The dates of his prefectures were March 10, 337 – January 13, 338 and December 18, 351 – September 9, 352.

²⁰ See Chapter 2 above.

deference to the people.²¹ Despite his ancient lineage, Proculus was equal to the burden of expectations that weighed on any descendant of such a famous ancestor.²² Avianius added to the aura of antiquity surrounding Proculus by using an archaism (*olli*) and emphasizing his worship of the traditional gods. Religious traditionalism among the Roman aristocracy was expressed through the holding of priesthods, and inscriptions attest that Proculus held three of the four customary senatorial priesthods.²³

Notwithstanding Avianius' characterization of Proculus as a Roman aristocrat of the most traditional type, we know from other sources that he was also a man of his era, and in particular that he linked himself closely with Constantine. In addition to his traditional priesthods, Proculus was also a *pontifex Flavialis*, or priest in the imperial cult; Proculus may have held this position during his tenure as proconsul of the province in the early 330s.²⁴ Normally, the priests of the imperial cult were local notables, such as the C. Matrinius Aurelius Antoninus who became a priest of the Flavian family at the central Italian town of Hispellum.²⁵ That a Roman senator of such exalted nobility as Proculus condescended to hold a provincial priesthod set him apart from many of his Roman peers. So, too, did his service in Constantine's privy council, which by this time entailed residence in Constantinople.²⁶ Constantine rewarded Proculus' conspicuous service by appointing him urban prefect back in Rome, and sanctioning the erection of a

²¹ *Liber de viris illustribus* 15, *provocatio*; Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 14.6.11, "collaticia stipe Valerius humatur ille Publicola" (see also Livy, *Ab urbe condita* 2.16.7); Symmachus, *Rel.* 4.3, consular axe. Plutarch, *Poplicola* 9, triumph, 10, cognomen, 11, *provocatio*, 23, burial.

²² For the pressure to earn the approval of distinguished ancestors, see Pliny, *Ep.* 3.3.6, "quibus imaginibus oneretur," and Flower (1996) 169-70.

²³ For the holding of priesthods by senators in the fourth century, see Chapter 4 above.

²⁴ Aurelius Victor, *Caesares* 40.28, imperial cult in Africa; *ILS* 1:273, no. 1240, *pontifici Flaviali*, with Chastagnol (1962) 100, implying that he may have held this priesthod in Africa.

²⁵ *ILS* 2.1:631, no. 6623.

²⁶ *ILS* 1:273, no. 1240, "comiti iterum ordinis primi intra palatium," which Chastagnol (1962) 100 places sometime between 333 and 337.

statue in his honor in the Forum of Trajan. Both Constantine's letter and Avianius' *elogium* testified to Proculus' noble lineage and personal virtues.²⁷

At the opposite end of the senatorial spectrum from Valerius Proculus was Locrius Verinus. While Proculus was a senator of Roman birth and ancient lineage, Verinus may not have even been of senatorial birth; his name is otherwise unattested among the ranks of known senators. Moreover, Verinus was almost certainly a Christian, for the tombstones of his parents have been found in a Christian cemetery in Etruria.²⁸ None of these details was mentioned in Avianius' epigram; instead, his distinguishing feature was that, unusually for a senator of this period, Verinus had held a military command.

VERINVS

Virtutem, Verine, tuam plus mirer in armis,
Eoos dux Armenios cum caede domares
An magis eloquium, morum vitaeque leporem,
Et—nisi in officiis, quotiens tibi publica curae—
Quod vitam innocuis tenuisti laetus in agris?
Nullum ultra est virtutis opus, nam si esset, haberes.

Am I more to admire your valor in arms, Verinus,
When as general you subdued by slaughter the eastern Armenians,
Or rather your eloquence, the charm of your manners and life,
and—except while in office, when public affairs were your care—
that you lived your life happily in the blameless countryside?
No further need of valor is there: were there, it would be yours.²⁹

Although Verinus' military command actually pointed to his lower origins, Avianius' commemoration of his martial exploits harked back to the senatorial values of the Republic, according to which the highest honor was to be awarded a triumph. Moreover,

²⁷ For this statue, see *AE 1934* (1935) 42, no. 158, with further discussion in Chapter 4 above.

²⁸ Morris (1965) 363-64, followed by Barnes (1995) 143.

²⁹ Symmachus, *Ep.* 1.2.7. *PLRE* 1:951-52, "Locrius Verinus 2," Chastagnol (1962) 74-76, no. 30. His prefecture lasted from September 13, 323 – January 4, 325. The form of Verinus' *nomen* is uncertain, and could have been Lucer(ius) or Locrius: Chastagnol (1962) 74, Barnes (1982) 118.

in describing his civilian virtues, Avianius applied virtually the same phrase to both Verinus and Proculus, referring to the “charm” or “grace” of their “manners and life.” Despite their portrayal in similar terms, these two senators had differed in nearly every respect, including their family status, offices, and religious affiliation. It is unlikely that Proculus’ family would have considered Verinus a worthy nominee to be prefect of Rome. For Avianius, however, it was precisely the fact that Verinus had been prefect that made him worthy of inclusion; he was assimilated to a shared image of aristocratic virtue and tradition.

The rhythm of Verinus’ life—in which public service alternated with periods of *otium*—was a tribute to the degree to which Verinus had absorbed senatorial values. It distinguished him from men such as Petronius Probus, who thirsted for office like a “fish out of water” when not holding one of his four praetorian prefectures; the comparison was more pointed by the inclusion of Probus’ grandfather among Avianius’ *elogia*.³⁰ Unusually among the prefects, Petronius Probianus was described as an Italian (not a Roman), and a close personal friend of the emperor.

PETRONIVS PROBIANVS

Iactet se Fortuna aliis, quos iudice nullo
Lucem ad Romuleam sua sola licentia vexit;
Te, Probiane, pudor, te felix gratia teque
Itala simplicitas morum et sollertia iuuit.
Adsidue quocirca, Augustis notus et hospes,
Praemia magnorum tetulisti dignus honorum.

Let Fortune pride herself on others, whom her whim alone,
no other reason, has brought to splendor in the city of Romulus.
You, Probianus, your modesty aided, your fortunate goodwill,

³⁰ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 27.11.3, Probus; see also Symmachus, *Rel.* 10.3, “ament alii perpetuas potestates,” a barb aimed at Probus or men like him. For Roman aristocrats declining to hold office in favor of a life of private ease, see *Expositio Totius Mundi et Gentium* 55. On the ideology of *otium*, see Matthews (1975) 1-12, and on the principle of alternation in office, Lizzi Testa (2004) 368.

your Italian simplicity of manners, your ingenuity.
Wherefore, constant friend and guest of emperors,
you rightfully carried off the rewards of great honors.³¹

Although Probianus, like Verinus, may not have come from the ranks of the urban aristocracy, he nevertheless possessed the same virtues for which the other prefects were praised. According to Avianius, it was these virtues that had won Probianus the friendship of the emperors and his appointments to high office. Thus while acknowledging his prefects' different backgrounds and paths to prominence, Avianius nevertheless emphasized the shared traits that united all aristocrats in a common culture of virtue.

The fifth of Avianius' prefects was Anicius Julianus, who, like Probianus, is little known in his own right, but came from a family that became a byword for nobility in the fourth century. Again, Avianius offered few details in his *elogia*, choosing instead to praise Julianus in generic terms for his wealth, nobility, high offices, and readiness to do favors.

ANICIVS IVLIANVS

Cuius opes aut nobilitas aut tanta potestas,
Cedenti cui non praeluxerit Amnius unus?
Acer ab ingenio cunctisque adcommodus idem
Hic et carus erat, conferre iuvare paratus;
Nam dives, tum celsus honoribus, et tamen illis
Grandior, aeterno complebat nomine Romam.

Who had wealth or nobility or power so great
as not to pale before Amnius' splendor alone?
Sharp-witted by nature, yet at the same time kind to all,
he was thus beloved, ready with kindness and help.
Though a rich man and towering with his honors, he was still

³¹ Symmachus, *Ep.* 1.2.6. *PLRE* 1:733-34, "Petronius Probianus 3," Chastagnol (1962) 82-84, no. 34. He was prefect from October 8, 329 – April 12, 331. To judge from a dedication to his grandson, Petronius Probus, the family came from Verona (*ILS* 1:281, no. 1265); hence "Italian" here refers to Transpadana: see Chapter 7 n.5.

greater than his rank; he filled Rome with eternal renown.³²

The metaphor of a man whose stature was even greater than his offices was reused by Avianius' son, Aurelius Symmachus, who wrote of his friend Praetextatus that he “always towered above his magistracies.” Praetextatus was also “a man who inspired respect but not fear,” a close echo of Avianius' epigram on Valerius Proculus.³³ The presence of two parallels makes it likely that Symmachus was thinking of his father's *elogia* while composing his remembrance of Praetextatus. The reuse of this phrase points to a typecast language of praise that expressed aristocratic values and could be applied to any deserving senator; it also demonstrates the transmission of aristocratic culture and memory to the next generation.

When compared to what other contemporaries were saying about these aristocrats, Avianius' poems seem even more remarkable for what they omitted to mention. Nowhere was Constantine named, even though all five senators served him as prefect. Moreover, Avianius said virtually nothing about the religious affiliation of these senators, a subject which has preoccupied modern scholars.³⁴ At the time when Avianius composed his *elogia*, Petronius Probus was the most famous descendant of both the Anicii and the Petronii, and was certainly a Christian.³⁵ Although it is impossible to determine whether his ancestors in each family were already Christians, circumstantial evidence suggests that members of these families were converting to Christianity as early

³² Symmachus, *Ep.* 1.2.5. *PLRE* 1:473-74, “Amnius Anicius Iulianus 23,” Chastagnol (1962) 78-80, no. 32. He was prefect from November 13, 326 – September 7, 329.

³³ Symmachus, *Rel.* 12.3, “ille semper magistratibus suis celsior.” Compare “sine terrore reverendus” (Praetextatus) with “et quamquam reverendus erat, non inde timeres” (Proculus).

³⁴ For efforts to classify senators by religious affiliation, with the aim of tracing the progress of Christianization in the aristocracy, see von Haehling (1978), Barnes (1995), and Salzman (2002).

³⁵ *ILS* 1:281, no. 1267, “Anicianae domus culmini,” Ausonius, *Ep.* 9(b) 83-84, ed. Green (1999), “mixto resurgens sanguine / Probianoque atque Anicio.” For his Christian epitaph, see Trout (2001).

as the 320s, when the prefects recalled in Avianius' poems were holding office. The sudden proliferation of Anicii in high office at this period may have been facilitated by a high-profile conversion to Christianity. Writing in the early fifth century, the Christian poet Prudentius believed that a "noble Anicius" had been the first member of the Roman Senate to become a Christian. Most scholars identify this convert as Sextus Anicius Paulinus (cos. 325), who may have been the brother of Anicius Julianus.³⁶ Petronius Probus was also the grandson of Petronius Probianus, Julianus' colleague in the consulship of 322. Probianus may have been a correspondent of Lactantius, a Christian rhetorician from Africa; his daughter was probably Faltonia Betitia Proba, the likely author of a poetic hymn to Christ stitched together from lines of Vergil.³⁷ Although no conclusive evidence exists for the religious affiliation of Anicius Julianus and Petronius Probianus, it seems clear that members of their families were converting to Christianity in the first half of the fourth century, and that these families were identifiably Christian when Avianius was composing his epigrams in 375.³⁸

Avianius' silence about the Christianity of these families is significant. Their adherence to the new faith was no obstacle to being included in his collection of poems.

³⁶ For the theory of a strategic conversion by an Anicius, see Novak (1979) 290-97, followed by Sivan (1993) 151. The convert is identified as Paulinus by Chastagnol (1962) 85 and Novak (1979) 291, citing *CIL* 6.1681. See also Prudentius, *Contra Symmachum* 1.552-53, "fertur enim ante alios generosus Anicius urbis / inlustrasse caput: sic se Roma inclyta iactat."

³⁷ Barnes (1973) 149, followed by Novak (1979) 299 and Sivan (1993) 150-51. The letters between Lactantius and Probianus need not have been on Christian topics, and according to Novak, some concerned the meters used in comedy. For Proba, see *PLRE* 1:732, "Faltonia Betitia Proba 2." Her authorship of the *Cento Vergilianus de laudibus Christi* is reaffirmed by Matthews (1992), and, with the proviso that it may have undergone additions, revisions, or editing at the hands of a later Proba, by Sivan (1993). Shanzer (1986) places the author in the next generation, as the wife of Petronius Probus.

³⁸ Chastagnol (1962) 79 and Novak (1979) 293 identify Julianus as a pagan, but Barnes and Westall (1991) 52-53 identify the famous Anician convert as Anicius Faustus 6 (cos. 298), and assume that all three Anician consuls in the time of Constantine were already Christians. Probianus' Christianity is assumed by Chastagnol (1962) 83 and called "probable" by Barnes (1995) 143. A politically-motivated conversion is supposed by Sivan (1993) 151, while von Haehling (1978) 366 is noncommittal.

Instead, he constructed his image of senatorial identity around timeless aristocratic values such as nobility, eloquence, authority, or simply “virtue” itself. His *elogia* testify to the conservatism of senatorial values, which had changed little since the days of the Scipios five hundred years before; one of them, too, had been mourned because a premature end had robbed him of the chance to display his “honor, reputation, virtue, glory, and talent.”³⁹ These values provided a ready-made language with which senators of the fourth century could think about themselves and their class, without getting caught up in current religious controversies. Although this language was supposedly religiously neutral, it embodied traditions that stretched back to the Republic, and thus to an age that predated both emperors and Christianity. Avianius drew on this ancient cultural repertoire to define the place of senators in his own world of fourth-century Rome. In the end, his son judged the poems to “outshine the *elogia* of the *Hebdomades*,” even though Varro had the advantage of composing his poems about “that senate of triumphs.”⁴⁰ With his labored imitation of Varro, Avianius sought to connect the senators of his own day to their illustrious predecessors of the Republic, and thereby to establish their claim to represent nobility, antiquity, and tradition in Rome.

Even a Christian bishop understood the importance of lineage in senatorial culture. Searching for a metaphor to illustrate the propagation of an Old Testament heretical sect, Filastrius of Brescia compared the Bahalitae (followers of Baal) to noble

³⁹ On the conservatism of these virtues, see Niquet (2000) 151-72 and Trout (2001) 168-69. *ILS* 1:2, no. 4, the virtues of Publius Scipio, son of the elder Africanus: “honos fama virtusque gloria atque ingenium,” with Flower (1996) 167-68.

⁴⁰ Symmachus, *Ep.* 1.4.1, “nam quae in nostrates viros nunc nuper conditis epigrammata, puto hebdomadon elogiis praenitere,” 2, “illum triumphalem senatum.” Avianius, by contrast, hymned the “rutuvam proximae aetatis.” The precise force of this image is impossible to recover, thanks to *rutuva*, a word used by Varro, *Satyræ Menippiae* 488, but of unknown etymology; in antiquity it was glossed as *perturbatio*, but this gloss was more likely a guess based on the context in Varro, and does not seem apt to this passage. Callu (1972-2002) 1:69 offers the colorless translation “décadent,” which at least gives the right sense.

senatorial families such as the Gracchi and Anicii: like these families, the heretics reproduced themselves from one generation to the next, buried their members in a common ancestral tomb, and called themselves by the name of their founder.⁴¹

Damasus and the writing of Christian Rome

The *elogia* of Avianus Symmachus represented an innovative use of an ancient cultural form to return senators to the foreground of Rome's history. Less clear, however, is whether anyone besides his son ever read them. Moreover, this conception of the city's history was not unchallenged: the bishop of Rome was busy with a parallel project, composing epigrams in honor of the city's martyrs. The chief difference was that Damasus inscribed his poems on marble plaques and placed them by the tombs of the martyrs in the churches and catacombs of Rome. The *elogia* of Damasus have been condemned nearly as roundly as those of Avianus, being faulted particularly for their obscurity and repetitiveness.⁴² This disparagement ignores their unmistakable success among contemporaries. Jerome, for example, praised Damasus' "elegant talent for composing verses," and the popularity of the poems encouraged imitators.⁴³ Only twenty years after Damasus' death, the poet Prudentius referred to reading the inscriptions of martyrs in Rome, and drew on the bishop's epigrams in his own poems.⁴⁴ Generations of visitors and pilgrims to Rome's sacred sites continued to transcribe Damasus' poems,

⁴¹ Filastrius, *Diversarum hereseon liber* 24.3, "nam ut est genus aut Graccorum aut Aniciorum et aliorum, ita ex parentibus suis omnis illorum emergerit progenies, ex uno nomine impia generatio ut Bahalitae dicerentur. Itaque mortui, cum in monumentis ponerentur, et progenies illorum itidem sepulta in eo loco hoc nomine a suo populo meruit a posteris nuncupari, ut Bahalitae appellarentur a sua generatione pristina."

⁴² For the epigrams of Damasus, see the standard edition and commentary by Ferrua (1942), with his verdict that "no one who has read his poems will contend that Damasus was really a poet" (p.12), a judgment seconded by Cameron (1985) 136-37; Fontaine (1986) 115-20 is an enthusiastic corrective.

⁴³ Jerome, *De viris illustribus* 103, "elegans in versibus componendis ingenium habuit." Ferrua (1942) 50-53, inscriptions falsely attributed to Damasus, nos. 60-77 in his edition.

⁴⁴ Prudentius, *Liber peristephanon* 11.1-10, and Roberts (1993) 18, 149-52.

which thereby found their way into manuscript collections that today are our best source for the original inscriptions, many of which have been lost or broken.⁴⁵ Despite the greater success of Damasus' *elogia*, the two poetic projects were broadly comparable in many respects. They were conceived on the same scale—eighty epigrams of Avianus as against fifty-nine of Damasus—and in the same meter, the dactylic hexameter characteristic of high poetry. More fundamentally, the epigrams of Avianus and Damasus each provided a distinct narrative of Rome's history which legitimized the prominence of a newly self-assertive community within the city. What Avianus did for the Roman senate by commemorating illustrious urban prefects, Damasus did for the Rome's Christian community by remembering its heroic martyrs.

Having come to power in a disputed election that had degenerated into a bloody massacre of his opponents, Damasus needed to consolidate his position in the Roman Church. One important component of this strategy of centralization was a wide-ranging set of interventions in the Christian landscape, building new churches within and beyond the walls, and gaining control of the extramural cemeteries. It is no surprise that Damasus was especially active at sites associated with the city's martyrs, for the lay supporters of his exiled opponent had already been gathering at the cemeteries to celebrate the stations of the martyrs without clerical officiants.⁴⁶ These gatherings had exposed Damasus' limited authority and threatened to appropriate the legitimacy that flowed from the martyrs. Thus Damasus' decision to reassert control over the martyrs'

⁴⁵ Ferrua (1942) 13-17; on the *syllogae* which proliferated especially in the Carolingian age, see the prefatory remarks by de Rossi (1857-1888) 2:1-2.

⁴⁶ For a summary of Damasus' church-building activity, see Nestori (1986), and for its significance, Curran (2000) 142-47. *Collectio Avellana* 1.12, Ursinus' supporters were celebrating "per coemeteria martyrum stationes sine clericis," with Maier (1995) on the topography of Christian dissent in Rome.

shrines was taken in response to an immediate crisis. “Damasus used the martyrs of the city as a means of unifying the Christians of Rome and fostering a spirit of reconciliation”—under his leadership, of course.⁴⁷ His embrace of the martyrs had far-reaching consequences, for by appropriating the past to support his present situation, he created a new narrative of Rome’s history.

Like the senators praised in Avianius’ epigrams, the martyrs were diverse in their origin and status. Some of them were not Roman by birth, but were claimed for Rome by virtue of their martyrdom there—most importantly, Saints Peter and Paul.⁴⁸ Five of them were Damasus’ predecessors in the episcopal office, while one is otherwise completely unknown; some lacked any name at all, but were just one of a number buried in a collective grave.⁴⁹ Relying on Roman traditions about the martyrs, and contributing information which he himself had learned, Damasus turned these heroes into Roman exemplars.⁵⁰ By displaying his inscriptions publicly, Damasus advertised the virtues of the martyrs, which were meant to inform and inspire the current generation, much as the honorific statues in the Forum of Trajan were thought to inspire emulation in the senators of the present day. Both martyrs and senators were portrayed as receiving rewards that were commensurate with their merits—high offices for Petronius Probianus, eternal life for Sts. Paul and Sixtus.⁵¹ St. Eutychius had suffered so many tortures that Damasus’

⁴⁷ On Damasus’ promotion of Roman Christian traditions, see Curran (2000) 148-57, with quote at 156.

⁴⁸ Damasus, *Epigrammata* 46 (Saturninus of Carthage), 48 (Hermes, a Greek), 20 (Peter and Paul). On the Romanization of these foreign-born martyrs, see Curran (2000) 152-53 and Trout (2003) 522-24; on the use of Peter and Paul in creating a new identity for Christian Rome, Piétri (1961) and Maccarrone (1983).

⁴⁹ Bishops: *Epigrammata* 17 (Sixtus), 18 (Eusebius), 19 (Cornelius), 35 (Hippolytus), and 40 (Marcellus); 21 (Eutychius, otherwise unknown), 43 (LXII martyrs).

⁵⁰ Saxer (1986) 62-68 establishes that Damasus used Roman versions of the *Depositiones episcoporum* and *martyrum*. *Epigrammata* 28.2 (Marcellinus and Peter), “percussor retulit Damaso mihi cum puer essem.”

⁵¹ Symmachus, *Ep.* 1.2.6, “praemia magnorum tetulisti dignus honorum”; Damasus, *Epigrammata* 1.12 (Paul), 17.8 (Sixtus), *praemia vitae*.

staccato list reads like a gruesome variation on a *cursus honorum*: “After the filth of the prison follows novel bodily punishment: they prepare potsherds that sleep might not come; for twelve days food is withheld; he is cast into the pit.” The appeal to emulation was even more forceful: after recording the martyr’s “merit,” Damasus enjoined worshipers to “venerate the tomb” which stood before them.⁵²

The glorification of the martyrs was meant to foster in worshipers an attitude of self-sacrifice, embodied, for example, in sexual renunciation. Damasus’ *elogium* of St. Agnes helped to make her the paradigm of a Roman virgin. She was praised in terms which recalled the virtues of an aristocratic male: her “noble body” endured the flames without impairing her “holy grace of modesty.”⁵³ This melding of aristocratic virtues and Christian purity made St. Agnes an excellent patroness for the growing numbers of Roman aristocratic women who were taking vows of virginity. The promotion of St. Agnes had begun under Damasus’ predecessor, Liberius, who decorated her tomb on the Via Nomentana with marble tablets. Ambrose’s sister Marcellina, had been consecrated as a lifelong virgin by Liberius in a ceremony that probably took place on Agnes’ feast day. Marcellina was the recipient of her brother’s treatise *Concerning Virgins*, in which St. Agnes was invoked as an example. Damasus, too, may have written his own tract on virginity; his own sister, Irene, had devoted herself to Christ “so that her sacred chastity alone might attest her merit as a virgin.”⁵⁴

⁵² Damasus, *Epigrammata* 21.4-7, “carceris inluviem sequitur nova poena per artus / testarum fragmenta parant ne somnus adiret / bis seni transiere dies alimenta negantur / mittitur in barathrum,” 12, “expressit Damasus meritum: venerare sepulchrum.”

⁵³ Symmachus, *Ep.* 1.2.5, Julianus’ nobility, 6, Probianus’ modesty. Damasus, *Epigrammata* 37.5, *nobile corpus*, 9, *sanctum decus pudoris*.

⁵⁴ *Liber pontificalis* 37.7, Liberius and tomb of St. Agnes. McLynn (1994) 60-61, esp. n.32, Marcellina. Agnes’ story is told in Ambrose, *De virginibus* 1.5-9; on Ambrose’s promotion of virginity within high

Damasus' disparate group of martyrs was held together not only by the fact of their common martyrdom at Rome, but also by virtue of their connection to Damasus himself, for the bishop went to great lengths to portray his own role as the keeper of the traditions about the martyrs. He took credit for telling the martyrs' stories, discovering the graves, building the memorials, and enjoining the worshipers to venerate the tombs. Several of the poems close with a request that the martyr look with favor upon his prayers. Damasus' objectives and techniques in commemorating Christian martyrs were similar to Avianius' project on the prefects of Rome. In each case, the author sought to forge a shared Roman identity for a disparate group of individuals, and did so by repetitively attributing the same characteristics and values to each member of the group. Nevertheless, Damasus far surpassed Avianius in his willingness to advertise his own role in this process: his own name occurs in thirty-six of the fifty-nine *elogia*, a proportion which would surely be higher still if more lines survived. Since Damasus' verses were actually inscribed at sites around Rome, the better comparison may be to Volusianus Lampadius, the publicity-hungry prefect of 365 who regularly inscribed his own name as the founder of buildings which he had only restored.⁵⁵

The evident comparisons between the commemorative endeavors of Damasus and Avianius reflect the fact that their projects developed simultaneously, and represented new and competing historical narratives about the city of Rome. While the *elogia* of Avianius encapsulated the values of the city's dominant class, those of Damasus memorialized an alternative history of resistance to the power of the Roman state. These

society, see Brown (1988) 345. Damasus, *Epigrammata* 11.4 (Irene), "virginis ut meritum sanctus pudor ipse probaret"; Ferrua (1942) 7-8, Damasus' tract on virginity.

⁵⁵ Curran (2000) 150-51, Damasus' forceful presence in his poems; on Lampadius, see Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 27.3.7, and Chapter 4 above.

sharply divergent projects drew on the same language to help define their respective groups; both senators and martyrs, for example, could be described as resisting “tyrants.” The invention of “tyrant” as the normal term for a defeated usurper in official discourse can be traced to the immediate aftermath of Constantine’s defeat of Maxentius; the insult was emblazoned, for example, on the arch of Constantine.⁵⁶ Decades later, Avianius praised one of his predecessors, Aradius Rufinus, for curbing the worst impulses of the tyrant Maxentius. Damasus now transferred this idea to two of his own predecessors as bishop who had been exiled by Maxentius. The bishops Marcellus and Eusebius had insisted that Christians who had lapsed during Diocletian’s persecution could only be readmitted to the Church after performing penance. This position led to strife among the Christians of Rome, and to the bishops’ consequent exile “through the beastliness of the tyrant.”⁵⁷ The characterization of Maxentius as a tyrant by both Avianius and Damasus was reflective of more than merely the currency of a political insult. On the one hand, it implied that both a pagan senator and a Christian bishop accepted the legitimacy of Constantine; at the same time, it pointed to a new spirit of competition as different groups within Rome positioned themselves as the most credible opponents of illegitimate emperors.

Although there had been lists of prefects and martyrs before—notably in the Codex of 354—it was not until Damasus and Avianius that these strands were isolated

⁵⁶ For the application of “tyrant” to Maxentius in 312/13, see Grünewald (1990) 64-71 and Barnes (1996) 60-63, who notes that the term may have been chosen deliberately for its connotation of persecuting Christians; Barnes and Neri (1997) agree that the word was more than a technical synonym for usurper, and continued to have ethical connotations. *ILS* 1:156, no. 694, arch.

⁵⁷ For Aradius Rufinus, see above. Damasus, *Epigrammata* 40.6 (Marcellus), “finibus expulsus patriae est feritate tyranni,” 18.6 (Eusebius), “extemplo pariter pulsi feritate tyranni.”

and developed into new expressions of historical consciousness.⁵⁸ In some ways, the significance of their poems lies in what was missing from them: the emperors. When Avianius began composing his poems in 375, no emperor had visited Rome since Constantius II in 357; more strikingly, there had been an emperor present in Rome for only one month in the previous fifty years. The writing of Rome was now catching up to that inescapable fact. It no longer seemed to make sense to measure Roman time by the succession of emperors—certainly not in a city which had such prestigious alternatives available. The new leaders of the city, the senatorial prefects and the Christian bishop, began to think about the city’s history in light of the present state of affairs. In keeping with their newfound public prominence, they created historical narratives that placed themselves at the forefront of their city’s history.

The results of Damasus’ and Avianius’ rewritings of Rome have so much in common that it is natural to wonder whether they were aware of each other’s work. Direct influence of one on the other is unlikely. Avianius composed his poems on the prefects in 375, but they probably did not circulate widely; those of Damasus cannot be dated closely, but it seems likely that at least some of his inscriptions would date from early in his pontificate (366-84). The most likely hypothesis is that Damasus and Avianius were drawing independently from the same ancient Roman method of commemorating honored ancestors. Damasus’ innovation was to adapt this traditional practice to Christian purposes; he “manipulated language that had long been at home in the arena of aristocratic self-definition.” Damasus crafted his poetry to appeal to Rome’s

⁵⁸ The importance of the Codex is discussed in Chapter 3 above.

“Christianizing elite.”⁵⁹ Like the hexameter hymn to Christ composed by the noblewoman Faltonia Betitia Proba, proper appreciation of the poems required knowledge of Vergil. Moreover, Damasus arranged for his poems to be inscribed by a master calligrapher, Furius Dionysius Filocalus, whose beautifully painted lettering transformed the texts into visually impressive monuments in their own right. Filocalus had earlier produced the splendid engravings of the collection of lists now known as the Codex of 354. By working with the master Filocalus, his “admirer and friend,” Damasus sought to give his inscriptions the same elegance which had attracted the senatorial recipient of the Codex, and thereby win for himself a place in Rome’s highest social circles.⁶⁰

Indeed, there is substantial evidence to show that Damasus was able not just to offer a compelling cultural alternative, but also to participate in senatorial society and politics. It was his ability to mobilize support beyond the ecclesiastical community that had secured him the episcopal throne in 366. Following the death of bishop Liberius on September 24, 366, rival factions met in separate churches to elect a successor.⁶¹ The subsequent strife completely overwhelmed the urban prefect’s meager forces: “unable either to punish or to mitigate the violence, and compelled by its great force, Viventius

⁵⁹ On Avianius’ conscious imitation of ancient literary forms, see above. Trout (2003) 521-22, Christianizing elite and Damasus’ manipulation of aristocratic language.

⁶⁰ Filocalus’ role in the carving of Damasus’ inscriptions is discussed by Ferrua (1942) 21-35; he subscribed his own name in *Epigrammata* 18 and 27, in the former calling himself Damasus’ *cultor adque amator*. For his role in producing the *Codex*, see Salzman (1990) 26 with facing illustration at Fig. 1, 44, 202-04. Salzman (p.26) and Cameron (1992) 142 suggest that Filocalus was of relatively high status himself.

⁶¹ The fullest source for these events, albeit written from a pro-Ursinus point of view, is *Collectio Avellana* 1. For a summary, see Piétri (1976) 408-14. Curran (2000) 137-42 emphasizes the topographical dimension of the conflict. A thorough criticism and elucidation of the sources is provided by Lizzi Testa (2004) 144-70, with chronology of events at 169.

withdrew to the suburbs.”⁶² Damasus assembled a gang to break up Ursinus’ election in the basilica of Julius; when Ursinus’ supporters moved to the basilica of Liberius, his forces stormed the church on October 26 and killed over one hundred of Ursinus’ faction.⁶³ As is apparent from the complaints of his enemies, Damasus was far more successful than Ursinus in winning support among both the upper and lower classes of the city. According to a hostile source, Damasus was at the head of a gang that included charioteers, gladiators, and grave-diggers. To engineer such support from the urban plebs required more than just money; Damasus must also have had contacts with the powerful leaders within the urban plebs who could mobilize the factions that controlled the circus and the amphitheater.⁶⁴

Moreover, Damasus enjoyed sufficiently close relations with the political leaders of the city that he could be accused of bribing them in order to procure the exile of Ursinus and two of his deacons.⁶⁵ In subsequent years, whenever Ursinus or his supporters caused trouble, Damasus was able to work with prefects and emperors in order to keep his enemies at bay and strengthen his grip on the Roman Church. He successfully petitioned the emperor to return to him the church in which Ursinus’ faction

⁶² Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 27.3.12, “quae nec corrigere sufficiens Viventius nec mollire, coactus vi magna, secessit in suburbanum.” See also *Collectio Avellana* 1.6, reporting that a pro-Ursinus mob freed seven presbyters who had been detained.

⁶³ Curran (2000) 137-42 places the basilica of Julius across the Tiber and that of Liberius on the Esquiline (S. Maria Maggiore); see, however, Lizzi Testa (2004) 137 n.151, who endorses the view that the basilica of Julius was on the Quirinal near the Forum of Trajan, and should not be confused with the *titulus Iulii* across the Tiber.

⁶⁴ *Collectio Avellana* 1.5, “omnes quadrigarios et imperitam multitudinem pretio concitat,” 7, “invitat arenarios quadrigarios et fossores omnemque clerum,” with Piétri (1986) 35-36. According to Lizzi Testa (2004) 134-36, 146-47, the charge may have some basis, since Damasus was elected in the *titulus Lucinae*, and later built the church of S. Lorenzo in Damaso (also called *in prasino*), both of which were in the area of the Campus Martius where the Greens had their stables.

⁶⁵ *Collectio Avellana* 1.6, “redimens iudicem urbis Viventium et praefectum annonae Iulianum,” with Lizzi Testa (2004) 157, who provides an additional reason for the disparagement of the prefect Viventius: he had earlier upheld the right of Auxentius, accused of Arianism, to retain his see in Milan.

had been butchered, shrewdly pleading the interests of unity and public order. In January 368, the urban prefect Praetextatus requested and received permission from the emperor to banish Ursinus from Rome for the second time.⁶⁶ Praetextatus was doubtless motivated primarily by the imperative to maintain public order, but he may also have been on friendly terms with Damasus: Praetextatus even “used to joke to the blessed pope Damasus, ‘Make me bishop of Rome and I’ll become a Christian at once.’” Although this joke has often been deemed to reflect the greed and opportunism of Rome’s senators, it simply reveals that the bishop was the only Christian figure who “had a standing in the city that made his role somewhat enviable to a senator who already enjoyed much wealth and power.”⁶⁷ Damasus was even accused of wielding “kingly authority”—by his Christian opponents. One of his tactics was to use his chummy relations with powerful senators to harass his opponents with charges of heresy. In other words, Damasus had learned the traditional tactics of senatorial competition and transferred them to the internecine politics of the Roman Church. It did not always work; he suffered a rare reverse when the urban prefect Anicius Auchenius Bassus, himself a Christian, refused to accede to the punishment of a bishop whom Damasus accused of being a heretic.⁶⁸

Damasus’ close contacts with members of the Roman aristocracy extended also to a number of women from elite senatorial families. In a petition presented to the

⁶⁶ *Collectio Avellana* 6, basilica of Liberius/Sicininus returned, 7, second expulsion of Ursinus from Rome. For the chronology of the conflict in the years after the disputed election, see Lizzi Testa (2004) 157-70.

⁶⁷ The joke is reported by Jerome, *Contra Iohannem* 8, “solebat ludens beato papae Damaso dicere: ‘Facite me romanae urbis episcopum, et ero protinus Christianus.’” For a survey of scholars’ comments, see Kahlos (2002) 123 nn.321-322; my interpretation follows Lim (1999) 278.

⁶⁸ *Collectio Avellana* 2.83, “accepta auctoritate regali,” 84-85 Bassus and the Luciferian bishop Ephesius, “et tunc primum erubuit Damasus, quod inventus est iudex, qui solus imperialia scripta piissime interpretans tueretur.” Compare, for example, the use of lawsuits in senatorial feuds: Sogno (2006) 81.

emperors, his enemies reported a famous insult which, they imply, was in general circulation at Rome: Damasus was called the “ear-tickler of matrons.” Although the phrase can be translated, it is difficult to know precisely what it meant; most likely it was calculated to evoke a whiff of scandal without formally lodging the charge. At the least, it suggested that Damasus spent an unseemly amount of time in the company of women.⁶⁹ The sense of impropriety seems to be confirmed by an edict issued in 370, addressed to Damasus, which prohibited clerics and ascetics to visit the homes of widows and virgins, and regulated the circumstances in which they might accept gifts and legacies from such persons. In other words, Roman priests had “joined in the time-honored Roman hunt for bequests from the childless,” the difference being that the priest was a more convincing advocate of chastity and charity.⁷⁰ The arrival of Jerome in the last years of Damasus’ episcopate placed a vigorous and uncompromising new advocate at the head of this group of ascetic noblewomen, but he and his tutees faced strong opposition. The renunciation of marriage had far-reaching effects on aristocratic families. Women who remained unmarried or who refused to remarry endangered the family’s ability to produce heirs to whom to bequeath its fabulous wealth. The intrusion of outsiders into sensitive issues of power, sex, and wealth within families naturally aroused a great deal of opposition among the relatives of ascetics. The simmering tensions surrounding Damasus’ strategy of promoting asceticism in the aristocracy boiled

⁶⁹ *Collectio Avellana* 1.9, “quem in tantum matronae diligebant, ut matronarum auriscalpius diceretur,” with Fontaine (1988). Damasus may have been prosecuted for adultery: *Liber pontificalis* 39.3, with the detailed analysis of Lizzi Testa (2004) 171-86 and chronology at 196-203.

⁷⁰ The edict, *CTh* 16.2.20 (July 30, 370), has been variously interpreted: Piétri (1976) 419 considers that it was issued to curb Damasus, but see the cogent arguments of Lizzi Testa (2004) 109-13, who argues that it was actually issued at Damasus’ request, in order to regulate the acquisition of wealth by lesser ecclesiastics and thereby strengthen his control over his own clerical establishment. Jerome, too, was concerned about clerics and ascetics amassing wealth in this way: *Ep.* 22.28-29; 52.5-6. Brown (1988) 345, legacy-hunting.

over in the wake of his death in December 384. Lacking his patron's political and social skills, and vulnerable to insinuations of scandal for spending so much time with rich women, Jerome was chased from Rome in the summer of 385.⁷¹

The importance of Damasus for the development of the Church in Rome can hardly be overstated. For the first time, a Christian bishop was able to match the senators in all their characteristic forms of preeminence. Culturally, he articulated a new sense of Rome's Christian identity, founded on a new conception of Rome's past which he coupled with aggressive self-promotion. Politically, he worked with prefects and emperors to thwart his opponents, and could mobilize enough supporters in the plebs to threaten public order. Socially, he was on friendly terms with senators of the highest rank, both pagan and Christian, and began to divert a measure of their vast wealth to support Christian causes. Not for nothing has he been called the "first society pope," that is, the first pope to be a significant figure not just in the Roman Church, but in Rome itself. Nor was his significance lost on contemporary observers. After describing the bloody strife of the disputed election in 366, Ammianus Marcellinus reflected on the desperate ambition which drove men to pursue power in Rome at any cost. They were right to do so, he commented ironically, for "once they have gained it, they will be so free from care that they grow rich from the offerings of matrons, process seated in carriages, dress in clothing that draws the eyes of all around, and provide such lavish feasts that

⁷¹ On Jerome's years in Rome, see Kelly (1975) 80-90, and on the development of his ideas, Brown (1988) 366-86. For the tensions within the Christian aristocracy of Rome, see Curran (2000) 269-98.

their banquets surpass the feasts of kings.” His portrait of Damasus was painted in the same colors as his more famous indictments of Rome’s senators.⁷²

Ammianus in Rome

Ammianus’ observations on bishop Damasus and the senators of Rome were made at first hand. He was certainly living in Rome in the 380s, and finished his history around 390. This chronology suggests a strong parallel with Aurelius Victor, who also came to Rome after a long career in the imperial service and even became prefect of the city in the late 380s. Although Ammianus and Victor shared a love for the history and traditions of Rome, both had also been born in the provinces, and thus came to Rome expecting to confirm an image they already had of it; both were disillusioned by what they found. Victor lamented the lapse of ancient traditions such as the Secular Games, while Ammianus criticized all ranks of the city’s population for their trifling pursuits. In another respect, Ammianus was like Themistius, the orator who had accompanied Constantius to Rome in 357, for both were natives of the Greek-speaking eastern provinces of the empire. Unlike either of these men, however, Ammianus had spent his career in the military, and thus had seen both Germans and Persians up close (sometimes, too close). Moreover, as a high-ranking staff officer attached to one of the most important generals in the army, he had also gained insight into the murderous conduct of power politics at the imperial court. With this exceptional range of experience, Ammianus came to Rome to write a history of the empire, but discovered that Rome in

⁷² Cameron (1985) 136, society pope. Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 27.3.14, “neque ego abnuo, ostentationem rerum considerans urbanarum, huius rei cupidus ob impetrandum quod appetunt, omni contentione laterum iurgare debere, cum id adepti, futuri sint ita securi, ut ditentur oblationibus matronarum, procedantque vehiculis insidentes, circumspicte vestiti, epulas curantes profusas, adeo ut eorum convivia regales superent mensas.”

many ways was a world apart. Unlike Victor, who had tried to reconnect Rome with its empire, Ammianus kept them separate. It was both an acknowledgment of Rome's special status, and an admission that Rome was largely irrelevant to the fate of the empire.⁷³

A world apart

In organizing his history, Ammianus confronted a challenge which had not faced his predecessor Tacitus. Not only did he have to cover multiple emperors at once, but because emperors no longer lived in Rome, there was less of a connection between events there and in the provinces. Ammianus therefore had to adjust the conventions of annalistic historiography, which had developed in the Republic, in order to describe the empire of the fourth century. He retained one of the most basic elements: a division between events in Rome and events outside Rome, what had once been expressed by the dichotomy “at home and abroad” (*domi forisque*) or more commonly “at home and on campaign” (*domi militiaeque*). Although Ammianus, perhaps mindful of his provincial origins, avoided calling Rome “home,” his mental map of the empire nonetheless considered Rome to be separate from everything else. The words with which he signals one of his transitions between these separate spheres are significant. “After ranging long and far from affairs of the city, driven by the mass of events abroad, I shall return to a brief account of them, beginning with the prefecture of Olybrius.” Rome and the empire

⁷³ Matthews (1989) 8-13, Ammianus in Rome; Barnes (1998) 59, son of high-ranking military officer. Apart from his self-identification as *miles quondam et Graecus* (31.16.9), his origin is obscure. The question is bound up with the problem of Libanius, *Ep.* 1063 (dated 392), addressed to a Marcellinus of Antioch who was living and writing in Rome, and may or may not be the historian. Matthews (1994) argues that the letter was written to Ammianus, who was perforce from Antioch; Barnes (1998) 54-64 denies that the letter was written to Ammianus, and proposes instead that the historian hailed from Syria or Phoenicia (he also cites bibliography for other, less likely possibilities). On Victor and his *Caesares*, see Chapter 3 above, and on his prefecture of Rome, Chapter 7 below; Themistius at Rome, Chapter 4 above.

were thus separated not only in space, but in time, for Ammianus used a distinct chronography for each. Events in the empire as a whole were organized by the succession of summers and winters, reflecting the rhythm of military campaigns. At Rome, meanwhile, time passed, as it had in the annalistic writers, according to the succession of civilian magistrates in office. In a reflection of the changed circumstances of the fourth century, however, this office was no longer the consulship, now closely associated with the imperial court, but rather the urban prefecture, which had become the most important office in the city of Rome.⁷⁴

The separation enforced between Rome and the outside world also determined how Ammianus dated specific events. Events at Rome were only dated by prefects, never by consuls. Constantius' famous arrival in Rome occurred "in the second prefecture of Orfitus," and the obelisk which he donated to the Circus Maximus was erected "while Orfitus was still administering his second prefecture." By contrast, a specific event of significance to the whole empire was dated by consuls: for example, the tsunami of 365 that devastated the Mediterranean happened on July 21 "in the first consulship of Valentinian with his brother." Otherwise, Ammianus used consular dates for two purposes. First, they specified the years in which military campaigns occurred, usually added as an afterthought to a mention of the season. Second, they were used selectively to lend emphasis and grandeur to his depiction of Julian. The best example of the latter was Ammianus' use of the consular dating formula for 355, which was delayed until the solemn announcement of Julian's elevation to Caesar on November 6 "when the

⁷⁴ *Res gestae* 28.4.1, "diu multumque a negotiis discussus urbanis, adigente cumulo foris gestorum, ad ea strictim exsequenda regrediar, exorsus ab Olybrii praefectura." On Ammianus' narrative structure and his use of summers and winters, see Barnes (1998) 32-42. For the displacement of the consulship by the urban prefecture, see Chapter 3 above.

year had Arbitio and Lollianus for consuls.” The use of this dual chronographic system, according to which time was measured in the outside world by campaigning season and consular dates, and at Rome by urban prefects, indicated that Rome was now effectively isolated from the rest of the empire.⁷⁵

Within the narrow compass of the city of Rome, the succession of prefects in office provided the narrative structure by which Ammianus organized his material on the city of Rome. If these disjointed sections were stitched together, they would constitute a chronicle of events in Rome over a twenty-year period. In all, thirteen prefects were named in the extant books of his history, including a complete series from 353 to 372.⁷⁶ The material in these sections was not organized according to a standard template. It might include information on the circumstances of a prefect’s appointment as well as an evaluation of his virtues and vices in relation to an implicit senatorial standard. For example, Memmius Vitrasius Orfitus was “less imbued with the brilliance of the liberal arts than befitted a noble,” while Avianius Symmachus “deserved to be named among the outstanding exemplars of learning and moderation.”⁷⁷ The most important element of a prefect’s reputation, however, was his ability to manage the food supply and prevent popular unrest. These tasks were closely related, for any shortage tended to lead to riots that might endanger the prefect himself. Orfitus’ first prefecture had been marred by serious riots which broke out amid a shortage of wine; even the anticipation of a shortage

⁷⁵ *Res gestae* 15.8.17, “cum Arbitionem consulem annus haberet et Lollianum,” 16.10.4, “secunda Orfiti praefectura,” 17.4.1, “administrante secundam adhuc Orfito praefecturam,” 26.10.15, “consule Valentiniano primum cum fratre.” On Ammianus’ dating systems, see Barnes (1998) 43-53 and 218-21, who, however, does not discuss dating by prefects.

⁷⁶ Barnes (1998) 113-19 uses the prefects as a sample by which to assess Ammianus’ impartiality; see also pp. 237-40 on the “missing prefects” of the late books.

⁷⁷ *Res gestae* 14.6.1, “splendore liberalium doctrinarum minus quam nobilem decuerat institutus,” 27.3.3, “inter praecipua nominandus exempla doctrinarum atque modestiae.”

of bread was enough to bring Tertullus into grave danger, from which he saved himself only by piteously displaying his own children to the mob. Conversely, prefects whose appointment or conduct was otherwise questionable were reviewed favorably if they secured abundant supplies for the people. Valerius Maximus owed his appointment to nepotism, but under his administration, there was food in abundance, and the complaints of the plebs ceased. During the prefecture of Apronianus, a notorious senator escaped conviction on a charge of sorcery by paying a substantial bribe; nevertheless, Ammianus concluded his remarks by noting that his prefecture was marked by such abundance that there was not even the slightest whisper of complaint about the food supply.⁷⁸

Ammianus' interests in his sections on Rome can be compared to the material in the *Chronicle of the City of Rome*, preserved in the Codex of 354. The *Chronicle*, too, "paid no attention to the Roman empire, but only to the city of Rome."⁷⁹ Just as Ammianus mentioned food shortages under the prefects, the *Chronicle* recorded a "great famine" in the reign of Maxentius. The most consistent element in the entries of the *Chronicle* was the careful listing of the cash donations (*congiaria*) made by each emperor to the citizens of Rome. Such a quantification of the emperor's liberality went back at least to Augustus' *Res Gestae*, which had enumerated his bequests to the soldiers and people. The cash donations, like the subsidized supply of bread and wine, were state benefactions to the urban plebs; by the fourth century, they were also ancient traditions which any ruler of Rome was obliged to uphold. The entries of the *Chronicle* also listed the buildings that had been constructed or rebuilt in each emperor's reign. Likewise,

⁷⁸ *Res gestae* 14.6.1, Orfitus, 19.10, Tertullus, 21.12.24, Maximus, 26.3.6, Apronianus.

⁷⁹ Mommsen (1892) 141, "non respexit imperium Romanum, sed solam urbem Romam." For the *Chronica urbis Romae* and the Codex of 354, see also Chapter 3 above.

although new construction virtually ceased in the fourth century, Ammianus mentioned buildings which had been restored by several prefects. Thus in his account of Avianus Symmachus' prefecture, he also mentioned that prefect's dedication of the *pons Valentiniani*, and credited Claudius Hermogenianus Caesarius with rebuilding the Portico of Good Outcome in the Campus Martius.⁸⁰

The parallels between the *Chronicle* and Ammianus' sections on Rome are significant. These were both histories of Rome as a city, to the exclusion of the rest of the empire. The content of these histories was similar, but the succession of prefects had replaced that of emperors as the organizing principle. In short, the terms in which the history of Rome was conceived and written had changed, reflecting a perception that emperors were now too distant to be useful markers of historical time at Rome. Emperors had been displaced by prefects.

The visibility of senators

The urban prefect's assumption of the emperor's responsibilities at Rome inevitably raised the possibility that a prefect might actually start behaving like an emperor. This is precisely what seems to have occurred in the case of Rufius Volusianus Lampadius, the grandson of the man who had been prefect and consul under Maxentius and Constantine. Lampadius' arrogance began long before he became prefect. When he was giving his praetorian games, which he had produced at great expense and with generous prizes, the crowd had evidently expressed disapproval. "Unable to endure the criticism of the plebs," he reacted by summoning a group of beggars from the Vatican

⁸⁰ *Chronica urbis Romae* s.v. Maxentius, ed. Mommsen (1892) 148, "fames magna fuit." On the form of the entries in the *Chronica*, see Salzman (1990) 53. Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 27.3.3, Avianus' dedication of the bridge, 29.6.19, Claudius' Porticus Boni Eventus.

and ostentatiously presenting them with valuable gifts. His generosity to the Christian beggars was calculated to show that he would rather shower his money on these basest of recipients—for Lampadius was a pagan—than on the crowd in the amphitheater. His pique was the more remarkable because typically it was the emperor whose reaction to outspoken Roman crowds was scrutinized for evidence of arrogance and a kingly disposition. During his visit to Rome in 357, for example, Constantius had impressed onlookers by enduring the shouts of the spectators in the Circus; conversely, Diocletian had famously left the city in disgust in 303 because he had been “unable to endure the independence of the Roman people.” In this perspective, the senator Lampadius evidently had a more exalted sense of his own dignity than even some emperors had exhibited. Ammianus sharpened this comparison with a second anecdote. During his prefecture, Lampadius had busily inscribed his own name on many buildings as their founder, even though they had been built by previous emperors and the prefect had only been responsible for repairs. As Ammianus remarked, the emperor Trajan had done the same thing, inscribing his name on so many buildings that he earned the nickname “wall-ivy.”⁸¹

However shocking Lampadius’ behavior may seem, Ammianus makes it clear that it was unusual only in degree. All prefects of Rome had many opportunities to generate publicity for themselves. The prefect was responsible for maintaining and repairing the city’s buildings and public works, and often took credit for repairs and

⁸¹ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 27.3.6, “plebis nequiens tolerare tumultum,” 7, “per omnia enim civitatis membra, quae diversorum principum exornarunt impensae, nomen proprium inscribebat, non ut veterum instaurator, sed conditor. quo vitio laborasse et Traianus dicitur princeps, unde eum herbam parietinam iocando cognominarunt.” For Constantius, see 16.10.13 and Chapter 4 above, and for Diocletian, see Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 17.2, “libertatem populi Romani ferre non poterat,” and Chapter 2 above.

improvements in dedicatory inscriptions. The potential for such inscriptions to function as advertisements explains why Lampadius went to such lengths to carve his name wherever he could. It is important to set Lampadius' auto-epigraphy in context. The year before, Valentinian and Valens had issued a law, addressed to Lampadius' predecessor as prefect, forbidding him to begin any new building projects and instructing him to repair buildings which had fallen into decay. Although there had been little new construction of secular buildings since the reign of Maxentius, the law of 364 nevertheless officially removed one of the most prestigious ways by which senators had advertised their status. Hence Lampadius sought to exaggerate his interventions in such a way as to suggest that his repairs amounted to new construction. The political significance of public building and the role of building inscriptions in advertising status should not be underestimated. A law of 394 prohibited governors from "courting a reputation for industry" by undertaking new constructions, and warned that any governor who inscribed his own name on a completed work built at public expense without mentioning that of the emperor was guilty of treason.⁸²

The ambition which made emperors so wary was not limited to prefects; all senators at Rome, according to Ammianus, were obsessed with their public image and used a variety of means to compete with one another for status. Honorific statues were another means by which senators achieved status and left an imprint on public space. Again, prefects enjoyed a certain advantage, for their office entitled them to set up dedications to emperors, invariably accompanied by inscriptions in which they claimed

⁸² For summaries of the urban prefect's role in repairing public buildings, see Chastagnol (1960) 353-57 and Ward-Perkins (1984) 38-48. *CTh* 15.1.11 (364), 15.1.31 (394), "industriæ captare famam." On the politics of inscribing or withholding one's name, see also Chapter 4 above.

credit for their role. Perhaps more striking, however, was the sudden increase in the number of statues to senators in their own right. Under the Principate, relatively few senators had received statues in public spaces, and these were invariably close associates of the imperial house. Statues of senators were largely confined to their own private houses, where they would not compete with the emperor's exclusive right to public honor. Thus it has been calculated that, in the first three centuries CE, eighty-eight percent of surviving statue-bases from honorific dedications to senators were found in private contexts, as against only twelve percent in public spaces. By contrast, the proportion of public dedications among the surviving bases was more than three times higher in the late imperial period. The emperor's withdrawal from Rome in the fourth century had led to a relaxation of the imperial grip on public space, and opened up a new dimension for aristocratic competition. Observing this phenomenon, Ammianus remarked acerbically that some senators "burn with desire for statues, calculating that they may thereby be commended to eternity."⁸³

The accelerating pace of aristocratic competitive self-display was most evident in the spiraling costs of the games. So long as emperors had lived in Rome, they had enjoyed a monopoly on the visibility that came with presiding over spectacles of public entertainment. In the fourth century, emperors continued to provide games in absentia.⁸⁴ Increasingly, however, "the late Roman senatorial aristocracy filled the vacuum in civic

⁸³ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 14.6.8, "quidam aeternitati se commendari posse per statuas aestimantes, eas ardentem affectant." Statue-bases: for the Principate, see Eck (1992), and for late antiquity, Weisweiler (2007) 44, who notes that "Roman public space was no longer the almost exclusive preserve of imperial self-representation, but again became the site in which Roman aristocrats competitively displayed their standing in society." For dedications by prefects to emperors, see Chapter 3 above, and for statues of senators in the Forum of Trajan, Chapter 4 above.

⁸⁴ See, for example, Symmachus, *Rel.* 6.2, urging the emperors to honor a promise to supply circus and theatrical entertainments: "curules ac scaenicas voluptates circo et Pompeianae caveae suggeratis." See also Chapter 7 below.

patronage created by the withdrawal of the imperial court.” Beginning in the fourth century, lower-ranking magistrates (quaestors and praetors) were required to sponsor games. This change brought both burdens and opportunities. On the one hand, senators had to shoulder some of the emperor’s duties (and expenses) in Rome; on the other, they could now openly compete with one another for public status in a way that had not been possible since the end of the Republic. The corpus of gladiatorial inscriptions from Rome confirms the new importance of senatorial games in the fourth century: before this time, only imperial games had been recorded, but now exhibitions sponsored by senators became the most common type. While senators of lesser means might struggle to meet the expense of providing games, the wealthiest senators, such as Lampadius, competed with one another to sponsor the most lavish spectacles. Much as they had done in the Republic, they used these occasions to seek fame and draw attention to the family’s political ambitions. Symmachus, for example, procured Saxon gladiators for his son’s quaestorian games in 393, and spent 2000 pounds of gold on wild beasts for Memmius’ praetorian games in 401.⁸⁵

Finally, and one presumes most commonly, senators used their public appearances as a means of conspicuous display. Quite literally, senators paraded themselves through the streets. The key element of this performance was the marshalling of an enormous retinue of slaves, the point being to show off the wealth and grandeur of the household. “Certain men hasten without fear of danger through the broad streets of

⁸⁵ On the substitution of senatorial for imperial sponsorship of the games, see Lim (1999) 272; for competition among Republican senators, Wiedemann (1992) 6. The burdens are emphasized by Jones (1964a) 537-42; financial hardship is revealed by Symmachus, *Rel.* 8 and *Orat.* 8, and by the laws of *CTh* 6.4. Gladiatorial inscriptions: Sabbatini Tumolesi (1988) 130. Sogno (2006) 77-78, Memmius’ quaestorian games, 84, praetorian games, with the cost given by Olympiodorus, *Fr.* 41.2 (Blockley).

the city and over the upturned paving-stones as though they were driving post-horses with hoofs of fire, so to speak, dragging behind them columns of slaves like bands of brigands.” Ammianus was so pleased with this image that he reused it. A certain notorious senator, after escaping conviction by paying a large bribe, continued to “ride over the pavements mounted on a war steed, dragging behind him many columns of slaves, desiring, by a novel kind of distinction, to attract special attention to himself.” It was essential to have not just a carriage, but one that was “higher than usual.” Symmachus used one of his reports to complain about the type of carriage assigned to him as prefect, and pointed out that people’s estimation of the prefecture would be affected by their opinion of his carriage. Likewise, senators took care to show off their “ostentatious finery of apparel,” and would even take care to be seen bringing extra clothes to the baths.⁸⁶

The obsession with clothes and carriages extended also to the bishop of Rome. Commenting on the desperation with which men sought this position, Ammianus identified a basic difference between Rome and the provinces.

These men might be truly blessed, if they would disregard the greatness of the city behind which they hide their faults, and live after the manner of some provincial bishops, whose moderation in food and drink, plain apparel also, and gaze fixed upon the earth, commend them to the eternal divinity and to his true servants as pure and reverent men.

Competition was stiffer in Rome, thanks in large part to the presence of the senators, who set the standard for conspicuous display. The senators were themselves seeking to

⁸⁶ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 14.6.9, “in carruchis solito altioribus et ambitioso vestium cultu ponentes,” 16, “quidam per ampla spatia urbis subversasque silices, sine periculi metu, properantes equos velut publicos, ignites quod dicitur calcibus agitant, familiarium agmina tamquam praedatorious globos post terga trahentes,” 26.3.5, “equo phalerato insidens discurrensque per silices, multa post se nunc usque trahit agmina servulorum, per novum quoddam insigne, curiosius spectari affectans,” 28.4.19, extra clothes at baths. For the prefect’s carriage, see Symmachus, *Rel.* 4 and Chapter 7 below.

imitate the emperors. They insisted on excessive ceremonials of greeting, including even the kissing of hands and knees, a gesture that was probably modeled on court protocols. Senatorial households included a “throng of eunuchs,” another hint that they had been organized in imitation of the imperial court. Ammianus compared the marshaling of senatorial retinues to that of an army; their pomp and pageantry would have reminded spectators at Rome of the dazzling ceremonies of imperial *adventus*.⁸⁷

It is difficult to know precisely how to interpret Ammianus’ caustic criticism of the manners of the senate and people of Rome. Certainly his portrayals were self-consciously rhetorical and owe something to the influence of Juvenalian satire. Whatever the degree of his literary embellishment, however, it seems safe to conclude that his caricature of Rome’s senators reflected a basic reality that any newcomer quickly grasped: the public spaces of the city were one giant, continuous theater in which senators played the leading roles, engaging in competitive display and vying with one another for public status. This had not been the case in Rome since the late Republic, for emperors had viewed such status competition as potentially dangerous to themselves. Only the withdrawal of the imperial court made open competition possible again. Yet for all their grandeur, Ammianus believed that senators at Rome labored under the delusion of their own self-importance. An officer who had seen action in Gaul and Persia could not but feel contempt for the parochial self-absorption of aristocrats who likened their leisurely progress from one Italian villa to another to the campaigns of Alexander.

⁸⁷ *Res gestae* 14.6.17, marshaling of retinue and eunuchs, 27.3.15, “qui esse poterant beati re vera, si magnitudine urbis despecta quam vitiis opponunt, ad imitationem antistitum quorundam provincialium viverent, quos tenuitas edendi potandique parcissime, vilitas etiam indumentorum, et supercilia humum spectantia, perpetuo numini verisque eius cultoribus, ut puros commendant et verecundos,” 28.4.10, greetings.

Cocooned within the Aurelian walls, senators had little understanding of the military problems confronting the rest of the empire. That is probably the reason for Ammianus' apparently deliberate decision to omit any mention of the senators' involvement in the tour of Rome's buildings given to Constantius in 357. Their place was taken by a Persian nobleman turned Roman cavalry officer. In the end, these two military princes shared a global perspective in which the city of Rome no longer played a significant role.⁸⁸

The parochialism of the Romans was especially conspicuous in their interactions with foreigners. Ammianus complained, with more than a hint of personal grievance, that the senators did not welcome foreigners as they had in the past, and that "the puffed-up vanity of certain men regards anything born outside the sacred boundary of the city as worthless." Senators' disdain for outsiders had especially baneful consequences when it led to the rejection of learned men. Ammianus was probably thinking of himself—he was probably one of those foreign-born practitioners of the liberal arts who had been temporarily expelled from the city during a grain shortage in 383/4—but he also may have been thinking of Julian, another soldier and Greek who had been rejected at Rome. After Julian had launched his rebellion, he had written to the senate at Rome to justify his course of action. In his letter, he had accused Constantius of various faults, and had blamed Constantine for disturbing ancient laws and established customs. Despite its invocation of tradition, the senators had rejected Julian's appeal with unanimous indignation. Rome's rejection of Julian was deeply problematic for Ammianus, who thought the two belonged together. Reflecting on Julian's burial at Tarsus, Ammianus

⁸⁸ For a listing of the thematic parallels between Ammianus and Juvenal, see Rees (1999). Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 28.4.18, senators equaling the marches of Alexander. The tour given to Constantius in 357 is discussed at length in Chapter 4 above.

declared that, “his remains and ashes ... in order to perpetuate the glory of his noble deeds, ought to be washed by the Tiber, which cuts through the eternal city and flows by the memorials left by the deified emperors of old.” Julian’s non-burial in Rome reflected more than just the city’s diminished importance; it was also an indictment of the senators’ failure to recognize him as the best hope for restoring the empire and its glorious traditions. In his *Book on the Emperors*, Aurelius Victor had assumed that the senate was still the living embodiment of Roman traditions, and that the empire’s decline was the fault of uneducated emperors who no longer knew these traditions. By contrast, Ammianus sharply distinguished the idea of Rome, for which he had great reverence, from the degenerate senators he encountered there in his own day. Contrary to what Juvenal had claimed, foreign-born, Greek-speaking provincials such as Ammianus and Julian might be more Roman than the Romans.⁸⁹

The fame of his two satirical portrayals of senators at Rome has distracted attention from the degree to which Ammianus grasped the essential paradox of Rome and its senators in the fourth century. On the one hand, the structure of his narrative affirmed the importance of the urban prefect as the chief executive of the city, and his colorful descriptions made clear that the urban aristocracy was enjoying a glittering revival. To this extent, his narrative corroborates the emerging role of the prefect in the Codex of 354 and the celebration of individual prefects in the epigrams of Avianus Symmachus. On the other, Ammianus’ firm separation in narrative space and time between affairs in

⁸⁹ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 14.6.19, expulsion of foreigners, with Matthews (1989) 13; 14.6.22, “nunc vero inanes flatus quorundam vile esse quicquid extra urbis pomerium nascitur aestimant.” For Julian’s letter to the senate, see 21.10.7-8, and Chapter 3 above. Julian’s burial at Tarsus (his body was later moved to Constantinople): 25.10.5, “cuius suprema et cineres, siqui tunc iuste consuleret, non CydnuS videre deberet, quamvis gratissimus amnis et liquidus, sed ad perpetuandam gloriam recte factorum praeterlambere Tiberis, intersecans urbem aeternam divorumque veterum monumenta praestringens.”

Rome and events in the rest of the empire showed how isolated the capital had become; its new leaders—both the senators and the rival Christian factions—were hopelessly self-absorbed and ignorant of the problems facing the empire.

Chapter 6

Symmachus in Trier

The insularity which Ammianus observed at Rome was a direct consequence of the removal of the emperor and his court to new centers in the provinces. The primary reason for this shift was “the necessity of the emperor being closer to the main military areas than Rome was.” Rome’s strategic inconvenience had been first glimpsed in the second century, when Marcus Aurelius spent much of his reign fighting on the Danube, and had been wholly revealed in the third, when emperors were regularly absent from Rome. With emperors increasingly on the move, new cities came to be used as imperial centers, but it was not until the Tetrarchic age that emperors began to convert these cities into quasi-permanent residences by equipping them with monumental buildings, often including a palace-circus complex built in imitation of the palace and Circus Maximus in Rome. The beneficiaries of this policy were cities such as Milan, Aquileia, Sirmium, Thessalonica, Nicomedia, Antioch, and, most spectacularly, Constantinople, all lying on the main land route connecting the western, central, and eastern frontiers of the empire. With the appropriate buildings as a backdrop, emperors could play the part without ever having to go to Rome.¹

¹ Millar (1977) 40-57, quote at p.45; Millar emphasizes that these new “capitals” had already emerged as convenient headquarters for itinerant emperors in the early empire.

The most northerly of these new centers was Trier, which in the fourth century became the normal seat of administration for the provinces of Britain, Gaul, and Spain. From the beginning, Trier's importance stemmed from its location "near yet sheltered" from the Rhine frontier. The site was located at an important crossing of the Moselle River, and probably began life as a fort laid out by Agrippa's officers to protect the new road he was building from Lyon to the Rhineland. In an early preview of the role it would play in the fourth century, the new tribal center grew by the mid-first century into an important supply point for the armies operating along the Rhine. This proximity to the field army turned Trier into a battleground during the Roman civil wars of 69-70. Trier supported the revolt of Julius Civilis and Treviran commanders were among the last holdouts against the Roman forces sent to subdue the rebels, suffering a defeat later remembered as comparable to Cannae. Some of these leaders had even dreamed of replacing the Roman empire altogether with a new Gallic empire. The early history of Trier thus showed its potential both to serve Rome and to rival it.²

Trier's prosperity reached new heights in the fourth century, when it achieved a political prominence to match its strategic importance, which, as it had in the early empire, depended on its proximity to the German frontier. "Though close to the Rhine, she reposes untroubled as though in the embrace of enveloping peace, because she feeds, because she clothes and arms the forces of the empire." Ausonius was probably referring to the imperial factories producing shields, artillery, woolens, and clothing embroidered in gold and silver, the last perhaps to serve the officers of the imperial court. The martial character of the city was stressed in a depiction in the Codex of 354 in which the city was

² For an overview of Trier's founding and subsequent history, see Wightman (1970) 35-70, quote at p.58. Tacitus, *Historiae* 4.59, "iuravere qui aderant pro imperio Galliarum," Ausonius, *Mosella* 3, Cannae.

personified as an armed Amazon holding a submissive barbarian captive by the hair. Trier was one of the first cities to benefit from the emperors' withdrawal from Rome, becoming the regular residence of Maximian when he was not in northern Italy. As early as 289, one orator even imagined that Rome might feel envious of Trier, where Maximian was celebrating the anniversary of Rome's founding. By marking the occasion with the customary magnificence owed to the "mistress of nations," Maximian conferred on Trier a "likeness of [Rome's] majesty."³

After Maximian raised Constantius I to the position of Caesar (junior emperor), Constantius used Trier as his base for defending the Rhine and regaining control of Britain, which had fallen under the control of a rebellious Roman officer. The city then became the principal residence of Constantine for the first ten years of his reign. It was during the years of Constantius and Constantine that Trier was provided with the monumental buildings befitting an imperial residence. These included a new set of imperial baths, a large basilica-shaped audience hall, and a revamped "circus maximus." According to an orator who spoke at Trier in 310, the new infrastructure was on a par with Rome's:

I see a "circus maximus" rivaling, in my opinion, the one at Rome; I see basilicas and a forum, and palatial buildings and a seat of justice that rise to such a height that they promise to be worthy of the stars and the sky, their neighbors.⁴

³ Ausonius, *Ordo urbium nobilium* 28-34, "proxima Rheno / pacis ut in mediae gremio segura quiescit, / imperii vires quod alit, quod vestit et armat," with Wightman (1970) 67, factories. Demandt and Engemann (2007) 312, illustration of Trier as Amazon. *Panegyrici latini* 10(2).14.3, "interim tamen te, gentium domina, quoniam hunc optatissimum principem in Gallis suis retinet ratio rei publicae, quaesumus, si fieri potest, ne huic invidias civitati, cui nunc ille similitudinem maiestatis tuae confert natalem tuum diem celebrando in ea consuetudine magnificentiae tibi debitae," with Nixon and Rodgers (1994) 42-3 on the date and setting of the speech.

⁴ *Panegyrici latini* 6(7).22.5, "video circum maximum aemulum, credo, Romano, video basilicas et forum, opera regia sedemque iustitiae in tantam altitudinem suscitari ut se sideribus et caelo digna et vicina

Another orator praised Constantine for holding a triumph at Trier, in which “he uses the slaughter of enemies for the pleasure of us all, and lengthens the procession for the games from the survivors of the massacre of the barbarians.” In other words, Constantine celebrated his victory over Frankish tribes by throwing a great many captives to the beasts in the amphitheater. Traditionally, triumphal games ought to have been held at Rome; since Constantine had just taken control of Rome some months before, he could have staged the games there, a gesture which would have been interpreted as a conciliatory sign of favor to the city which had backed his rival Maxentius. Instead, Constantine celebrated his “triumph”—a ceremony which was supposed to be unique to Rome—in Trier.⁵

When Constantine began to establish his sons with their own courts, Trier became the residence first of Crispus, then of Constantine II, but the period of its greatest influence began with the reign of Valentinian I. For most of the years between 367 and 387, it was the principal residence of Valentinian, his son Gratian, and the usurper Magnus Maximus; by contrast, in those same years none of these emperors, or any other, set foot in Rome. It was thus in these two decades that Trier was most aptly called the “distinguished residence of emperors.” The emperor’s presence in Trier helped set the city apart from its competitors. Speaking in the latter half of 379, Ausonius proudly claimed that Gratian’s imminent return to Trier would make the city’s celebration of an

promittant,” with Nixon and Rodgers (1994) 212-4 on the date and place of delivery of this speech. For a survey of fourth-century construction at Trier, see Wightman (1970) 98-123.

⁵ *Panegyrici latini* 12(9).23.3, “nam quid hoc triumpho pulchrius, quo caedibus hostium utitur etiam ad nostrum omnium voluptatem, et pompam munerum de reliquiis barbaricae cladis exaggerat? Tantam captivorum multitudinem bestiis obicit.” On Rome as the proper location for triumphs, see below; on the favor which emperors could win by providing games at Rome, see Chapter 7 below.

imperial festival superior to the celebrations in Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, Carthage, and Alexandria. This claim was technically correct, since none of those cities was hosting an emperor at that time. More broadly, it elevated Trier to preeminence among the most important cities of the empire, including the three cities with which it had been grouped in the illustrations of the Codex of 354—Rome, Constantinople, and Alexandria. In light of Trier’s newfound prominence, it is scarcely surprising to find that a local notable could refer to his city as “Belgian Rome.” While Rome had long been the standard against which other cities were measured, the idea that Rome could be replicated in the provinces was an invention of the fourth century.⁶

The permanent establishment of the imperial court in new capitals far from Rome forced both the emperor and the senators at Rome to find ways of overcoming the distance that now intervened between them. Senators’ fortunes depended on cultivating contacts at court, where they now had to compete for influence with aristocrats from the provinces. Emperors still valued the legitimacy conferred by the support of the senate and people of Rome. In order to keep up a symbolic presence there, emperors continued to sponsor building projects in Rome; senators, meanwhile, periodically served on embassies to the imperial court (Chapter 6). Although prefects of Rome did not visit the court in person, they nevertheless sent frequent written reports in which they pressed the

⁶ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 15.11.9, *domicilium principum clarum*. For the courts of Valentinian and Gratian at Trier, see Matthews (1975) 32-87. Ausonius, *Gratiarum actio* 7.34, “et Roma de more et Constantinopolis de imitatione <et> Antiochia pro luxu et Carthago discincta et donum fluminis Alexandria, sed Treveri principis beneficio et mox cum ipso auctore beneficii,” with Green (1991) 537, date of Ausonius’ speech; Seeck (1919) 255-57, Theodosius’ movements in 379-80 (he was using Thessalonica as the base for his Gothic campaigns). Belgian Rome: Vollmer and Rubenbauer (1926), discussing an epitaph found at Trier, most likely from the fourth century: “Belgica Roma mei, non mea, digna fuit” (I owe this reference to R. Van Dam).

emperor to play his traditional role as the benefactor of the Roman plebs by providing the people with food and entertainment (Chapter 7).

Building bridges

Since Roman emperors visited Rome so rarely in the fourth century, their presence in the city had to be established by other means. They could make their views known to the senate by dispatching letters to be read aloud in the house, either by the urban prefect or by a special designee. They could reach a wider audience with their laws, which would likewise be read aloud and posted in public places. For ordinary citizens, however, an emperor's physical works, i.e. his sponsorship of buildings, monuments, and infrastructure, was one of the clearest expressions of his concern for the city of Rome. Although this principle applied to all emperors, it was especially appropriate in the case of Valentinian I, who had a talent for engineering but had never been to Rome.⁷

Soon after Valentinian came to power in spring 364, he began to promote a policy of pragmatism in public building projects. Thus he preferred to build "structures of practical value to the masses," and directed that old works be finished or repaired before new ones were begun. Barely three months after his accession, Valentinian issued a law addressed to Avianus Symmachus, then serving as prefect of Rome, which granted permission to restore ruined buildings but warned that no official was to construct any new building without an express directive from the emperors. The emperor practiced

⁷ For the reading of imperial messages in the senate, see Chastagnol (1960) 68, prefect, and Symmachus, *Ep.* 10.2.1, special designee: "Scio amore factum, quo summates viros plerumque dignamini, ut sacrae orationi vestrae lector adhiberer." For building projects as establishing an emperor's symbolic presence in Rome, see Humphries (2003) 28.

what he preached: soon after he issued this law, he rebuilt thirteen bridges along the Tiber between Ostia and Rome.⁸

The repair and (re)building of bridges proved to be more than just a utilitarian activity; it also provided a symbolic language of communication between Valentinian and the city of Rome. Recognizing Valentinian's predilection for bridges, the senate chose a bridge as the vehicle for its most visible expression of support during his reign. In accordance with Valentinian's injunction to concentrate on repairs to dilapidated structures, this bridge was not a new construction, but rather a "magnificent" rebuilding of a bridge that had probably been built in the 270s at the same time as the city walls. By decree of the senate and people of Rome, the bridge was renamed for Valentinian and dedicated to him and to his brother Valens, the emperor in the eastern provinces, "because of the foresight which is always shared between him and his renowned brother." Since Valentinian could not be present in person, he delegated the honor of cutting the ribbon on the new bridge to none other than Avianius Symmachus, the same man who had served as his first prefect of Rome a few years before.⁹

⁸ Valentinian's directive against new building: *CTh* 15.1.11 (May 364); see also 15.1.15-7 (all from 365). For his repairs to the Tiber bridges, dated to April 365 – February 366, see Floriani Squarciapino (1973-4) = *AE* 1975 (1978) 42, no.134: "albei Tiberis ripas et pontes tredecim, quos dissimulatio longa corruperat et publica dispendia requirebant, dd(omini) nn(ostri) Valentinianus et Valens triumff(atores) semper Augg(usti) constitui fierique iusserunt." Valentinian's concern for the masses: Alföldi (1952) 64-5 and Lenski (2002) 277-8, quote at p.278; 393-401, catalogue of imperially-sponsored building projects. The dedicatory inscriptions of his bridges in Rome explicitly drew attention to their usefulness: *ILS* 1:170, no. 769, "ex utilitate urbis aeternae"; 171, no. 772, "in usum senatus populi que Romani."

⁹ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 27.3.3, *ambitioso ponte*. Avianius' role in the dedication is attested both by Ammianus and by *ILS* 1:170, no. 769, "ob providentiam, quae illi semper cum inclyto fratre communis est," "dedicandi operis honore delato iudicio princip(um) maximor(um) L(ucio) Aur(elio) Aviano Symmacho v(iro) c(larissimo) ex praefectis urbi." For an excellent photograph of this inscription, see Alföldy (2000a) 460-1, no. 61, who argues from the absence of Gratian's name that it should be dated to before August 24, 367. This inscription was formally a dedication to Valens, but there was doubtless a matching one to Valentinian.

According to Galliazzo (1995) 2:7-10 and Dey (2006) 324-8, the *pons Valentiniani* represented the rebuilding of the structure previously called the *pons Aureli/Antonini*, and was distinct from the *pons*

The inauguration of Valentinian's bridge was evidently held back to coincide with the emperor's five-year anniversary festivities (*quinquennalia*). Indeed, the parapets of the bridge carried inscriptions celebrating the fifth and anticipating the tenth anniversaries of Valentinian and Valens. The form of the dedication as a whole was thus the same as that of the arch of Constantine; in each case, the monument was voted to the emperor by decree of the senate in the name of the senate and people of Rome. By analogy, the bridge ought to have been dedicated on the first day of the anniversary year, on the date on which the emperor had acceded to the throne. Thus in all probability Avianus Symmachus presided over the ceremony of inauguration on February 26, 368, the first day of Valentinian's fifth year in power. Yet another set of inscriptions, carved on bases that supported bronze statues of the goddess Victory, recorded dedications by the senate and people of Rome "to imperial Victory, the companion of our lords and princes." The bridge was thus a complex symbolic monument that expressed the senate's loyalty and gratitude to the regime as well as its confident expectation of further victories in the next five years.¹⁰

Although the beginning of Valentinian's fifth anniversary year had already been marked by the inauguration of the bridge, the end of the anniversary year was also observed with appropriate ceremony. On such occasions, the senate was expected to

Agrippae, which stood about 140m upstream; another view holds that the *pons Agrippae* was not a separate structure, but the earliest precursor on the site downstream: see Coarelli (1999). All agree that Valentinian's bridge was located at the site of the current Ponte Sisto.

¹⁰ The assemblage of inscriptions from Valentinian's bridge is printed at *CIL* 6.31402-12, with a reconstruction of their placement on the bridge in Bertinetti (2000). They include 31403-4, "Victoriae Augustae comiti dominorum principum(que) nostror(um) s(enatus) p(opulus)q(ue) R(omanus)," with photographs at Alföldy (2000b); for the statues of Victory, see Cioffarelli (2000). For the anniversary, see 31405, "Votis decennialibus domini nostri Fl(avii) Valentiniani Max(imi) victoris ac triumf(atoris) semper Augusti." On the date of inauguration, see Chastagnol (1987b), especially p.258: "on ait retardé l'inauguration du pont par l'ancien préfet pour qu'elle coïncide avec la fête et en constitue à Rome l'un des épisodes principaux en l'absence des empereurs." Arch of Constantine: see Chapter 2 above.

deliver its offering of gold, a special payment levied on senators at Rome during anniversary years. The organization of such payments required a good deal of advance planning, not only to collect the funds, but also to provide for their conveyance to court. In this case, the senate voted to send an official embassy to Valentinian's court at Trier, and selected as its leader Quintus Aurelius Symmachus, the son of Avianus Symmachus. Thus Valentinian's fifth year began with the inauguration by the elder Symmachus of the bridge in Rome, and ended with the younger Symmachus' journey to Trier, where he delivered a speech in praise of Valentinian on February 25, 369. The younger Symmachus was doubtless an obvious choice to lead this embassy: not only was he a talented orator, but he was the son of the man whom the emperor had favored with the honor of inaugurating his new bridge in Rome.¹¹

In leading the embassy to Trier, Symmachus followed in the footsteps of his father, who had been an ambassador to the imperial court many times himself. Avianus knew by experience that serving on an embassy could help secure future appointments to higher office. On their way back to Rome after visiting Constantius, Avianus and another high-ranking senator, Valerius Maximus, had stopped to visit Julian at Naissus in the summer of 361. Ironically, these two senators had initially been dispatched to Constantius to assure him of the senate's loyalty, but their absence from Rome may have helped them win the favor of Julian, for they were not in Rome when the senate rejected Julian's letter of complaint against Constantius. In any case, Julian promptly appointed

¹¹ For a behind-the-scenes look at the preparation (and consternation) occasioned by the levy of the *aurum oblativum*, see Symmachus, *Ep.* 2.57 and *Rel.* 13, concerning the payment made to Valentinian II at the beginning of his decennial year in November 384. For another example of a panegyric delivered in the context of a year-end anniversary ceremony, see Nixon (1980). For detailed discussion of the dates of Symmachus' three panegyrics in Trier, see below.

Maximus to be prefect of Rome, an honor which Avianius also gained less than three years later. Quite apart from the prospect of promoting one's career, service on embassies to court was a mark of distinction in itself. Among Avianius' many claims to fame, "he had performed many embassies to the divine emperors in accordance with the wishes of the most distinguished senate." Another senator was similarly praised for having been "seven times an ambassador of the most distinguished senate." The appearance of inscriptions honoring senators at Rome for their service on embassies to court was an innovation of the fourth century. This type of service had long been familiar to local notables from cities in the provinces, but in the fourth century, it was Rome itself that was acting like a provincial city.¹²

While serving on an embassy might help already-established senators secure plum appointments, for young senators, it was an opportunity to launch one's career and become known at court. Symmachus was not yet thirty when he was selected by the senate to be its representative at the ceremonies marking the end of Valentinian's fifth year in power in February 369. Although an embassy on the occasion of an imperial anniversary was not unusual, and the duties expected of him were fairly predictable, Symmachus' visit to Trier did not fit the normal pattern of senatorial embassies, for he stayed at court for a whole year. His intent, in other words, was not to run an errand, but to have a "study abroad" experience. His extended sojourn at court gave him ample opportunity to meet and cultivate a number of court officials with whom he would

¹² Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 21.10.7, Julian's letter, 21.12.24, embassy of Avianius and Maximus; Ehling (2001) probably overestimates the degree to which Julian's appointments to high office were part of a concerted plan to restore paganism. *ILS* 1:277, no. 1257 (Avianius), "multis legationibus pro amplissimi ordinis desiderii apud divos principes functo," no. 1258 (Praetextatus), "legato amplissimi ordinis septies." On the embassies sent by provincial communities, see Millar (1977) 375-85; on senatorial embassies in the fourth century, Sogno (2006) 3-5.

maintain an active correspondence after he returned to Rome. One of these new acquaintances was Ausonius of Bordeaux, a Gallic teacher of rhetoric who was then tutor to the young emperor Gratian. Symmachus also had the opportunity to accompany the emperor on his expedition to the Rhine in summer 369, a memory he recalled later in a letter to Ausonius. It was probably also his participation in this expedition—the last time a Roman emperor crossed the Rhine—that earned him a formal rank at court as “count of the third grade.” This rank may not have counted for much at Trier, but neither was it a distinction typically accorded a mere ambassador; Symmachus would have been pleased to see it listed alongside his other offices in an inscription set up by his son after his death. Symmachus then stayed on at court through the inauguration of Valentinian’s third consulship in January 370, when he delivered two more panegyrics in honor of Valentinian and Gratian.¹³

For Symmachus and Ausonius, the tour of the frontier zone in summer 369 was a splendid opportunity to gather material for their literary compositions. The homeward journey from Bingen to Trier inspired the opening lines of Ausonius’ poem on the

¹³ For embassies as a means by which ambitious young men could make a name for themselves, see Plutarch, *Moralia* 805A. Symmachus, *Ep.* 1.14, “cum aeternorum principum iam pridem signa comitarer.” *ILS* 1:576, no. 2946, “comiti ordinis tertii,” with Humphries (2003) 35, who suggests that Symmachus would have been flattered by this honor, which hinted “that he and his fellow senators still had an important role to play in the emperor’s frontier policy.”

Wightman (1970) 64, last emperor to cross Rhine. On Symmachus’ correspondence with Ausonius, see Roda (1981), who shows that Ausonius initiated the correspondence, and Sogno (2006) 5-8.

The chronology of Symmachus’ embassy to Trier and of the three speeches he gave there is not universally agreed among modern scholars. In dating the embassy to 369-70, I have followed Seeck (1883) xlvi-xlvii, ccx-ccxi, seconded by Matthews (1975) 32-3. On the basis of internal evidence in the speeches, they assign *Orat.* 1 to February 25, 369 and *Orat.* 2 to January 1, 370. The date of *Orat.* 3 is uncertain, but del Chicca (1987) has argued persuasively that it was delivered on January 3, 370. A different view, supported by Chastagnol (1987b), Pabst (1989) 152-3, and Lizzi Testa (2004) 447-54, holds that *Orat.* 1 and *Orat.* 3 were delivered in February 368. Since *Orat.* 2 was manifestly spoken in January 370, this hypothesis would imply either that Symmachus lingered at court for two years, or made two separate trips to Trier in less than two years—propositions both implausible and unsupported by the evidence, which, on the contrary, places Symmachus and Valentinian on the Rhine in June 369: Matthews (1975) 32 n.4. The most recent treatment of Symmachus’ embassy uses two different dates for *Orat.* 1: see Sogno (2006) 87 (delivery in 369) and 95 n.32 (delivery on February 25, 368).

Moselle River. Symmachus recalled the summer's events in the panegyric he addressed to Valentinian to mark the emperor's assumption of his third consulate on January 1, 370. He witnessed the fortifications being built along the Rhine, laid out by Valentinian's own "fortunate right hand." He was equally impressed by the ease with which the emperor constructed a pontoon bridge across the Rhine, finishing the task in a single day. "The Rhine, a river that had never been navigated before without elaborate preparations, afforded safe passage on its swollen waters. A line of vessels, lashed together in the manner of a path, with earth spread overtop, dug into the edges of the banks."¹⁴

Symmachus returned to the construction of this bridge across the Rhine two days later in his panegyric of Gratian. The bridge was more than just an impressive feat of engineering; it now prompted comparisons with the bridges Valentinian was building in Rome. Both the Rhine and the Tiber could now boast bridges built by Valentinian, but Symmachus pointedly reminded his audience that the bridges, and the rivers, were not equal. Indignantly addressing the Rhine, he warned:

Look here, you two-pronged river now ours—be careful not to think yourself the equal of the Tiber, just because you both carry structures built by our emperors: that river has been crowned, you have been conquered. The two rivers are not celebrated for the same quality. The conquered river has received a necessary bridge, the conquering an eternal one; the finer bridge was bestowed as an honor, the cheaper one as a mark of slavery.¹⁵

The comparison between the bridges in Rome and in Germany was especially appropriate in the context of a speech addressed to Gratian. The previous summer, even as he was

¹⁴ Symmachus, *Orat.* 2.2, Valentinian's third consulate, 18, *felicem dexteram*, 26, Rhine bridge: "Rhenum numquam antehac temere navigatum tumentibus aquis itinera tuta portasse. semitae in morem nexa navigia constrato desuper solo riparum extima momorderunt."

¹⁵ Symmachus, *Orat.* 3.9, "en noster bicornis, cave aequalem te arbitrere Tiberino, quod ambo principum monumenta gestatis: ille redimitus est, tu subactus. non uno merito pons uterque censetur: victus accepit necessarium, victor aeternum: pretiosior honori datus est, vilior servituti."

personally overseeing the construction of the Rhine bridge, Valentinian was also sponsoring repairs to a second bridge in Rome. This bridge was to be renamed for Gratian and “consecrated to the eternity of the imperial name.” Symmachus’ praise of the eternal bridge in Rome thus echoed the official language of its dedication, and sharply distinguished it from the temporary pontoon bridge Valentinian had built across the Rhine. Symmachus may have been talking about bridges, but his point was really about the relationship between Rome and the provinces. He was expressing the traditional perspective of a senator from Rome. In this view, Rome was still the agent of conquest, exerting its will on the landscapes and peoples beyond the frontier—even though it was really Valentinian who was responsible, and Valentinian had never been to Rome. Moreover, Rome was the proper site for the monumental commemoration of imperial victory. Valentinian’s bridge in Rome—surmounted by bronze statues of the goddess Victory—was eternal, in keeping with the eternity of Rome itself. Whatever Valentinian might build in Germany paled by comparison with the constructions in Rome. Indirectly, Symmachus was suggesting that Valentinian and Gratian should visit Rome and see the magnificent bridges that now bore their names.¹⁶

Bridges turned out to be useful symbols in the long-distance dialogue between the senators in Rome and Valentinian in Trier. The emperor’s decision to sponsor the rebuilding of two bridges in Rome helped to establish a virtual or symbolic presence there that helped to compensate for his physical absence in Trier. The bridges advertised

¹⁶ The *pons Gratiani* was a reconstruction of the *pons Cestius*, built in the late Republic to join the Tiber island to the right bank; the modern Ponte S. Bartolomeo is built on its foundations: Galliazzo (1995) 2:10-13, Degrassi (1999). For the dating of this bridge to the summer of 369 and of Symmachus’ *Orat.* 3 to January 3, 370, see del Chicca (1987). *ILS* 1:171, no. 771, “pontem felicitis nominis Gratiani,” no. 772, “Gratiani triumphalis principis pontem aeternitati Augusti nominis consecratum.”

his concern for the welfare and convenience of the Roman people, and demonstrated to the senators that he acknowledged the fundamental duties of an emperor. His building projects in the capital thus placed him in the long tradition of emperors and helped to establish his legitimacy in Rome. Symmachus picked up on the symbolic potential of Valentinian's bridges in Rome and on the Rhine and used them to reflect on the political geography of the fourth-century empire. More precisely, he denied that there had been any changes to the empire's "mental map," and reminded the court in Trier that, despite appearances to the contrary, Rome was still the true capital of the empire. Finally, it might be said that through his embassy, Symmachus was himself a "bridge" between Rome and Trier, senate and emperor. As an official representative of the senate, Symmachus carried a distinctly Roman message to the court in Trier, and hinted that Valentinian should return the favor by visiting Rome. At the same time, Symmachus also became a messenger from court, promising to spread the news of Valentinian's deeds all along the route he would take back to Italy:

I shall discharge the duty of a witness. I shall go through the cities, I shall go through the nations, more proud than the victor who has been praised. I shall say to the senate and people of Rome: "Dispatch the *fasces* to new provinces; prepare officials for service across the Rhine."

So long as emperors continued to reside away from Rome, such journeys helped to establish a relationship between center and periphery, even when it was no longer entirely clear which was which.¹⁷

¹⁷ Symmachus, *Orat.* 2.31, "ego testis fungar officio. ibo per urbes, ibo per populos iactantior victore laudato. dicam senatui plebique Romanae: 'fasces in provincias novas mittite, trans Rhenum iudices preparate.'" Similarly, but moving in the opposite direction, a Gallic orator speaking in Rome promised to return to Gaul and spread the news of what he had seen in Rome: Pacatus, *Panegyrici latini* 2(12).47.5.

Rome as the locus of political legitimacy

Symmachus had been charged by the senate with expressing its loyalty to Valentinian and its approval of his policies. Such messages were often transmitted in the literary form of panegyric, i.e. a speech of praise addressed to the emperor and delivered in the presence of the court. Although the topics and conventions of imperial panegyric had long ago been standardized, these well-defined generic characteristics made variations or departures from the template more conspicuous. The particular circumstances of the occasion or the unique priorities of the speaker might then become apparent. The three speeches Symmachus delivered in Trier in February 369 and January 370—the only examples of imperial panegyrics written by a senator from Rome to survive from the fourth century—conveyed a distinctively Rome-centric perspective that was absent from other panegyrics of the period written by senators living in the provinces. This perspective was especially visible in two themes of the speeches. First, Symmachus hoped that the emperor would visit Rome to celebrate a triumph for his victories on the frontier. Second, he argued that Valentinian's selection as emperor was in accordance with the traditional procedures once used to elect magistrates under the Republic.¹⁸

In the early empire, the senate had customarily sent an official embassy to an emperor who tarried too long in the provinces to implore him to hasten his return to Rome. Such requests had usually been mere exercises to demonstrate the senate's loyalty and affection for its *princeps*, rather than the expression of genuine worry that the emperor might not return to the capital. In the fourth century, however, when emperors

¹⁸ For a recent discussion of the panegyrics Symmachus delivered in Trier, see Sogno (2006) 8-21.

scarcely ever came to Rome, the senate's invitations acquired more urgency.

Symmachus took advantage of his opportunity at Trier to “put Rome on the map.” That Rome could ever have fallen off the map was symptomatic of the changes in the empire's political geography which had taken hold in the third century. When a Gallic orator speaking at Autun in the 290s had described a map of the Roman world that was being painted on the wall of a new school there, he had mentioned the many frontier zones of the empire, but had omitted any mention of Rome itself. Evidently, since no emperor lived in Rome, it could be assumed that nothing worth mentioning was happening there.¹⁹

The pivot by which Symmachus made the old capital relevant to Valentinian, a military man of the frontiers, was, logically enough, the triumph, a ceremony customarily celebrated at Rome. In order to demonstrate how appropriate a triumph at Rome would be for Valentinian, Symmachus contrasted the emperor's tireless campaigning on the frontier with the dissipation of some of the great Romans of the past. First, Symmachus named three Republican generals whose victories were marred by their taste for self-indulgence: Scipio Africanus (the Elder) had conquered Carthage, but not before he lazed about in Sicily playing at Greek philosophy; Lucullus had failed to complete his victory over Mithridates because he was distracted by eastern luxury; Marcus Antonius had scored victories over the Persians but “melted away” from love of Cleopatra in Egypt. “These are those famous triumphal men,” Symmachus commented sarcastically.

¹⁹ Millar (1977) 353, senatorial embassies in the early empire. On the senatorial suggestions in Symmachus' panegyrics, see MacCormack (1975) 175-6, quote at p.176. *Panegyrici latini* 9(4).20.2-21.3, map at Autun, with Van Dam (2007) 35.

If triumphs had been awarded to men with such flaws, surely Valentinian was even more deserving of Rome's highest honor.²⁰

Symmachus followed this catalog of Republican examples with four more drawn from the imperial age. Augustus had spent great amounts of time and money reconfiguring the coastline around Baiae, a notorious resort area on the Bay of Naples; Tiberius had retired to Capri to sail and swim; Antoninus Pius had been overly fond of his vacation home on the coast; and Marcus Aurelius had spent his vacations giving philosophy lectures in Athens. In both sets of examples, Republican and imperial, Symmachus criticized high-achieving Romans for taking extended vacations outside Rome. But Valentinian, he implied, surpassed all these great men. Like the Republican generals, he conquered non-Roman peoples, but without succumbing to luxury and dissipation; unlike the emperors, he was not tempted to shirk the burdens of rule by taking vacations. The one respect in which Valentinian fell short was his failure thus far to visit Rome. If Valentinian would only come to Rome, he could, like the Republican generals, celebrate a richly deserved triumph; at the same time he would surpass the emperors by choosing to spend his *otium* in the capital, traditionally a place of *negotium*, rather than in disreputable vacation spots. Symmachus' veiled suggestion became a virtual invitation when the orator went on to observe that "you deny to yourself the rest you provide to others; amid so many thousands of laurels, not yet do you depart for a triumph." Although this might seem complimentary on the surface, Symmachus seemed to be complaining that Valentinian, fully five years into his reign, had still not made time to visit Rome. A career soldier, Valentinian was more at home building forts in the

²⁰ Symmachus, *Orat.* 1.16, "hi sunt illi triumphales viri, delicatis negotiis frequentibus occupati."

Rhineland than he could ever have been visiting Rome, where the senators and plebs expected their rulers to show deference to them. The behavior expected of an emperor at Rome explained both why Symmachus wanted Valentinian to visit and why the emperor declined to do so.²¹

Valentinian's failure ever to come to Rome was of course one of the reasons why Symmachus had made the journey to Trier in the first place. If the emperor would not come to Rome, the seat of political legitimacy, then perhaps instead a senator from Rome could transmit the legitimacy conferred by the capital to the emperor created in the provinces. In Republican times, the senate had been the source and guardian of political legitimacy in the Roman state. Thanks to Augustus' fashioning of the Principate as a "restored Republic," and the reverence Romans had for their own antiquity, the language of constitutional government was still frozen in the old Republican terminology. Although other techniques of legitimation were available—including the ruler's personal virtues, his relationship with the divine, and success in battle—Symmachus' panegyrics were distinctive for their attempt to paint the ruling imperial dynasty in the traditional colors of Roman political legitimacy. Symmachus solved this problem by describing the accession of Valentinian as though it had resembled an election of a Republican magistrate in Rome.

Symmachus did not have an easy task. Notwithstanding the language of Republican constitutionalism, the real power of emperors had always depended on their control of the field armies; there were, moreover, awkward dimensions to the elevations

²¹ Symmachus, *Orat.* 1.16, "quietem tibi negas, quam ceteris praestas; inter tot milia laurearum nondum digrederis ad triumphum." On the behavior expected of emperors in Rome, see Chapters 1 and 3 above, and the succinct remark of Straub (1939) 188, "es zum Zeremoniell eines Besuchs in Rom gehörte, sich 'volkstümlich' zu zeigen."

of Valentinian, Valens, and Gratian to imperial rank. Following the sudden death of Jovian on February 17, 364, the leading officials of the empire met to pick a new emperor. Valentinian's was not the first name mentioned; in fact three other men were considered before Valentinian emerged as a compromise candidate. Secundus Salutius, a highly respected praetorian prefect, who had been offered the crown after the death of Julian, refused it once again; a high-ranking military officer, Aequitius, was rejected for his coarseness; and Januarius, a relative of Jovian, was deemed too distant to be viable. Only then was Valentinian approached, and acclaimed on February 26, so that the empire was without an emperor for a total of ten days. In his first panegyric of Valentinian, delivered to mark the close of the emperor's first five years in power, Symmachus could hardly avoid the momentous events of five years before. Faced with the awkward fact that Valentinian had not been the first choice, Symmachus re-imagined his accession in terms of an ancient Republican election for a Roman magistrate. Far from being "hypocritical declamations" extracted under duress, Symmachus' language reflected a senator at Rome's understanding of a distant event at which he was not present, and contributed to his portrayal of Valentinian as a legitimate Roman ruler.²²

Following the sudden death of Jovian in February 364, a council of senior officers met to choose a new emperor. According to Symmachus, this was an unusual moment, because there was "not the whispering usually heard from the factions."²³ Curiously, Ammianus explicitly says that there *was* whispering, and that the names of Aequitius and

²² Zosimus, *Historia nova* 3.36.1, Salutius; Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 26.1.4-5, Aequitius and Januarius; on the circumstances of Valentinian's election, see Potter (2004) 521-2. Alföldi (1952) 106, hypocritical declamations.

²³ Symmachus, *Orat.* 1.8, "nec ulla, ut adsolet, murmura factionum."

Januarius were being tentatively circulated.²⁴ Whispers or no, even Symmachus allowed that it took some time for the general staff to agree on Valentinian. This delay Symmachus construed as the result of a genuine contest in which Valentinian was judged the most deserving. Symmachus created the appearance of an imperial election by sprinkling his description with technical terms that recalled Republican elections, such as *ambitus* (unseemly campaigning) and *suffragium*.²⁵ Originally, *suffragium* had signified a vote cast by a Roman citizen in the *comitia*. By the later imperial period, it usually meant the “support of an influential person;” thus the word accurately described the council that selected Valentinian, while simultaneously cloaking his designation in the traditional terms of a Republican election.²⁶

Valentinian’s installation also required that he be acclaimed by the soldiers. Symmachus found a Republican equivalent for this step, too: “How obviously worthy of the leadership (*principatu*) of such a great empire were these elections (*comitia*)! As free men (*liberi*) they decided to whom they would be subject.”²⁷ By characterizing the assembly of soldiers as a *comitia*, Symmachus may have meant to evoke the *comitia curiata*, an archaic assembly whose main business was to pass the annual *lex curiata* confirming the *imperium* of magistrates.²⁸ Symmachus’ characterization of Valentinian’s acclamation as an election exemplified both the conservatism of Roman political language and its adaptation to new circumstances. In fact, fossilized Republican electoral

²⁴ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 26.1.4, “obscuris paucorum susurris.” Emphasizing the eventual consensus for Valentinian over this initial delay, Alföldi (1952) 10-12.

²⁵ Symmachus, *Orat.* 1.8, “cessabat ambitus, quia dignus extabat. Equis miratur non ilico in te conversa suffragia?”

²⁶ *ILS* 1:574, no. 2941, *suffragium* as the support of an influential person. On the evolution of the word, see de Ste. Croix (1954).

²⁷ Symmachus, *Orat.* 1.9.

²⁸ Varro, *De lingua latina* 5.155; Taylor (1966) 4-5, Nicolet (1980) 218-9.

practices, including the role of the *comitia*, had survived at Rome at least into the Flavian period, as is shown by municipal laws which contain provisions *de comitiis habendis*, in which magistrates were to be elected through voting (*suffragia*) by *curiae*.²⁹ Discrete elements of the imperial *statio* were voted to Marcus Otho in 69 in separate votes of the *comitia* spread over several weeks, and Vespasian's power had likewise been confirmed by the passage of a *lex*.³⁰ Even as late as the third century, the people probably played a role in conferring imperial authority on emperors.³¹ Thus Symmachus would have had access to a long tradition of comitial involvement in the installation of new emperors.³²

Interestingly, Symmachus did not characterize the soldiers' acclamations as *suffragia*, even though this, too, was a current meaning of the term in the fourth century. On the contrary, he disparaged popular *suffragium* as a flawed mechanism, since it was used by electors who lacked direct experience of the man they were endorsing, whereas the soldiers who acclaimed Valentinian had served under his command for years.³³ By this sleight of hand, Symmachus effectively severed the traditional pairing of *suffragium* and *comitia* by appropriating the former for the council of officers while leaving the latter to signify the assembly of soldiers. By subtly and skillfully updating the meanings of ancient Republican terms such as *suffragium*, *comitia*, and *imperium*, Symmachus

²⁹ *Lex Malacitana* L-LX, *passim*, LII, "de comitiis habendis."

³⁰ For Otho's piecemeal accumulation of imperial power, see the *Acta Arvalium Fratrum* (ed. Scheid (1998) 100-1), s.a. 69, s.v. January 26, "ob comitia consularia," February 28, "ob comitia tribuniciae potestatis," March 3 (*sic*, an error for March 5), "ob comitia sacerdotium," March 9, "ob comitia pontificatus maximi."

³¹ For this view, see Brunt (1977) 107-8, citing evidence from Ulpian and Cassius Dio.

³² On the concept of *comitia imperii*, see Pabst (1997).

³³ *Suffragium* as acclamation: *CTh* 12.5.1, *IRT* 564, 566, 574, 578, 595. Symmachus, *Orat.* 1.9, "noti testimonio, ignoti suffragio provehuntur."

described the acclamation of Valentinian as emperor in Asia Minor as though it had resembled the election of a magistrate in Rome.³⁴

Following a convention of panegyric, Symmachus went on to explain how the present situation actually surpassed the glory of the ancient past. Elections in the Republic had often been marred by corruption, because otherwise upstanding senators had to resort to bribery of the people. By contrast, acclamation by the soldiers was far purer, for it constituted the decision of the “senate of the camp” (*castrensis senatus*). This striking phrase was a variation on the old Republican formula, *senatus populusque Romanus* (the senate and people of Rome), updated to fit the circumstances of the fourth century. When the historian Tacitus, writing his *Annals* in the early second century, had wished to signify the realities of politics in the early empire, he conspicuously altered the traditional expression to *senatus milesque et populus* (the senate, soldiers, and people).³⁵ Now Symmachus went Tacitus one better: by combining the mass support of the soldiers and the good judgment of the senate, Valentinian enjoyed both popular and senatorial legitimacy. Under the Republic, magistrates with *imperium* had been elected by the *comitia centuriata*, an assembly of citizen-soldiers who appeared unarmed and clad in the toga. Valentinian’s acclamation, by professional soldiers, under arms and untainted by unsavory electoral bribery, thus represented a kind of new and improved *comitia*

³⁴ Ammianus uses the same metaphor to characterize Valentinian’s acclamation: “comitiorum specie,” *Res gestae* 26.2.2. For the possibility that Ammianus used Symmachus’ speeches, see Sabbah (1978) 332-5.

³⁵ Tacitus, *Annales* 1.7.

centuriata.³⁶ Thus Symmachus not only contrived for Valentinian a more perfect form of election, but he even managed to insinuate the senate into the soldiers' acclamation.³⁷

Although Symmachus reinterpreted Valentinian's acclamation as an updated version of a traditional Roman election, the circumstances of his brother Valens' elevation were even less promising for a panegyrist. Valens lacked his brother's military credentials, having served, without distinction, for only four and a half years; another panegyrist facing this task instead praised his understanding of farming.³⁸ In fact, his only qualification to be emperor was that he was Valentinian's brother, and one high-ranking official doubted that even this coincidence sufficed.³⁹ Moreover, breaking with the practice of Constantine's dynasty, Valentinian had elevated Valens straight to the rank of Augustus, bypassing the subordinate rank of Caesar. Such a rapid advancement of an unqualified relative may have been disconcerting, to judge from the amount of space Symmachus devoted to lauding Valentinian for this inspired decision. Symmachus interpreted this innovation as comparing favorably to the unhappy partnerships of Constantius II and his Caesars, Gallus and Julian. Although Symmachus tactfully withheld the names, there can be little doubt that Constantius was one of the emperors he had in mind, who "feared almost as rivals the men whom they had appointed as their subordinates," while Julian was the one who had exhibited "the impatience of the man

³⁶ Taylor (1966) 85-106, Nicolet (1980) 219-24.

³⁷ Cf. Straub (1939) 33-4, who mistakenly believed that Symmachus was renouncing the senate's claim to participate in the creation of emperors.

³⁸ Lenski (2002) 50-55, Valens' background, 54, quoting Themistius, *Orat.* 8.113d-114a.

³⁹ Dagalaifus, the *magister equitum*, bravely counseled Valentinian to look beyond his own family: Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 26.4.1.

next in line.” The questionable elevation of Valens to full imperial rank was thereby justified as a prudent measure calculated to avoid civil war.⁴⁰

If Valens’ promotion from obscurity to Augustus had raised eyebrows, at least Valens was an adult with a military background. When Valentinian decided to raise his son, Gratian, to full imperial rank, Symmachus had another accession to explain. The main problem in this case was Gratian’s age: born in 359, he was only seven years old upon his elevation to the rank of Augustus on August 24, 367. Gratian’s elevation was born of weakness. In fact, Valentinian had been deathly ill, prompting a faction at court to demand that Rusticus Julianus, the *magister memoriae*, be made emperor; a rival faction countered with the name of Severus, the *magister peditum*. Evidently, no one had been calling Gratian’s name, but as soon as Valentinian recovered, “he resolved to honor his son Gratian, then on the verge of puberty, with the insignia of imperial rule.”⁴¹ Valentinian’s preference for family members had already guided his decision to raise Valens to a share in imperial rule, and avoided the problem of choosing among other candidates.⁴² Nevertheless, there were traces of dissatisfaction with the elevation of Gratian straight to the highest rank; “transgressing the usage established of old, Valentinian named his brother and son, not Caesars, but Augusti—rather generously.”⁴³ Symmachus felt compelled to offer an extended defense of this decision in the panegyric he addressed to the boy-emperor; he even conceded that some had thought Gratian too

⁴⁰ Symmachus, *Orat.* 1.12, “hinc plerique principum, quos secundos creaverant, quasi aemulos mox timebant. urget enim potissimos expectation proximorum, semperque similis invidenti est, cui superses, quod requirat.”

⁴¹ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 27.6.4, “Gratianum filium suum, adulto iam proximum, insignibus principatus ornare meditabatur.”

⁴² Matthews (1989) 190.

⁴³ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 27.6.16, “Valentinianus morem institutum antiquitus supergressus, non Caesares sed Augustos germanium nuncupavit et filium, benevole satis.”

young to be elected emperor: “Yes, you are the one whom we thought was elected almost prematurely!”⁴⁴ Symmachus himself had trouble imagining the improbable scene of his election; to see “on one side the Emperor, on the other the legions, and between them a boy not yet bearded, the candidate for the imperial throne” – these were “miracles scarcely to be believed.”⁴⁵

Seeking to counter the widespread fear that Gratian was simply too young for such weighty responsibilities, Symmachus began by recalling Gratian’s consulship, held in 366 while still a boy of six or seven. The most laudable achievement of his tenure was the repeal of an unpopular law restricting the activities of lawyers: “Then for the first time the pursuits of the forum, formerly condemned to silence by the law, raised their eyes in freedom to your tribunal.”⁴⁶ Symmachus passed directly from Gratian’s consulship to his acclamation by the soldiers, presenting the first office as the prelude to the second. Returning to the conceit he used to express Valentinian’s elevation to the purple, he twice invoked the *comitia* to describe Gratian’s accession.⁴⁷ This time he added a further technical term from Roman voting procedure, praising Gratian for conferring the “consul’s prerogative” on the assembly.⁴⁸ By this curious expression Symmachus was apparently referring to the *praerogativa*, the century chosen by lot to vote first in the *comitia centuriata* (which elected the consuls); the *praerogativa*’s vote

⁴⁴ Symmachus, *Orat.* 3.3, “tu nempe es, quem paene intempestive putabamus electum!”

⁴⁵ Symmachus, *Orat.* 3.5, “vix credenda miracula: hinc Augustum, inde legions et inter hos medium regni inpuberem candidatum.”

⁴⁶ Symmachus, *Orat.* 3.2, “tunc primum forensis industria, lege quondam silentiis subiugata, liberos oculos ad tuum tribunal erexit”; Valentinian, too, seems to be praised for the repeal of this measure in *Orat.* 2.30.

⁴⁷ Symmachus, *Orat.* 3.3, “comitia purpurae;” 3.5, “comitia spectanda.”

⁴⁸ Symmachus, *Orat.* 3.3, “his ad imperium lectus auspiciis praerogativam consulis ad comitia purpurae detulisti.” The technical aspects of voting in the *comitia*, long obsolete, may not have been well understood in the fourth century. For example, Ausonius, *Actio gratiarum* 9.44 badly misunderstood the “urbanarum tribuum praerogativae.”

nearly always foretold the winner, so that it was regarded as an omen.⁴⁹ Thus in Gratian's "election," the auspicious first vote, instead of being limited to one century, was given to the assembled soldiers en masse, whose enthusiastic acclamation was therefore an even more powerful expression of divine favor. In short, Gratian's acclamation, like Valentinian's, was described in terms that recalled Republican voting procedure, with the aim of showing that these emperors' elevations to the throne were thoroughly regular, legitimate, and Roman.

At the same time, as though recognizing that this portrayal was unconvincing, Symmachus found a famous Roman precedent for irregular advancement to the highest rank: Pompey the Great, though consul, had nevertheless appeared for the census of 70 BCE, humbly leading his public horse in the traditional review of *equites*. This was evidently an ostentatious publicity stunt designed "to demonstrate the exceptional nature of his own career and his respect for the law."⁵⁰ According to Symmachus, when the censor duly asked him under what general (*imperatore*) he had served, he proudly replied that "I served under my own command as *princeps*." So bold was this reply that Symmachus affected to doubt its authenticity, but in any case, Gratian surpassed Pompey's example, because he had acquired the name of *imperator* even before he was old enough to enlist legally in the army.⁵¹ By comparing this version of Pompey's remark with a fuller account, we can see that Symmachus has subtly modified this anecdote: what Pompey had really said was that he had served *all* his campaigns under his own command. This boast—Pompey Magnus quite literally did not take orders from

⁴⁹ Taylor (1966) 91, Nicolet (1980) 260-64.

⁵⁰ Nicolet (1980) 83.

⁵¹ Symmachus, *Orat.* 3.8, "nolo explorare iactationem ducis tanti fortasse mendacem."

anyone—was remembered as a token of his greatness, but it also inevitably recalled his early campaigns, in which he had raised his own private army from his late father's estates, had been saluted as *imperator* by Sulla, and triumphed, all before he was of the legal age to enter the senate.⁵² The choice of this example demonstrated how a speaker could appeal to the tastes of his audience while also preserving his own voice.

Symmachus was probably aware that Pompey's early career had been highly irregular and mounted in defiance of law and tradition. Although Symmachus bowdlerized Pompey's early career in order to emphasize its glory and suppress details that might reveal its illegality, his knowledge of Roman traditions equipped him with the vocabulary to interpret current events.

Ausonius

The signature of Symmachus' panegyrics was his claim that Rome continued to be the true capital of the empire and his use of traditional Republican terminology to establish the political legitimacy of the emperors he addressed. There were, however, other strategies of legitimation available that were favored by other panegyrists. A better appreciation of Symmachus' distinct perspective emerges from comparison with the speeches delivered to the same emperors by his contemporaries Ausonius of Bordeaux and Themistius of Constantinople.⁵³ Like Symmachus, these were educated men who were searching for the proper language to describe Roman emperors and their own relationship with those emperors. Yet the priorities and attitudes of these men, shaped by

⁵² Plutarch, *Vita Pompeii* 6, private army; 8.3, saluted *imperator*; 14.2, first triumph; 22.5-9, appearance in the *recognitio equitum*.

⁵³ For a similar type of comparison among Latin panegyrists, see MacCormack (1975) 177. On the expansion of senatorial rank in the fourth century, see Heather (1998), and on the relationship between geographic and social origins on the one hand and religious affiliation and career path on the other, Salzman (2002) 69-137, though her study does not include the Greek East.

exposure to different traditions, were noticeably different from those of Symmachus. Ausonius and Themisius were aristocrats from the provinces who enjoyed closer relations with the imperial court. Lacking direct access to the political and cultural traditions of senators at Rome, they used different means of portraying the emperor as a legitimate ruler. They, too, devised strategies of legitimation that also accommodated their own essential role in making the emperor a successful ruler.⁵⁴

Ausonius came to the imperial court in Trier from Bordeaux, where he had been a professor of rhetoric; his big break came in the mid-360s, when he was tapped by Valentinian to be tutor to his young son, Gratian. By the end of Valentinian's reign Ausonius had parlayed this position of private influence into formal positions in the court bureaucracy, culminating in the ordinary consulship of 379, for which he delivered the customary *gratiarum actio* or "speech of thanks" in August or September of that year.⁵⁵ Whereas Symmachus had carefully shown how Gratian's (and Valentinian's) promotion to the purple had taken the form of a Republican election, Ausonius took a quite different tack in talking about his own rise to the consulship. Thanks to Gratian's favor, Ausonius was spared the hassle of pressing palms, dispensing bribes, and suffering the indignity of a popular vote; so far, sentiments worthy of Symmachus. In his glee, however, Ausonius went on to sweep up even the respectable political classes: "The Roman people, the Campus Martius, the equestrian class, the Rostra, the hustings, the senate and the senate-

⁵⁴ Salzman (2002) 39, "Since growing numbers of men could achieve senatorial rank through very different trajectories—through the military, the imperial administration, or a traditional senatorial civic career—they entered the aristocracy possessed of very different experiences as well as different political and social connections, both inside and outside of the order."

⁵⁵ On Ausonius' life and career, *PLRE* 1:140-1, "Decimius Magnus Ausonius 7," see Green (1991) xxiv-xxxii; for the date of this speech, Green (1991) 537.

house—Gratian alone was all of these for me.”⁵⁶ Instead, Ausonius likened his designation as consul to the archaic selection of the pontifical college, in which vacancies were filled by co-option, without any involvement by senate or people.⁵⁷ Symmachus would not have found anything admirable in the non-participation of the senate. Indeed, when Symmachus was in Ausonius’ position, giving thanks to Gratian for awarding the consulship to his father, he, too, hailed the absence of corrupt popular voting, but accorded pride of place to the senate. His father “had the sort of electors that antiquity had for candidates... our elections are conducted between emperors and senate; the election is by equals, the confirmation by superiors.”⁵⁸ This distinction between Ausonius and Symmachus in their treatment of the election conceit stemmed from their different perspectives: Ausonius was a Gallic senator whose loyalty and thanks were owed solely to Gratian, while Symmachus was senator at Rome, whose gratitude for his father’s consulship was shared equally between senate and emperor.⁵⁹

Ausonius himself recognized that his position was different from that of Symmachus, or anyone else. Gratian awarded him the consulship purely as a token of recognition of the many years of service his tutor had rendered him. Thus Ausonius held a unique place among the consuls of the empire. He was neither a military man, nor the sort entitled to high office by birth alone, of whom he observed that “many things are given to famous names, and a family tree stands in place of merit.” The barb could easily describe Symmachus himself, or his father, who died before he could take up the

⁵⁶ Ausonius, *Gratiarum actio* 3.13, “Romanus populus, Martius campus, equester ordo, rostra, ovilia, senatus, curia—unus mihi omnia Gratianus.” All citations from this text are from Green (1999).

⁵⁷ Ausonius, *Gratiarum actio* 9.42.

⁵⁸ Symmachus, *Orat.* 4.7, “tales collega vester suffragatores habuit, quales antiquitas candidates...inter senatum et principes comitia transiguntur; eligunt pares, confirmant superiores.”

⁵⁹ Symmachus, *Orat.* 4.1, “quantos huius beneficii habeamus auctores—humanitatem vestram, qui postulastis, clementiam principum, qui dederunt.”

consulship appointed for him.⁶⁰ Instead, Ausonius saw himself as one of the consuls who had worked his way up, recognized for his loyalty and successful discharge of lower offices. Ausonius began as *comes*, a companion of the emperor; in 375 Valentinian appointed him *quaestor sacri palatii*, in charge of drafting legislation. When Gratian took the reins of power, he ascended to become praetorian prefect of Gaul, then of Gaul, Italy, and Africa, positions which he held for about a year just before he took up the consulship in 379.⁶¹ Ausonius linked his tenure of these posts to Gratian personally; he is “your quaestor, your praetorian prefect, your consul, your teacher.” Ausonius’ glittering career, no less than Trier’s soaring buildings, was a gift that flowed from the emperor’s personal favor and presence in Gaul.⁶²

Ausonius’ career thus bore little resemblance to that of Symmachus, whose path to the consulship (of 391) proceeded from his rank and status in the city of Rome. Indicative of the difference between the two men was the rank of count which they held in common.⁶³ Unlike Symmachus, who did not begin a career at court, Ausonius used this initial office as a springboard, representing himself as a self-made man. He found an illustrious model in Gaius Marius, a Republican general who had been consul seven times.

“I am not able to display portraits of my ancestors in proof of good faith,” as Marius says in Sallust, or a lineage traced back to the heroes, or to

⁶⁰ Ausonius, *Gratiarum actio* 4.16, “viros nobilitatis antiquae—dantur enim multa nominibus et est stemma pro merito.” Avianus Symmachus was probably consul-designate for 377: *PLRE* 1:863-5, “Symmachus 3.”

⁶¹ Jones (1964b) 83-4, for the chronology of Ausonius’ praetorian prefectures.

⁶² Ausonius, *Gratiarum actio* 18.83, “quaestorem tuum, praefectum tuo praetorio, consulem tuum ... praeceptorem tuum,” with Sivan (1993) 123, emphasizing “the correlation of his success to the court’s establishment in the region.” See also Salzman (2002) 40, “dependency on the emperor for advancement made for a different sort of experience than that of the senator from older entrenched families.”

⁶³ For Symmachus’ rank of “count of the third grade,” see above.

unfold a family tree of gods, or enormous wealth and properties scattered around the world.⁶⁴

Once again, Ausonius could have been describing Symmachus or others of the noblest senators at Rome. Marius had compensated for his humble origins with his military decorations and battle scars; these were his claim to nobility, and he had acquired them through his own strenuous effort, not through inheritance.⁶⁵ As a new man, Ausonius had to rely on his own talents, in particular upon his learning and rhetorical skill, but even these would have availed little had the emperor not personally recognized his merit.⁶⁶

In truth, all the highest offices available to both a senator at Rome and a senator at court were in the gift of the emperor. Symmachus owed his appointment as prefect of Rome directly to Valentinian II no less than Ausonius owed his praetorian prefectures to Gratian. Whenever Symmachus felt victimized by intrigue, one of his stock arguments was that the emperor should defend him, since his opponents were attacking the emperor's nominee.⁶⁷ Despite the fact that Symmachus and Ausonius both owed their exalted titles to the emperor's goodwill, there was an important difference in the language the two men used to describe the emperor's benefaction. Since both men delivered speeches of thanks to the same emperor, only three years apart, for the award of a consulship—Ausonius for his own, Symmachus for his father's—this difference is easily discernible. Ausonius owed not only his consulship, but every step in his career, to the favor of Gratian:

⁶⁴ Ausonius, *Gratiarum actio* 8.36, “non possum fidei causa ostendere imagines maiorum meorum, ut aid apud Sallustium Marius, nec deductum ab heroibus genus vel deorum stemma replicare, nec ignotas opes et patrimonia sparsa sub regnis.”

⁶⁵ Sallust, *Jugurtha* 85.29-30.

⁶⁶ Ausonius, *Gratiarum actio* 3.15, “in tua enim positum est opinione, si merui.” For Ausonius' self-perception as a *novus homo*, Green (1991) 538, 550.

⁶⁷ Symmachus, *Rel.* 21.2, 23.15.

What do you owe me? Quite to the contrary, what do I not owe you? The fact that I taught you? I can retort more truthfully that I was deemed worthy to teach, that so many men superior in their eloquence and learning were passed over when your esteem turned toward me, in order that you might have someone already fortified by mature years to promote in your hurrying kindness through all the ranks of office, so that you seemed to be afraid lest I die while something still remained for you to give.⁶⁸

By contrast, when Symmachus gave thanks for his father's designation to the consulship, he spent nearly as much time praising the senate as he did praising Gratian. According to Symmachus, his father's consulship was awarded through the partnership of senate and emperor; indeed, using the traditional term for a consul's speech of thanks to the emperor, he elevated the senate to equal status, asserting that "the same *gratiarum actio* is owed also to you."⁶⁹ Ausonius thanked the emperor; Symmachus thanked the senate. It was the senate that had taken the initiative in requesting the consulship for his father, miraculously staging an election (*comitia*) for a man who was not even a candidate, and then doing the hard work of canvassing (*ambitus*) on his behalf, leaving nothing for the candidate but to accept his effortless designation.⁷⁰ Symmachus thus reverted to the same Republican language of politics to legitimate his father's uncontested designation to the consulship as he had used to describe Valentinian's and Gratian's elevation to imperial rank, though his rhetorical protestations were less strained in Rome than they had been in Trier.

Even speaking before the senate in Rome, of course, Symmachus did not ignore the emperors' role in designating his father for the consulship; on the contrary, he praised

⁶⁸ Ausonius, *Gratiarum actio* 5.24, "quid tu mihi debes? et contra quid non ego tibi debeo? Anne quod docui? Hoc ego possum verius retorquere, dignum me habitum qui docerem, tot facundia doctrinaque praestantes inclinata in me dignatione praeteritos, ut esset quem tu matura iam aetate succinctum per omnes honorum gradus festinate bonitate proveheres; timere ut videreris ne in me vita deficeret, dum tibi adhuc aliquid quod deberes praestare superesset."

⁶⁹ Symmachus, *Orat.* 4.3, "eadem gratiarum actio debetur et vobis."

⁷⁰ Symmachus, *Orat.* 4.2.

them highly, but mainly for complying with the request of the senate. “What a rare thing it has been for our State, conscript Fathers, to fall in with the sort of emperors whose wishes and decisions are the same as those of the senate!” In words that verged on insulting toward the memory of Gratian’s father, Symmachus complained that the insecurity and jealousy of past emperors tended to “elevate the very worst men to the very highest offices,” while good men were either “crushed through the treachery of the wicked or were themselves transformed by these bad examples.”⁷¹ The chief virtue of the new regime was that the prerogatives of office had been restored to their rightful holders; “the honor [of holding office] which all too often was bestowed by fortune (not to mention intrigue) has returned to good character.”⁷² This language of restoration had become second nature to senators in Rome since the days of Augustus; it symbolized a return to normalcy, in which emperor and senate worked as partners and senators were once again permitted to hold the highest offices. Ausonius may have been granted a consulship, but it was a free gift in recognition of his services, rather than an acknowledgement of a birthright; never could Ausonius boast of his consulship that “our era has restored this privilege to a patrician family.”⁷³ Only a senator at Rome was entitled to feel such entitlement.

The claims of senators at Rome were based on their access to a set of traditions that antedated the institution of imperial rule and on their self-perception as the guardians of these traditions. In conceptualizing their relationships to the emperor, therefore, they had different choices available to them: whereas a provincial senator who owed

⁷¹ Symmachus, *Orat.* 4.5, “quam raro huic rei publicae, patres conscripti, tales principes contigerunt, qui idem vellent, idem statuerent quod senatus!”

⁷² Symmachus, *Orat.* 4.6, “ad mores rediit honor, quem saepius, ut de ambitu taceam, fata praestabant.”

⁷³ Symmachus, *Orat.* 4.4, “hoc ius patriciae genti tempora reddiderunt.”

everything to the emperor had little choice but to acknowledge and advertise this connection, a senator at Rome could choose to view the emperor in a longer perspective, evaluating him in light of the traditions of the Republican senate. Symmachus and Ausonius, for example, were both impressed by Gratian's ability to manage the business of empire while simultaneously receiving a liberal education, but they constructed rather different comparisons for appreciating his achievements. Proud of his status as the emperor's tutor, Ausonius looked for other examples of emperor-tutor pairs to serve as inferior precedents. Various (unnamed) members of Constantine's family had been educated in Gaul, but none of them ever attained full imperial rank. Seneca had been the teacher of Nero, but he received only a suffect consulship in return; likewise with Quintilian, the tutor of Domitian's cousins; so, too, Julius Titianus, tutor to an unspecified emperor.⁷⁴

He rejected all these pairs, however, accepting only the precedent of Fronto and Marcus Aurelius. Fronto, too, fell short of Ausonius' ordinary consulship, but, although Ausonius hesitated to place himself ahead of Fronto, the comparison was retrieved because at least Gratian surpassed Marcus! Aside from the undeveloped, almost parenthetical, comparison between Gratian and Marcus, it was clearly the first element in the pairs that interested Ausonius. All of these tutors were, like Ausonius, from the western, Latin-speaking provinces of the empire. The tutors of Constantine's family, Arborius and Exsuperius, were natives of Ausonius' Bordeaux; Seneca and Quintilian were Spaniards; Titianus taught in Gaul, splitting time between Besançon and Lyons; and

⁷⁴ Ausonius, *Gratiarum actio* 7.31. The son of Titianus was said (unreliably) to have been among the tutors of the son of the emperor Maximinus: Historia Augusta, *Maximini duo* 27.5, with Syme (1968) 185-6.

Fronto hailed from Cirta, contained, in Ausonius' day, in a province of Numidia.⁷⁵ This set of teachers reveals a great deal about how Ausonius saw himself: a provincial of curial family who rose by hard work to become the confidant of emperors and win fame as a man of letters (among this group, Ausonius seems to place himself second only to Fronto, whose reputation was great at this period). For all of these men, "the teaching profession functioned as a well-used channel of social mobility," but it was imperial favor that vaulted them into the highest reaches of Roman society.⁷⁶

Symmachus, too, used the pairing of successful generals with wise instructors in order to express his admiration for Gratian's training in the liberal arts even amid the rigors of war. Indeed, it was probably Ausonius' own presence at court, and likely in the audience listening to Symmachus' panegyric of Gratian, that pointed Symmachus in this direction. Thereby he paid a tastefully oblique compliment to Ausonius as well, whose friendship he had gained in the course of the year he had spent at the imperial court. Yet Symmachus' pairs look nothing like Ausonius', since none of his examples was drawn from the imperial period. Instead, Symmachus reverted to the Republic: Gratian exhibited the "signs of the old virtues—not sketched in outline but fully sculpted." His wondrous ability to attend school lessons while on military campaign made it possible to believe that Fulvius Nobilior really was accompanied in battle by the poet Accius, and Scipio Aemilianus by the philosopher Panaetius, not to mention Alexander the Great, accompanied through practically the whole world by a retinue (*comitatus*) of

⁷⁵ Arborius (Ausonius' uncle) and Exsuperius: Ausonius, *Professores* 16-7. They taught at least the sons of Dalmatius and perhaps of Constantine's other half-brothers as well: Green (1991) 352-4. Titianus: Ausonius, *Gratiarum actio* 7.31. Ausonius does not mention Lactantius, who was tutor to Constantine's eldest son Crispus, but he, too, was African, also probably from Numidia.

⁷⁶ Hopkins (1961) 247.

philosophers.⁷⁷ Whereas Ausonius paired tutors with emperors, Symmachus paired tutors with illustrious Roman generals of the Republican period. Thus Symmachus drew on an entirely different heritage to understand the achievements of Gratian: to emulate and surpass Fulvius Nobilior and Scipio Aemilianus was a stiff challenge indeed. By using senators instead of emperors as the standard, Symmachus reminded Gratian that senators at Rome evaluated military success and personal virtue according to an older set of traditions which did not necessarily make room for emperors.⁷⁸

The contrast in Symmachus' and Ausonius' treatment of this topic also revealed the different personal priorities and aspirations of the two men. Ausonius was clearly more interested in the tutors than in the emperors they had served, for it was the tutors who were described, while some of the emperors were not even named; this was hardly surprising, since Ausonius had his reasons for self-identifying with the tutors. On the other hand, Symmachus gave the teachers only a perfunctory mention (even getting one of them wrong), while reserving the fuller description for the senators. Symmachus was doubtless pleased to include himself in a group with Fulvius Nobilior and Scipio Aemilianus, two of the most famous senators of the golden age of the Roman senate. What is more, Symmachus had been taught by a rhetorician from Bordeaux, Ausonius' native city, as Symmachus reminded his friend in a letter written sometime before his trip

⁷⁷ Symmachus, *Orat.* 3.7, "agnosco in te non adumbrate vestigiis sed expressa veterum signa virtutum." Fulvius Nobilior, *cos.* 189 BCE, triumphed over the Aetolian Confederacy and the island of Cephallenia: Livy, *Ab urbe condita* 39.5.13. He was accompanied not by Accius, but by Ennius, who celebrated his patron's exploits in his epic *Annales* and in the play *Ambracia*. Symmachus' mistake is perhaps traceable to Cicero, *Pro Archia* 27, where the names of these two poets occur together: Pabst (1989) 157 n.34. The examples of Ennius and Panaetius are cited (correctly) in a letter of 378 to Ausonius, congratulating him on his designation for the consulship: Symmachus, *Ep.* 1.20.2.

⁷⁸ See the astute remark of Dagnon (1984) 119, "L'empereur est source de tout à Constantinople, à l'inverse de Rome où la ville a une histoire, un Empire, avant d'avoir un empereur."

to the imperial court in 369.⁷⁹ Thus the Roman subtly put the provincial in his place: Ausonius would have made a fine tutor for Symmachus himself!⁸⁰ Formally, Ausonius and Symmachus were singing the praises of an emperor named Gratian; at the same time, however, they were thinking about their own relationships with the emperor and with each other, and about their own place in history.

A senator from Rome had unique access to the cultural heritage of the most revered era of the Roman past; however, this very antiquity could also be a burden, limiting a man like Symmachus' ability to find a place for himself at the side of emperors who thought along entirely different lines. The potential liability was especially embarrassing when Roman tradition ran up against the stubborn fact that Christianity prevailed at the imperial court in Trier. Even a distinguished emissary had little to offer in this respect, as Symmachus' panegyrics make plain. Although Valentinian and Gratian were Christians, Symmachus at no point mentioned their faith explicitly. Even the conventional, general language of divinity found in other Latin panegyrics of the fourth century was used only sparingly and unimaginatively; Symmachus may have been wary of offending Christian sensibilities at court.⁸¹ In one of his few attempts to use this language, Symmachus countered the idea that Gratian was too young to be emperor by pointing out that age was irrelevant in a god, apparently implying that Gratian was himself a god.⁸²

⁷⁹ Symmachus, *Ep.* 9.88.3-4, with Roda (1981).

⁸⁰ Salzman (2002) 70 aptly remarks that "differences in rank and in career path, together with differences in family and geographic origin, allowed aristocrats to define themselves against other aristocrats."

⁸¹ Rodgers (1986) 74-5, on Symmachus' use of the terminology of divinity.

⁸² Symmachus, *Orat.* 3.3, "errat, quisquis in deo recenset aetatem."

His most extended attempt to bestow cosmic significance on Gratian was characterized mainly by indirection and caution. Invoking one of the most famous passages in Latin literature, Symmachus declared that the golden age foretold in Vergil's Fourth Eclogue could be applied to Gratian's reign. Yet Symmachus refused to commit himself even so far, couching the possibility in the form of a contrary-to-fact condition: "If it were now permitted me to divagate in a loftier strain, with the fluency of a poet, I would, like a bard, copy out Vergil's whole passage about the new age and apply it to your name; I would say that Justice has returned to the heavens."⁸³ All the color in this passage has been borrowed from Vergil; the hesitancy belonged only to Symmachus. Nor is there even anything patently religious in this language—it is merely suggestive of supernatural promise. Symmachus did his best to link Gratian with one of the greatest hits of Roman culture, but his use of the passage was conventional and uninspired. One wonders what Gratian thought of the effort, since the boy-emperor was doubtless familiar with the poem, thanks to his studies with Ausonius. Indeed, because Ausonius and Gratian were also linked by their common Christianity, tutor and pupil together could have interpreted Vergil's poem quite differently. They may have known, for example, about the emperor Constantine's allegorical reading of this poem, which equated Justice, often personified in the poets as Virgo, with the Virgin Mary, and the savior child exalted by Vergil with Jesus Christ.⁸⁴ Measured against the exciting Christian interpretations of Vergil's "messianic eclogue" that were circulating in the fourth century, Symmachus' traditional exegesis probably fell flat on the young emperor's Christian ears.

⁸³ Symmachus, *Orat.* 3.9, "Si mihi nunc altius evagari poetico liceret eloquio, totum de novo saeculo Maronis excursus vati similis in tuum nomen excriberem; dicerem caelo redisse Iustitiam."

⁸⁴ Constantine, *Oratio ad sanctum coetum* 19, interpreting Vergil, *Eclogae* 4.6-7.

Ausonius, on the other hand, was in a far better position to articulate Gratian's relationship to divinity because he shared the emperor's religion and lived in close contact with the imperial court over many years. It was this intimacy that allowed him to trace Gratian's piety to his earliest youth.⁸⁵ Thanks to Ausonius' fawning commentary on the letter Gratian sent to him announcing his designation for the consulship of 379, we know that Gratian represented himself as consulting God about the appointment, and Ausonius as familiar with and supportive of Gratian's inclination to seek higher counsel.⁸⁶ God's blessing bestowed a superior legitimacy on Ausonius' consulship: "What elections were ever better-attended than these, to which God has furnished the design and the emperor his compliance?"⁸⁷ Thus Ausonius distinguished his consulship from that, for example, conferred on Symmachus' father. Whereas that designation was presented in terms of a Republican election (*comitia*) conducted by the senate and confirmed by the emperor, Ausonius discarded the language of electoral process in favor of an emperor's implementation of God's design. Prayerful consultation with God was a better means of deliberation than referring the matter to the senate, the equestrian order, or the Roman plebs, or even the army and provinces.⁸⁸

There is perhaps no better illustration of the divergent perspectives of Symmachus and Ausonius than the concluding thoughts of their panegyrics of Gratian. Ausonius closed by thanking God for the love and favor Gratian had shown to himself; Symmachus cited the "prophesying bards of foreign nations" for his confidence that Gratian would

⁸⁵ Ausonius, *Gratiarum actio* 14.63. There is little reason to doubt that Ausonius was a genuine, if moderate Christian: Green (1991) xxvii-viii, Sivan (1993) 110.

⁸⁶ Ausonius, *Gratiarum actio* 9.43.

⁸⁷ Ausonius, *Gratiarum actio* 9.44, "quae comitia pleniora umquam fuerunt quam quibus praestitit deus consilium, imperator obsequium?"

⁸⁸ Ausonius, *Gratiarum actio* 10.47.

conquer barbarians wherever he found them.⁸⁹ Although the Christian tone of Ausonius' prayer was "not obtrusive," it nevertheless showed that Ausonius was able to adapt the traditional pattern of imperial panegyric in order to accommodate the needs of a Christian speaker addressing a Christian emperor.⁹⁰ Symmachus, by contrast, was left out in the cold, unwilling to profess Christian sentiments and unable to appeal to the traditional corpus of prophecies, the Sibylline Books, without causing offense. Without any access to the world of the divine that could be expressed in Roman terms, Symmachus was reduced to using the barbarians' own pagan priests against them.

Themistius

Like Ausonius, Themistius was a *novus homo* from the provinces who rose to the attention of the emperor through his reputation as a professor. Born most likely in Paphlagonia, a region of northern Asia Minor, Themistius moved to Constantinople as a young man, where he was trained in philosophy by his father. After he held professorships of philosophy in Nicomedia and Constantinople, Constantius II publicized his approval of Themistius' philosophical practices by adlecting him to the senate of Constantinople in 355.⁹¹ Like Symmachus, his influence derived from his powers as an orator and as a representative of the senate, rather than from holding formal office, although coincidentally, he, like Symmachus, was appointed urban prefect, of Constantinople, in 384. He shared two other important traits with Symmachus: he was a pagan who had to solve the problem of communicating with Christian emperors, and he

⁸⁹ Ausonius, *Gratiarum actio* 18.80; Symmachus, *Orat.* 3.12, "audio iam pridem fatidicos obmurmurare gentium vates."

⁹⁰ Green (1991) 553, not obtrusive; MacCormack (1975) 169.

⁹¹ On the early life of Themistius, see Vanderspoel (1995) 31-49; on his appointment to the senate, together with the letter of adlection, Heather and Moncur (2001) 97-114.

was an advocate for an imperial city, the “New Rome,” that was insecure about its status relative to that of other cities where emperors spent much of their time. In some ways, however, Themistius was at an even greater disadvantage than his western counterpart, since, apart from Constantius II, he spoke before emperors who did not even understand Greek.⁹² Nevertheless, the tasks of his panegyrics were much the same: to bestow legitimacy on emperors while constructing a role for himself in the process.

Although Themistius did not have the advantage of being Christian, like Ausonius, he nevertheless proved far more successful than Symmachus at lending an aura of divine sponsorship to the promotion of Valens to imperial rank, and could even quote Scripture to justify his claim. Whereas Symmachus used the language of Republican elections to describe the acclamation of Valentinian, Themistius explicitly rejected this process of election as an inadequate guarantor of legitimacy. Speaking before the senate of Constantinople late in 364, only months after Valens became emperor, Themistius denied that the soldiers were “in charge of such an important election;” rather, the pronouncement in favor of Valens was “from above,” the soldiers merely acting “in the service of god.” Proof that the election was “from god” lay in the “mutual goodwill and esteem” that Valentinian and Valens felt for each other, as shown by their amicable division of responsibilities for governing the empire.⁹³

Two years later, after the revolt of Procopius had been suppressed with great difficulty, Themistius delivered a speech on the recent misfortunes, in which he affirmed that the “heart of the emperor is guarded in the hand of god.” The point of this quotation

⁹² Most of his imperial orations were addressed to Valens, a Pannonian, and Theodosius, a Spaniard. Themistius’ first words, *Orat.* 6.71c-d, were an apology to Valens for his inability to speak in Latin.

⁹³ Themistius, *Orat.* 6.73c, 74b. Heather and Moncur (2001) 183 n.147, denying validity to the soldiers was a way of retrospectively denying legitimacy to Jovian, thus explaining his failure.

from Proverbs was perhaps to suggest that “god had supported Valens from the beginning.” Judging from his return to this same biblical passage twice more in imperial orations, it was probably one of the few Themistius knew from what he calls the “writings of the Assyrians.”⁹⁴ Even the Christian Ausonius did not quote Scripture in his oration to Gratian, and the “prayer” at the close of his speech reads like more self-congratulation. Themistius, by contrast, ended his speech by celebrating the beginning of Valens’ *decennalia* in 373 with a genuine prayer to god, “the emperor and consul and father of men,” to increase the emperor’s philanthropy and grant him children.⁹⁵ This invocation was particularly deft, since it could just as well apply to Valens himself, who held his fourth consulship in this year. Themistius’ use of the language of divinity was far more subtle and sophisticated than Ausonius and Symmachus could muster. He found ways to talk about god that not only did not offend his own pagan sensibilities but could also appeal to a Christian audience who wanted to hear about God, not god. By incorporating Christian elements, without drawing attention to them as Christian, he found an innovative means of demonstrating the legitimacy of Valens’ rule, and helped secure for himself a far longer ascendancy at court than either Symmachus or Ausonius achieved.

Themistius’ willingness to incorporate Christian touches in his orations was a deliberate ploy to create distance between himself and the more extreme pagan elements represented most threateningly by the emperor Julian and the Neoplatonist philosophers memorialized in Eunapius’ *Lives of the Sophists*. In opposition to these thinkers, whom he attacked for their withdrawal from affairs and preoccupation with other-worldliness,

⁹⁴ Themistius, *Orat.* 7.89d, 11.147c, 19.229a, quoting Proverbs 21:1, with Vanderspoele (1995) 162.

⁹⁵ Themistius, *Orat.* 11.153c-d.

Themistius drew on different elements of Greek philosophy in order to render traditional *paideia* compatible with Christianity.⁹⁶ In effect, he advocated a cultural middle ground in which Latin-speaking Christian emperors and Greek-speaking pagan aristocrats could communicate with each other. Greek philosophy thus became the framework within which emperors were evaluated, much as Symmachus used Republican traditions to portray emperors in a Roman context. Although modern credulity strains to believe that professional military men with little knowledge of Greek culture could ever be described as philosopher-kings, this redefinition was no further from the truth than Symmachus' fictions of emperors duly elected by Republican voting assemblies. In each case, the orator was translating the emperor into terms that were culturally familiar and acceptable to the upper classes whose acquiescence and participation in the regime was necessary to administer the empire.⁹⁷ Symmachus, however, had little to offer besides his status as a senator at Rome, while Themistius, in addition to being the most prominent member of the senate at Constantinople, also used his status as a philosopher to construct his stance as an independent, truthful advisor.

The most distinctive feature of Themistius' panegyrics was his assertions that the reigning emperor embodied ideal qualities praised by Plato and Aristotle. When Themistius delivered a panegyric to Valens to mark the opening of the emperor's *quinquennalia*, he recalled Plato's requirements for an ideal ruler: he must be "young, self-controlled, great-hearted, mindful, gentle, brave, an apt learner." Addressing Plato directly, Themistius summons him to look upon Valens, the "archetype" of the desirable

⁹⁶ Heather and Moncur (2001) 57-68, 97-101.

⁹⁷ Heather and Moncur (2001) 19-29.

king.⁹⁸ This list of virtues served as a programmatic introduction to the rest of the speech, in which Themistius explained how Valens embodied the perfection of these qualities (and still others) and surpassed illustrious predecessors, including Alexander the Great. Two years later, when praising Valens for concluding a treaty of peace with the Goths, Themistius again invoked the authority of Plato to justify imperial policy. Recalling Plato's criticism of Lycurgus for establishing a state that only functioned well when it was at war, Themistius praised Valens for recognizing that war was not an end in itself, but a means to achieving peace.⁹⁹ By mastering himself, Valens was able to make peace with others, thus earning the right to be called emperor of all mankind, rather than just emperor of the Romans. In his only panegyric delivered in honor of Gratian (though the emperor was not present), Themistius praised the emperor as the embodiment of true beauty such as Socrates described in Plato's *Symposium*. So great was his beauty that barbarians became civilized, perhaps a reference to the Goths' request in 376 to settle on the Roman side of the Danube.¹⁰⁰ However fanciful it may seem, the language of philosophy provided the vocabulary with which Themistius made sense of the emperors he served and publicized them among the cultured classes of the Greek east. The vocabulary of classical philosophy, like that of Republican politics, went beyond the mere citation of exempla common in all imperial oratory; it constituted a whole mental framework that served the interests of both emperor and orator.

Although Themistius promoted moderate, public-spirited philosophical views, he simultaneously claimed the uncompromised integrity and forthrightness normally

⁹⁸ Themistius, *Orat.* 8.105b-c, 119d, citing Plato, *Respublica* 503c.

⁹⁹ Themistius, *Orat.* 10.131a, citing Plato, *De legibus* 628d-e.

¹⁰⁰ Themistius, *Orat.* 13.165d, 166c, with Vanderspoel (1995) 182 n.110. There is a hint of Gratian's good looks also in Ammianus, *Res gestae* 31.10.18, "dum etiam tum lanugo genis inserperet speciosa."

associated with more reclusive, ascetic philosophers.¹⁰¹ Themistius incurred a great deal of opprobrium among other philosophers for “selling out” by involving himself in public affairs; they called him a sophist, addicted to fame and celebrity, unconcerned with true philosophy. He fought off these attacks doggedly because his status as a philosopher was central to his credibility as a truth-teller, and a reputation for truthfulness was useful practically, against his professional rivals, and rhetorically, as a disclaimer of flattery that was standard for any imperial panegyrist. Themistius’ self-representation as a philosopher functioned in the same way as Ausonius’ as the imperial tutor: these roles allowed them to position themselves as trusted advisors to the emperor. When Ausonius listed famous tutors of past emperors, he associated himself with these predecessors who were, like him, provincial aristocrats from the western provinces of the empire. Themistius, too, saw himself as the latest in a famous sequence of philosophers and emperors: Arius and Augustus, Thrasyllus and Tiberius, Dio Chrysostom and Trajan, Epictetus and the two Antonines, and most recently, his own grandfather and Diocletian. With these pairs Themistius skillfully constructed a double set of lineages, by turning previous emperors into the “fathers” of Jovian’s rule, while associating himself with illustrious predecessors, all of whom were, like him, philosophers from the Greek world who taught Roman emperors.¹⁰²

Themistius proposed to continue this tradition by teaching Valens’ son, Valentinian Galates, whom he would turn into an Alexander under the direction of proper philosophy, not the sort of thaumaturgy in vogue under Julian. It would be best if the child would emulate Gratian, who “is revered by all Greeks and barbarians, but bows to

¹⁰¹ Brown (1992) 61-70, philosophers’ freedom of speech, 68-70, Themistius.

¹⁰² Themistius, *Orat.* 5.63d; similar lists at 11.145b, 13.173b-c, 34.viii.

his teacher, who is an object of dread to the Celts and Germans, but keeps his eyes on the ground when his guide in lessons appears.”¹⁰³ Ausonius had the one thing that eluded Themistius’ grasp: a child-emperor to indoctrinate with his own ideas. An underage emperor may have been the choicest prize, but Themistius could work with any emperor who was sufficiently pliant: “We are pleased whenever an emperor appears who does not himself practice philosophy, but is ready to obey and listen to true philosophers.” When, however, an emperor appeared who *did* practice philosophy, Themistius found himself not only deprived of influence but subjected to lectures from the emperor. In fact, Themistius had attempted to justify his public role to Julian by once again invoking the examples of Arius and Thrasylus, together with Nicolaus of Damascus and Musonius Rufus. In return, he received a lengthy letter from the emperor explaining how he had misunderstood Aristotle and pointing out that the men he named had in general avoided any public responsibilities. The imperial palace was not big enough to accommodate two philosophers, let alone two who followed different traditions.¹⁰⁴

The philosopher who participated in public affairs was expected to be an advocate for his city in its dealings with the imperial administration. Themistius’ cultural status as a philosopher and political status as the leading member of the senate combined to produce an effective spokesman for Constantinople.¹⁰⁵ Although Constantine had refounded the ancient city of Byzantium in 324, it took most of the fourth century for it to grow into its eventual role as the eastern imperial capital. Although the special importance of the city seems to have been recognized from the beginning—its citizens

¹⁰³ Valentinian Galates: Themistius, *Orat.* 8.119a-120b; he should emulate Gratian: 9.125b-c.

¹⁰⁴ Themistius, *Orat.* 8.108b; Julian, *Ep. ad Themistium* 263c-266d.

¹⁰⁵ Vanderspoel (1995) 29-30, “Among his other roles, Themistius was always a representative of a city.”

received subsidized grain, and iconographical representations were not ashamed to class it with Rome, Alexandria, Trier, and Antioch—it was slow to acquire the trappings that would allow it to compete with the more established cities of the east, let alone with Rome. It did not acquire a city prefect or senate of equal size to Rome’s until the late 350s, and even then, its members lagged far behind their Roman counterparts in wealth and prestige.¹⁰⁶

By other measures, Constantinople’s upward struggle continued for another generation. In the decades after Constantine’s death, emperors in the east spent far more time in Antioch than in Constantinople; it was not until Theodosius ascended the throne in 379 that emperors began to reside continuously in Constantinople. Constantinople’s importance was formally recognized in a canon of the Council of 381, which awarded it see the first place of honor after that of Rome—a belated confirmation of Themistius’ claim, in 357, that Constantinople “ruled in second place.”¹⁰⁷ It was also difficult to build the physical infrastructure appropriate to an imperial city overnight. In important respects, then, Constantinople’s anxieties in the middle of the fourth century were not very different from those of Rome herself: each city pleaded, and competed, for the attentions of emperors, in the hope that they would visit in person, or at least sponsor building projects worthy of the city’s pretensions. Constantinople did have one important advantage over Rome, however: like the other cities that were turned into imperial centers in the age of the Tetrarchy, Constantinople was located on an important communication network, and emperors therefore passed through the city relatively often.

¹⁰⁶ Dagron (1984) 119-46, on the foundation and development of the senate at Constantinople, 132 n.3, for the more distinguished ancestry of senators at Rome.

¹⁰⁷ Downey (1961) 419; Themistius, *Orat.* 3.41c, and Chapter 4 above.

Valens was the first emperor to be proclaimed at Constantinople, in a ceremony managed by his brother in the Hebdomon, a suburb seven miles from the center that served as the main army camp. Valens, therefore, had good reason to be well-disposed toward the city; indeed he called it the “mother of my emperorship” in a speech to the senate in December 364. Recalling this phrase in his own speech, Themistius proposed that Valens sponsor a building program in the city center, to complement his promise to adorn the Hebdomon with “foundations, platforms, and statues.” In this way, Valens could surpass the benefactions even of Constantine himself.¹⁰⁸ This initial promise suffered a setback, however, when the usurper Procopius gained control of Constantinople in September 365. The uprising began in Constantinople and robbed Valens of control of the city for eight months.¹⁰⁹ After he recovered the city, Valens spent only about twelve months there, spread over three stints, in the remaining twelve years of his reign, and did not visit the city at all between May 371 and June 378.¹¹⁰

Thus when Themistius spoke in honor of the emperor’s *decennalia* in 373, he was obliged to travel to Antioch. Bowing to reality, Themistius conceded that “you appear to be visiting the Syrians and Assyrians,” but added hopefully, “you turn your eyes continually to Thrace.” Themistius gently sought to remind the emperor of the strategic importance of Constantinople: “the building activities there are no less your concern than the ones you are engaged in [here].”¹¹¹ Imperial building activity was interpreted as an indication of the emperor’s favor. Themistius alluded to the waterworks Valens was

¹⁰⁸ Themistius, *Orat.* 6.82b-83c, with Heather and Moncur (2001) 197 n.203.

¹⁰⁹ On Procopius’ revolt, see Matthews (1989) 191-203, Vanderspoel (1995) 161-67. Heather and Moncur (2001) 36, “for all Themistius’ efforts on his behalf, the Emperor Valens never successfully won over hearts and minds in Constantinople.”

¹¹⁰ Barnes (1998) 247-54.

¹¹¹ Themistius, *Orat.* 11.152b.

building in Constantinople—later sources specify these as two baths, the Anastasianae and Carosianae, named for his daughters, a nymphaeum, and an aqueduct—in order to remind Valens of his former affection for the city and congratulate him for surpassing the benefactions of Constantine and Constantius, whose gifts had been lifeless baubles.¹¹² Symmachus had used the same tactic when reporting to Valentinian and Gratian about the bridges being built at Rome in their names. Ultimately, the aim was to get the emperor to visit in person, but Valens, like his brother, failed to show up. Meanwhile, Antioch was profiting handsomely: it received from Valens a new forum ringed by colonnades, a renovated arena for wild-beast exhibitions, and a new public bath.¹¹³ By the end of his reign, the rupture between Valens and Constantinople was complete; when he presided at the hippodrome in Constantinople in June 378, before marching against the Goths, “all with one voice clamored against the emperor’s negligence of the public affairs, crying out with great earnestness, ‘Give us arms, and we ourselves will fight.’” Incensed, Valens vowed to punish the citizens upon his return, “not only for their insolent reproaches, but for having previously favored the pretensions of the usurper Procopius, declaring also that he would utterly demolish their city, and cause the plough to pass over its ruins.”¹¹⁴

After fourteen years in power, Valens had still not learned how to handle outspoken crowds in the hippodrome. Contemporaries perceived a distinction between the family of Constantine and the brothers from Pannonia; laying siege to Procopius’ forces in Chalcedon, Valens was taunted from the walls as “Sabaiarius,” helpfully

¹¹² Themistius, *Orat.* 11.151a-c, with Lenski (2002) 278, 399.

¹¹³ Downey (1961) 403-10.

¹¹⁴ Socrates, *HE* 4.38.

glossed by Ammianus as a drinker of cheap Illyrian beer.¹¹⁵ Thanks to his liberal education at the hands of Ausonius, Gratian was the family member best equipped to appeal to Roman sensibilities. Symmachus had invited a boy to visit the bridge being built in his name. Six years later, Themistius journeyed to Rome to invite a young man to visit and enter the city in triumph.¹¹⁶ Gratian may have planned to visit in the first months after his accession, but it is unlikely that he ever made the trip.¹¹⁷ Without Valens and Gratian to chaperone, Themistius doubtless had a good deal of time to spend with the senators of Rome. He arrived only a few weeks after Avianus Symmachus had been designated for the next year's consulship and Aurelius Symmachus had delivered his speech of thanks in the senate.¹¹⁸ Without an emperor in the audience, Themistius instead praised the senators of Rome as the bulwarks of religious tradition against the slanders of Empedocles.¹¹⁹ Themistius' visit in 376 revealed the position of Rome in the fourth century: in a city without emperors, senators were once again the most prominent figures in the city.

¹¹⁵ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 26.8.2, with Matthews (1989) 199-200.

¹¹⁶ Themistius, *Orat.* 13.178d, 179b.

¹¹⁷ Barnes (1999), amending (1975).

¹¹⁸ Themistius may have discussed philosophy with the Symmachi and Praetextatus: Vanderspoel (1995) 184-5.

¹¹⁹ Themistius, *Orat.* 13.178a-b. The passage is obscure, as shown by the range of explanations offered: Dagron (1968) 159-63, Empedocles as Christ; Vanderspoel (1995) 25-6, as Christianity or some other Christian figure; Heather and Moncur (2001) 170 n.109, as Julian.

Chapter 7

Symmachus and Milan

In contrast to Trier's location at a strategic river-crossing, Milan was a landlocked city whose importance owed to its position at the center of an extensive road network. The city lay astride the major east-west route that connected Gaul with the Balkans, and at the southern end of the central Alpine passes that led to the Rhine frontier; thus it was ideally situated to afford access to all the military theaters of the western empire. Occasionally, Milan was on the receiving end of this proximity. An invading army of Alamanni was defeated on their way back north by Gallienus near Milan in 260; the city fell to another invader from the north—Roman, this time—in 387, when Magnus Maximus evicted Valentinian II from Italy.¹ Milan was close to another road, too: the Via Aemilia, running south-east to Ariminum, whence the Via Flaminia led straight south to Rome. Milan's position south of the Alps made it feel relatively close to Rome, but emperors did not choose it for its convenience to central Italy; the road to Rome was truly the road less traveled.²

¹ Zonaras, *Epitome historiae romanae* 12.24, with Drinkwater (2007) 53-57, 70-71, Gallienus; Matthews (1975) 173-82, Maximus.

² For the perception that Milan was close to Rome, see *Panegyrici latini* 11.12.1, "Roma immodico propinquitatis vestrae elata gaudio vosque e speculis suorum montium prospicere conata," Ausonius, *Ordo nobilium urbium* 45, *vicinia Romae*, and Symmachus, *Ep.* 1.102 (to Syagrius, a friend in Milan), "nunc expectationem nostram vicinia facilitate sollicitas, nec te excusare collegis interventus Alpium potest."

For all that Milan was south of the Alps, it was still north of the Apennines, which were a serious obstacle to communication between northern Italy and the rest of the peninsula. The Lombard plain, dominated by the river Po, had a different landscape, environment, and orientation from central and southern Italy; its people were different, too.³ Milan had been founded in the early fourth century BCE, by relatives of the Gauls who would capture Rome itself a few years later. Rome first captured Milan in 222 BCE, and established permanent control in 194. When the region was finally “reduced to the form of a province” after the Social War, it was given the name Cisalpine Gaul, i.e. “Gaul-this-side-of-the-Alps.”⁴ Although relatively little is known about Milan in the decades afterward, there are indications of lingering hostility to Rome. In the time of Augustus, there was a bronze statue of Brutus, Caesar’s assassin, prominently displayed in the center of the city. Augustus noticed it and affected to be displeased, before commending the city for its loyalty to friends even in adversity. Probably in 14 BCE, a local advocate got so carried away that he “bewailed the condition of Italy [Transpadana], charging that it was being reduced to the form of a province for a second time, and on top of that he invoked Marcus Brutus, whose statue was in full view, as the author and champion of the laws and liberty, and nearly paid the penalty.” He was cheered on by the crowd, who defied the attempts of the proconsul’s guards to maintain order. Even long

³ On the importance of the Apennines, see Wickham (1981) 10-11, noting that they “block the North off from the rest of Italy” (p.10); Humphries (1999) 21-44, distinct environment of northern Italy. The degree to which Cisalpine Gaul was connected economically to the rest of Italy in the Roman period has been disputed, with Garnsey (1976) arguing for more extensive contacts, Brunt (1971) 172-84 for relative isolation.

⁴ Polybius 2.34.15, Milan captured by Cn. Cornelius in 222; Livy 5.34.9, foundation, 34.46.1, campaign of 194 under L. Valerius Flaccus.

after their subjugation, the people of Milan could still be brought to their feet by a stirring show of hostility to Roman power.⁵

For most of its history, Milan was a “respectable county seat”; it was not until the late third century that Milan became a serious rival to Rome. The emperors who composed the Tetrarchy began to build up new cities to use as their residences.

Maximian Herculius, the senior emperor in the west, initiated a building program in the last years of the third century that provided Milan with new walls, a large bath complex, a circus, and a palace, in addition to a mausoleum for his family. A poet of the late fourth century declared that these new monumental buildings did not suffer by comparison with those of Rome.⁶ Milan’s new status was given spectacular confirmation when it hosted an unprecedented imperial summit in the winter of 290-91. An orator who painted the scene described the whole city turning out to watch Diocletian and Maximian process through the city, seated together in the same chariot in perfect comity and harmony.

Rome could only crane her neck to try to catch a glimpse of this miraculous sight.

Although she remained the “mistress of nations,” it was Milan which was “most blessed during those days”; denied the favor of the emperors’ presence, Rome could only send a delegation of senators, generously lending Milan a likeness of its own majesty. “At that moment the seat of imperial power appeared to be the place to which the two emperors

⁵ Plutarch, *Comparatio Dionis et Bruti* 5, Augustus in Milan; Suetonius, *De grammaticis et rhetoribus* 30.6, “et rursus in cognitione caedis Mediolani apud L. Pisonem proconsulem defendens reum, cum cohibente lictore nimias laudantium voces ita excandisset, ut deplorato Italiae statu quasi iterum in formam provinciae redigeretur M. insuper Brutum, cuius statua in conspectu erat, invocaret legum ac libertatis auctorem et vindicem, paene poenas luit.” For “Italia” as Transpadana, and the proconsulship of L. Calpurnius Piso Pontifex (cos. 15 BCE), see Syme (1986) 331-2.

⁶ Krautheimer (1983) 69-70 building program (quote at p.69). Ausonius, *Ordo nobilium urbium* 45, “nec iuncta permit vicinia Romae.”

had come.” It was the first time any orator had ever implied that Rome was not necessarily the capital of the empire.⁷

Milan continued to be an important city in the Tetrarchic period and in the years immediately afterward. Indeed, it was probably at the aforementioned summit in Milan that Diocletian and Maximian took the fateful decision to appoint two junior emperors, or Caesars. Maximian subsequently invested Constantius I with his new rank at Milan on March 1, 293, and Maximian himself abdicated there on May 1, 305.⁸ The first Tetrarchy was followed by a second, which lasted little more than a year before Constantius’ death threw open the door to new candidates. In the resultant chaos, Maximian’s son, Maxentius, seized power and developed an ideology that glorified Rome and returned it to its rightful place as the center of the empire.⁹ Rome’s revival as an imperial residence came to an end when Constantine invaded Italy in 312. He was welcomed at Milan by a joyous populace, including the leading men and women of the city. The triumphal arch built in Rome to celebrate Constantine’s victory over Maxentius included a scene which showed Constantine’s departure from Milan, and portrayed it as the beginning of a campaign that led to his victories at Verona and at the Milvian Bridge and finally to his entry into Rome. The depiction of an emperor who set out from Milan to conquer the illegitimate ruler of Rome represented an inversion of the original narrative of Roman conquest. It was a revealing commentary on the realities of power in the late empire:

⁷ *Panegyrici latini* 11(3).12.1, *gentium domina Roma*, 2, “lumina siquidem senatus sui misit beatissimae illi per eos dies Mediolanensium civitati similitudinem maiestatis suae libenter impartiens, ut ibi tunc esse sedes imperii videretur quo uterque venerat imperator,” with Millar (1977) 45.

⁸ Barnes (1982) 60, dates. For the hypothesis that the Tetrarchy was conceived at the 290-91 summit, see Potter (2004) 285-8.

⁹ See Chapter 2 above.

Rome was politically and militarily weak, susceptible to conquest by its former provinces.¹⁰

After Maximian, few emperors lived in the new palace in Milan for continuous periods, but it was still a convenient rendezvous. Constantine returned to Milan after defeating Maxentius and stayed there nearly as long as he had stayed in Rome. In February 313, Milan hosted its second imperial summit. This meeting resulted in a marriage alliance between Constantine and Licinius, embodied in the latter's marriage to Constantine's sister Constantia. Milan also gave its name to a momentous edict by which Constantine and Licinius guaranteed the toleration of Christianity and the restoration of property confiscated in Diocletian's persecution.¹¹ In November 355, Milan again witnessed the creation of a Caesar, when Constantius II raised his cousin Julian to imperial rank and dispatched him to quell a revolt in Gaul. In the years between autumn 354 and spring 357, Constantius lived in Milan for several spells totaling nearly two years; by comparison, he spent only one month in Rome.¹²

Milan once again became an important imperial residence at the end of the fourth century. The Roman senator Symmachus made a number of journeys to the court at Milan, at least five in the last twenty years of his life (382-402). In contrast to the many trips Symmachus and other senators made to Milan, emperors scarcely ever returned the favor by coming to Rome. Indeed, in these twenty years there was an emperor in northern Italy, almost always in Milan, for approximately fifteen years, while Rome saw

¹⁰ *Panegyrici latini* 12(9).7.5-8, *adventus* at Milan. For the argument that the *profectio* depicted on the west frieze commemorated Constantine's departure from Milan, see L'Orange and von Gerkan (1939) 59, with photographs at Tafeln 3, 6, and 7. Van Dam (2007) 70-8, inversion of Rome and provinces.

¹¹ Barnes (1982) 71, Constantine in Milan; Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 45.1, marriage, 48, edict of toleration.

¹² Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 15.8.17, Julian; Barnes (1993) 221-2, Constantius' dates in Milan, and Chapter 3 above.

its ruler only once, for two-and-a-half months.¹³ Symmachus' frustration with this state of affairs is apparent in a letter which he sent to his son-in-law in 397. The senate had apparently won a promise from the emperor Honorius to enter on his fourth consulship at Rome on January 1, 398. This concession was now being reversed through the machinations of a high court official. The praetorian prefect of Italy, Mallius Theodorus, had received an embassy of Milanese dignitaries, who doubtless entreated the emperor to stay in Milan instead. A whole new embassy would have to be dispatched to the court to reverse Theodorus' intrigues and "ask again for the arrival of our lord and emperor." Symmachus could only fume that "the wishes of provincials were being set before the petitions of the senate." Milan may have been the seat of the imperial court, but "from the perspective of a senator at Rome, northern Italy was still a province."¹⁴

The centrality of Rome in Symmachus' *Relationes*

The same concern to defend the privileges and prerogatives of Rome underlay the official statements Symmachus made in his capacity as prefect of Rome. During his tenure of this office, which lasted for approximately eight months in 384-85, Symmachus submitted at least forty-nine *relationes*, or reports, which were intended to keep the emperor informed about events in Rome. Although many of his reports have come down

¹³ For Symmachus' trips to Milan, see Matthews (1974) 77. The length of emperors' stays in Milan is computed from Seeck (1919) 264-304; Theodosius I visited Rome from June 13 – August 30 or September 1, 389 (pp. 275-7; see also Nixon and Rodgers (1994) 443 n.16). It is disputed whether Theodosius I also visited Rome in autumn 394 following his victory over Eugenius; for the arguments in favor, see Cameron (1969), but against, Matthews (1975) 248 n.2; the literature on the question is assembled by Marcone (1983) 62.

¹⁴ Symmachus, *Ep.* 6.52, "adventus domini et principis nostri denuo postulandus est. Theodorus enim vir inlustrius Mediolanensium legatione suscepta eniti dicitur, ut senatus petitionibus provinciale desiderium praeferatur," with quote at Van Dam (2007) 75; see also Humphries (1999) 42, "Northern Italy had usurped the position once held by the center and south, and it was Milan—and subsequently Ravenna—that sat at the center of Italian political activity." According to Marcone (1983) 131, *provinciale* here refers specifically to Italia Annonaria, as northern Italy was called in the late empire.

to us without a named addressee, or with the wrong one, nearly all of them would have been sent to Valentinian II, whose court was resident at Milan during this period.¹⁵ The *Relationes* comprise a unique and relatively complete series of administrative documents from the office of Rome's highest magistrate, the urban prefect. As such they have become an invaluable source for understanding the administrative processes of late Roman government; in his definitive study of the urban prefecture, André Chastagnol called them "the most precious jewel."¹⁶ Nevertheless, these *Relationes* were more than mere administrative reports. The very fact that such reports were even necessary reflected the fundamental problem facing Rome in the fourth century: with the removal of the emperors to new bases in the provinces, Rome's identity as the capital of the empire was increasingly open to question. As prefect of Rome, Symmachus had a platform and open channel of communication with the imperial court. He could use his *Relationes* to defend the interests of the senate and Roman people (SPQR) and to remind the distant emperor of his obligations to the city of Rome.

The prefect's most important duty, on which his very life depended, was to ensure Rome's supply of provisions, for the city's outsized population required a vast infrastructure to keep it fed.¹⁷ In this respect, Rome's relationship to the provinces had

¹⁵ On the problem of the headings, see Vera (1981) lxxxix-xcv, who argues on their basis that neither Symmachus nor his son Memmius could have been responsible for publishing the *Relationes*, and that it was a later admirer who found them languishing in the family's archive. Vera's thesis is accepted by Sogno (2006) 33-34, but see also the attractive earlier proposal by Matthews (1974) 63, that Memmius collected the *Relationes* to form the core of a tenth book of *Epistulae* modeled on Pliny's correspondence with Trajan.

¹⁶ Chastagnol (1960) 14, "sa valeur est inestimable: elle constitue sans aucun doute le plus précieux joyau de notre documentation."

¹⁷ Chastagnol (1960) 296-334, prefecture's distribution of bread, oil, pork, and wine. The number of citizens entitled to receive the *annona* is also the basis for estimating the population of Rome in the fourth century, which held steady at around 800,000 until the Gothic sack of 410: see Durliat (1990) 110-23, esp. 117.

changed little since the early empire, except that the emperor was no longer physically present to oversee these arrangements; instead, this responsibility had passed to the prefect, even though the emperor was still the only figure with the authority to order the supplies to be sent. The prefect thus had great responsibilities, but little power to deliver results: “it is the emperor’s favor that makes good magistrates.” Consequently, his main hope was to secure the emperor’s cooperation; he continually appealed for help, relying on arguments from custom and tradition—both that Rome was accustomed to these supplies, and that the provision of them was traditionally an imperial responsibility. The language of Symmachus’ pleas for help during a grain shortage was revealing: Rome was still awaiting the arrival of its “regular sustenance,” its “customary cargoes.”¹⁸ Symmachus complained that “the appointed provinces had contributed nothing of their customary revenues,” and helpfully attached a chart showing what quantities the commissariats of Spain and Alexandria were supposed to be supplying. Rome was dependent on overseas provinces for these massive imports of grain and olive oil, but the urban prefect had no authority over the magistrates overseas; he could only appeal to the emperor to uphold Rome’s traditional right to the resources of the provinces.¹⁹

The continuation of these customary deliveries from the provinces was crucial to maintaining Rome’s cherished belief that it was still at the center of the Roman world. By this time, Constantinople, for example, was also receiving official distributions of

¹⁸ *Rel.* 1.2, “bonos enim magistratus favor principum facit,” 2.3, “honorem meum non deseruerint, qui dederunt.” *Rel.* 18.1, *sollemnis alimoniae*, 2, *onera consueta*; see also 37.3, *inlatio sollemnis inpendii*.

¹⁹ *Rel.* 18, 37, grain, 35, olive oil; 37.2, “opem largam populi Romani inploramus aerario, cum iam diu nihil solitorum vectigalium decretae provinciae contulerunt.”

grain, and in 381, had gained the further honor of being recognized as “New Rome.”²⁰ The prefect’s plea was thus not just for grain, but for reassurance that the emperor still considered Rome important. Symmachus employed all the techniques of praise to remind the emperor of Rome’s expectation that he would “promise unfailing supplies for the Roman people.” “It befits your age, it befits your divine virtues, that one of your first and foremost concerns should be the peace of mind of the Roman people.”²¹ When insufficient supplies arrived, Symmachus ordered an expulsion of foreigners to try to alleviate the crisis. He thereby incurred not only the odium of provincials but also the ridicule of opponents.²²

The urban plebs did not live by bread alone; as in the early empire, the people expected the generous provision of entertainment as well. When the emperor promised shows in the theater and circus but did not follow through, Symmachus wrote to remind him of his obligation: the people, he said, regarded these spectacles “as owed.” This remark referred to a particular promise, but was indicative of a broader attitude of entitlement that prevailed at Rome. When the horses and actors finally arrived, there was a surge of popular support for the emperor, and the people poured from the gates to catch the first glimpse of his gifts. Characteristically, Symmachus framed his description of the

²⁰ Dagron (1974) 458, New Rome, a title conferred by the third canon of the Council of Constantinople. Constantinople’s *annona* was instituted in 332; the restoration of its full funding in 357 “inaugure une série de mesures qui portent la capitale orientale au niveau de Rome” (pp. 530-41, quote at 535). *CTh* 2.8.19 (389), addressed to the prefect of Rome, would soon accord equal status to the *natales* of Rome and Constantinople as official holidays.

²¹ *Rel.* 18.3, “hoc saeculo vestro, hoc divinis virtutibus dignum est, ut securitatem Romani populi inter praecipua et prima curetis,” 37.1, “felicitas quidem vestra indefessas populo Romano copias pollicetur.”

²² Symmachus, *Ep.* 2.7.3, “quanto nobis odio provinciarum constat ista securitas?”, provincials; see also Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 14.6.19. Ambrose, *De officiis* 3.45-52, opponents, with McLynn (1994) 272-75. On the absence of this report from the *Relationes*, see Sogno (2006) 32-34.

people's enjoyment of the circus races in terms of ancient tradition, pointing out that the first Romans had found their wives by luring the Sabine women to the races.²³

Symmachus' comments point to a deeper significance of these imperial benefactions to the urban plebs. He was at pains to deny that the people were simply "greedy" for food and spectacles; "love for your Perennities, not desire for spectacles, has stimulated the desires of the people."²⁴ The Roman people, in short, were looking for a sign that the emperor still held them in high enough regard to provide for their entertainment, as emperors used to do when they lived in Rome. Even as he thanked the emperor for his gift of actors and horses for the racing factions, Symmachus could not help making yet another request for grain. A "royal fleet" would return laden with the "fruitful cargoes of Egyptian grain" to the joyous welcome of senate and people. Symmachus almost seemed to be dreaming of another military conquest of Egypt. The shipment of commodities to Rome was rich with symbolism, for it signified Rome's power to extract resources from the provinces. The result was more than just the importation of food: "we have recovered the pledge of our ancient prerogative—peace of mind; for it is evident that, with you as emperors, anything of quality that nature produces or hard work fashions belongs to the Roman people."²⁵ It was the same sentiment which Aelius Aristides had voiced in an oration praising Rome in the mid-second century: "whatever grows and is manufactured among each people cannot fail to exist in abundance here." At the peak of Rome's power and prosperity, Aristides had assumed

²³ *Rel.* 6.1, "ea iam quasi debita repetit, quae aeternitas vestra sponte promisit," 9.5, popular opinion, 9.6, Sabine women.

²⁴ *Rel.* 9.7, "non sunt avara vota, quae saeculi excitavit humanitas," 6.3, "et tamen amor perennitatis vestrae acuit desideria plebis, non cupiditas ludicrorum."

²⁵ *Rel.* 9.2, "recepimus veteris praerogativae fidem, securitatem. siquidem constat imperantibus vobis populi esse Romani, quidquid ubique generosum vel gignit natura vel informat industria," 7, "regiam classem," "felicia onera Aegyptiae frugis."

that Rome would always be the first city of the empire; Symmachus knew how precarious its privileges really were. In his day Rome's position was no longer assured; it was a city "grey with age," but imperial favor could "return it to its original luxuriance and to that springtime of its erstwhile age of vigor." The continued flow of goods from the provinces to Rome was a tradition in its own right, the preservation of which constituted a tangible link with Rome's glorious past.²⁶

Apart from his responsibilities towards the plebs, the urban prefect also functioned as the head of the senate, and by extension as the spokesman of the senatorial order in its relations with the imperial court. Symmachus defended the right of all men of senatorial rank, including those in the provinces, to have their cases heard before the prefect of Rome, rather than before the palace official in charge of the imperial accounts. It was "the business proper to the urban prefecture to safeguard the rights of senators."²⁷ Underlying this attitude was the perception that "Rome" and "court" were two distinct, separate spheres. On the one hand, this meant that senators had to virtually beg the emperor to visit. In the depths of despair as he attempted to resign his office, Symmachus declared that he would exchange all the favors he had ever received from the emperor in return for seeing him in person: "this is the one thing I yearn for."²⁸ On the other, it made senators extremely sensitive about court officials who improperly meddled in Roman affairs. When he was accused by opponents in Milan, Symmachus voiced his astonishment that "reports which were unknown at Rome were accepted as true at court."

²⁶ Aelius Aristides, *Orat.* 26.11, "ὅσα γὰρ παρ' ἐκάστοις φύεται καὶ κατασκευάζεται, οὐκ ἔστιν ὡς οὐκ ἐνταῦθα ἀεὶ περιττεύει." Symmachus, *Rel.* 9.7, "fecistis ut urbs cana luxuriet in primam reducta laetiam et ver illud quondam vigentis aetatis."

²⁷ Symmachus, *Rel.* 48.1, "praefecturae urbanae proprium negotium est senatorum iura tutari."

²⁸ Symmachus, *Rel.* 10.3, "hoc unum pro omnibus, quae praestitistis, exopto"; see also 7.2, "quando mihi eveniet expressa potius et viva gaudia capere de vobis?" Symmachus had also urged Valentinian I to visit Rome: see Chapter 6 above.

In his formulation of this dichotomy, Symmachus used a peculiar phrase to designate the court, literally, “in the fortified camp,” which further marked it as antithetical to the civilian character of Rome.²⁹ Resentment at court interference was felt even more strongly when it was a question of defending senatorial prerogative. At the height of the treason trials that ensnared a number of senators under Valentinian I, the senate’s most bitter complaint was that members of the order had been treated “in an unaccustomed and unlawful manner.”³⁰

It is worth considering in more detail Symmachus’ instinctive defense of ancient usages. Soon after he took office, Symmachus wrote to the court at Milan to ask that a recent decision by Gratian be overturned, so that an ancient custom might be restored in Rome. For many years, the prefect of Rome had been permitted to ride about the city in a particular kind of carriage; Gratian, believing that something more dignified was needed, replaced the old carriage with a new vehicle, which Symmachus condemned as “foreign and pretentious.” Symmachus summoned examples from the distant past to argue that Romans did not tolerate excessive displays of majesty: not just Tarquin, but even Camillus had offended popular opinion by his use of a chariot; better to emulate the modesty of Publicola. The new carriage, he said, implied that the old had been inadequate. “The Roman people reckon that a prefecture which has adopted more recent standards is in decline.” Although the new carriage was more magnificent, it was less familiar. “We do not find fault with your novel gift, but we prefer our own good

²⁹ Symmachus, *Rel.* 21.3, “miratur in procinctu creditum, quod Roma nescit admissum.” The *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, s.v. *procinctus* II.A.2, records only three examples, all from Symmachus, of *in procinctu* to mean “at the imperial court.” On Rome’s civilian character, see also Chapter 2 above. Curran (2000) 208, the episode illustrates “the distance between the urban prefecture and the court.”

³⁰ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 28.1.24, “inuitato et illicito more.”

things...whose use is more ancient.” Symmachus’ defense of the old carriage was expressed in terms of its symbolic meanings. The carriage called forth reflections on Rome’s past, and helped to define a public image that was synonymous with all things traditional.³¹

The altar of Victory and the struggle to define an emperor

At about the same time that Symmachus was voicing his preference for the old style of carriage, he was also drafting a report which requested the return of the altar of Victory to the senate-house.³² The literary fame of the *Third Relatio* has caused it to be detached from the administrative dossier to which it belonged. It is usually read by itself, or paired with Ambrose’s letters on the altar, and treated as a unique window on the relative fortunes of paganism and Christianity in the late fourth century.³³ The temptation to describe the conflict over the altar primarily in religious terms both stems from and contributes to a broader tendency to describe fourth-century Rome in terms of the Christianization of society and topography.³⁴ The altar of Victory affair has been seen as an unusually lucid episode in this otherwise murky process. On the surface, it seems obvious that the problem arose when Christian emperors objected to the presence of a

³¹ Symmachus, *Rel.* 4.1, “peregrini ac superbi vehiculi,” 2, “degenerem praefecturam populus Romanus existimat, quae posteriora traxit exempla,” 3, “non culpamus novum beneficium, sed bona nostra praeferimus. submovete vehiculum, cuius cultus insignior est; illud maluimus, cuius usus antiquior.” For an illustration of the prefect’s carriage, see Demandt and Engemann (2007) 181, a color reproduction of the prefect’s insignia as represented in the *Notitia dignitatum* (early fifth century).

³² The two *relationes* appear consecutively in the manuscripts, but it is unclear which one was written first; Barrow (1973) 16 places the petition on the carriage before the one on the altar.

³³ For examples of the *Third Relatio* printed with Ambrose’s letters on the altar, see Klein (1972), Croke and Harries (1982) 28-51, Ramsey (1997) 174-94, and Liebeschuetz (2005) 61-94. A starting point of pagans and Christians is usually taken for granted even in more recent discussions of the altar controversy: Sheridan (1966), Evenepoel (1998).

³⁴ The Christianization of society is most often studied in terms of the aristocracy: Brown (1961), von Haehling (1978), Barnes (1995), Salzman (2002); that of topography has focused on the building of churches, and is dominated by the work of Krautheimer (1937-1980) and (1983). Both society and topography are treated by Curran (2000).

pagan altar in the Curia, and that the senate's petitions for its return were inspired by its members' unwillingness to acquiesce in the proscription of pagan cults. "Then as now the affair achieved a notoriety exceeding its intrinsic importance, and the altar of Victoria came in a sense to symbolize the struggle for paganism itself."³⁵

It is not foreordained, however, to interpret the struggle over the altar in religious terms. The problem of the altar went back to 357, when Constantius II removed it from the Curia, and it would continue to be an issue in the senate's relationship with the imperial court through the end of the fourth century. The senate sent no fewer than five petitions or embassies on the subject to four different emperors between 382 and 393.³⁶ Thus it is clear that the senate, or at least a significant part of it, believed that important principles were at stake. Certainly, religion was part of this controversy, as was politics, two categories which it did not occur to Romans—of whatever religious persuasion—to segregate. But even when the arguments about the altar seem to be about religion and politics, they were often driven by larger questions about identity and status. In particular, Symmachus sought to use the current issue of the altar as a focus around which to construct an image of proper imperial rule. Thus he was more interested in being an advocate for a particular kind of emperor, and a particular kind of empire, than he was in debating the significance of the altar per se. Not surprisingly, Symmachus wanted an emperor who would uphold Rome's distinctive traditions, and an empire in which Rome was recognized as the most important city, the one true center. It was the

³⁵ Matthews (1975) 210-11, lucid episode; Cameron (1970) 237, struggle for paganism.

³⁶ These included an embassy to Gratian in 382, Symmachus' *Third Relatio* to Valentinian II in 384, a senatorial petition to Theodosius I (probably in 389), another petition to Valentinian II in 392, and yet another to Eugenius in 393. The last three petitions are mentioned by Ambrose, *Ep. extra Collectionem* (to Eugenius) 10.4-6, with notes on the chronology in Liebeschuetz (2005) 79-80, 257-58. Barnes (1976) argues for a sixth attempt, an embassy led by Symmachus to Honorius in 401/2, which provoked Prudentius' *Contra Symmachum*.

same vision which permeated his requests for imperial benefactions of grain and entertainment, as well as for the old style of carriage. In short, he wanted not just a Roman emperor, but a “Rome emperor.”

It is true that Symmachus began and ended his appeal for the return of the altar with a request to return to the status quo ante with respect to religion: “we ask that you give us back that religious arrangement which long benefited the state.” He imagined the emperors of the past as a kind of senate, divided into pagan and Christian factions, but all agreeing that the state’s religious institutions should not be abolished. He believed that it was false economy to have withdrawn the subsidies to the Vestal Virgins, and that the current food shortage could be traced to this failure to honor the state’s obligations to the priestesses. Nevertheless, Symmachus was “not concerned for the cause of religion alone.” What aggrieved him was the sense that Rome’s influence with the emperor was diminishing. The Vestals’ loss of their subsidies was a blow to their honor, not their pocketbooks; their immunity from public obligations was a “mere title,” yet it was as visible a token of their status as the fillets they wore on their heads. The food shortage that ensued only seemed to confirm that Rome was slipping down the list of the emperor’s priorities.³⁷

Symmachus’ arguments about the altar of Victory often betray the same underlying concern for the status of Rome and its most characteristic institution, the senate. The removal of the altar seemed to symbolize a devaluing of the relationship

³⁷ Symmachus, *Rel.* 3.3, “repetimus igitur religionum statum, qui reip(ublicae) diu profuit. certe dinumerentur principes utriusque sectae utriusque sententiae,” 11, “honor solus est in illo veluti stipendio castitatis: ut vittae earum capiti decus faciunt, ita insigne ducitur sacerdotii vacare muneribus. nudum quoddam nomen inmunitatis requirunt, quoniam paupertate a dispendio tutae sunt,” 15, “nemo me putet tueri solam causam religionum.”

between senate and emperor. The altar had first been placed in the senate-house by Augustus in 29 BCE, along with a statue of Victory which had once belonged to the Greek city of Tarentum in southern Italy; the statue and altar commemorated his victory at Actium, and they were installed as part of the inauguration of the new Curia Iulia.³⁸ The altar and statue thus embodied the close link between Augustus and his senate. When Augustus died in 14 CE, the senate met to consider by what tokens it might demonstrate its own particular grief at the death of its leader. Among the suggestions, some members proposed that his funeral procession pass through the Triumphal Gate, “preceded by the statue of Victory which is in the Curia,” while the sons and daughters of the leading members sang dirges.³⁹ In the fourth century, the altar was still where senators swore oaths to uphold the emperor’s laws and decrees. It was fitting, then, that Symmachus called the altar one of the “ornaments” of the Curia which ought to have been left alone; elsewhere, he declared frankly that Gratian’s removal of the altar had “displeased the senate.”⁴⁰ His support for the altar was thus expressed in terms reminiscent of his preference for the old style of carriage for the urban prefect. The altar and the carriage were both traditional pieces of senatorial furniture which ought to have been left in place. But they were more than objects of sentimental attachment; they also

³⁸ Tortorici (1999), with references to the ancient texts on the altar and statue. Herodian 5.5.7 speaks of members offering incense and libations upon arriving in the chamber, but associates them with the statue rather than the altar. No description of the altar survives. It is not certain where the altar and statue were placed in the Curia, but the statue at least probably stood on a pedestal against the back wall, behind the president’s tribunal: Bartoli (1963) 57, with photograph at p. 55 fig. 31.

³⁹ Suetonius, *Augustus* 100, “senatus et in funere orando et in memoria honoranda eo studio certatim progressus est, ut inter alia complura censuerint quidam, funus triumphali porta ducendum, praecedente Victoria quae est in curia, canentibus neniam principum liberis utriusque sexus.”

⁴⁰ Symmachus, *Rel.* 3.4, “ornamentis saltem curiae decuit abstineri,” 5, oath of allegiance, 20, “praestate etiam divo fratri vestro alieni consilii correctionem; tegite factum, quod senatui displicuisse nescivit.”

helped to define a public image—one might almost say “brand”—for the senate as the keeper of Roman traditions.⁴¹

Symmachus sought to illustrate his image of the proper Christian emperor by invoking an example which was meant to be an instructive precedent for Valentinian II. Responding to the anticipated objection that Valentinian’s removal of the altar followed the precedent of Constantius II in 357, Symmachus explained how an emperor ought to show respect for senatorial institutions. Admittedly, Constantius had removed the altar, but he had “gone astray.” Valentinian, following him, had no excuse for making the same mistake twice.⁴² But in other respects, Constantius had behaved properly: “he subtracted nothing from the privileges of the sacred [Vestal] virgins, he refilled the priesthoods with nobles, he did not withhold the subsidies for the Roman rites...and, though he himself followed different rites, he preserved these [pagan rites] for the empire.”⁴³ In other words, Constantius, despite his own Christian faith, had nevertheless carried out his obligations as *pontifex maximus* to fill vacancies in the pagan priesthoods. Since these priesthoods were filled by high-ranking senators, and were a traditional marker of elite senatorial status, these were important gestures by which Constantius paid honor to senators and reassured them that he would not undermine their traditional sources of prestige. Moreover, Constantius had even condescended to have the senators show him around the most famous sights of Rome—including pagan temples, which he was able to look upon with equanimity and even genuine interest, despite his own ardent

⁴¹ Similarly, Liebeschuetz (2005) 70 observes that Symmachus’ argument for the altar “is relevant not only to the defense of religion, but to every kind of traditional institution.”

⁴² Symmachus, *Rel.* 3.6, *de viasset*, “num potest etiam nobis eadem defensio convenire, si imitemur, quod meminimus improbatum?” Despite Pohlsander (1969), it appears that Constantius removed only the altar of Victory, not the statue: see Cameron (1970) 239-40, followed by Dewar (1996) 392-5.

⁴³ Symmachus, *Rel.* 3.7, “nihil ille decerpit sacrarum virginum privilegiis, replevit nobilibus sacerdotia. Romanis caerimoniis non negavit impensas...cumque alias religiones ipse sequeretur, has servavit imperio.”

Christian beliefs.⁴⁴ Constantius' respectful gestures provided a model for how a Christian emperor could reconcile his personal faith with his public duty to maintain the traditions of Rome and its aristocracy. In effect, Constantius had found a way to navigate this divide by portraying his actions as showing respect to senators, rather than to pagan cult per se. Conversely, the removal of the altar of Victory—first by Constantius, then by Gratian—was not so much an insult to paganism, but an insult to senators.⁴⁵

Although the altar was closely associated with the senate, Symmachus claimed that its symbolic importance extended to the city of Rome itself. “The divine mind has assigned different cults to different cities as protectors; just as souls are apportioned among men at their birth, so guardian spirits are apportioned to peoples to control their destinies.”⁴⁶ Befitting the prefect's role as spokesman and advocate for Rome, Symmachus used the rhetorical device of prosopopoeia to bring Roma to life and place words in her mouth.⁴⁷ Speaking as an aged woman, Roma pleaded the utility of her ancestral cult practices, which had demonstrated their efficacy in the past by repelling invaders such as Hannibal (211 BCE) and the Gauls (390 BCE). The keynote of this appeal was a defense of Rome's autonomy: “Allow me to use my ancestral ceremonies, for I do not repent of them; allow me to live according to my custom, for I am free.” With this formulation, Symmachus sought to turn the altar of Victory into a symbol of Rome's exceptionalism. “This cult subjugated the world to my laws.” The altar was thus

⁴⁴ Cameron (1968) 99, Constantius as pontifex maximus, (1999) 110, priesthoods as markers of elite senatorial status. On this “tour of Rome,” see Chapter 4 above.

⁴⁵ Curran (2000) 207, “the Altar of Victory question was relevant chiefly to the senate.”

⁴⁶ Symmachus, *Rel.* 3.8, “suus enim cuique mos, suus ritus est: varios custodes urbis cultus mens divina distribuit; ut animae nascentibus, ita populis fatales genii dividuntur.”

⁴⁷ The personification of Roma was especially popular among the Latin poets of late antiquity: see Roberts (2001), esp. 538-39 on Prudentius' revision of the speech given by Symmachus' Roma.

a visible token of a history which made Rome unlike any other city, and forever entitled it to claim a special status in the empire.⁴⁸

Symmachus' appeal for the return of the altar of Victory thus had much in common with his other *Relationes*. Just as he asked for the customary grants of food and entertainment for the plebs, so he supported the return of the ancestral altar of Victory to the senate, and the old style of carriage for himself as prefect of Rome. People, Senate, and Prefect: these were the constitutive elements of *urbs Roma* in late antiquity. The prefect's mission, as Symmachus understood it, was to be a spokesman and advocate for the ancient organs of the Roman state: the *Senatus Populusque Romanus* (SPQR), or in other words, Rome itself. This mission required vigilance against any attempt to erode Rome's privileges or infringe its traditions. Symmachus formulated the doctrine of Rome's exceptionalism succinctly in another of his reports: "I beg and beseech you not to compare with all other cities the people whom you have often treated with respect during your triumphs."⁴⁹ At its core, the ideology of SPQR evoked the constitutional arrangements of the Roman Republic, but Symmachus was no crypto-Republican. What Symmachus wanted above all was a return to the sunnier days of the early Roman empire, when emperors (the good ones anyway) made a show of deferring to senatorial opinion, and Rome was unchallenged as the center and capital of the empire. In the fourth century, showing respect for the senate and people of Rome amounted to an acknowledgement of Rome's special status, expressed in the declaration of autonomy

⁴⁸ Symmachus, *Rel.* 3.9, "Romam nunc putemus adsistere atque his vobiscum agere sermonibus: 'optimi principum, patres patriae, reveremini annos meos, in quos me pius ritus adduxit! utar caerimoniis avitis, neque enim paenitet! vivam meo more, quia libera sum! hic cultus in leges meas orbem redegit, haec sacra Hannibalem a moenibus, a Capitolio Senonas reppulerunt.'"

⁴⁹ Symmachus, *Rel.* 14.4, "oro atque obsecro, ne populum, quem triumphantes saepe veneramini, ceteris urbibus conferatis."

which Symmachus had placed in the mouth of Roma: “I am free (*libera sum*).” At the time when Symmachus was prefect of Rome, in 384, he had seen an emperor in Rome exactly once, back when he was a teenager, and that had been twenty-seven years ago. In an age when emperors rarely came to Rome and were increasingly ignorant of its traditions, it was all the more important to defend the lingering tokens of Rome’s status. The altar of Victory was a useful symbol around which to construct a vision of a “Rome emperor” who guaranteed Rome’s traditional institutions, and by extension, acknowledged Rome’s unique claim to be the true capital of the empire.

Since Symmachus’ plea for the restoration of the altar of Victory was by its outward form just another of the *relationes* which the prefect filed with the court, the reply ought to have come from emperor Valentinian II, speaking through his senior court officials. This was the normal procedure by which governors of other provinces communicated with the court. Presumably, a reply of some kind was sent, but there is no record of it; instead, as far as posterity can know, the right of reply was usurped by Ambrose, bishop of Milan. Ambrose, it must be emphasized, was intruding on an administrative dialogue which did not concern him. His intervention was highly successful; indeed, he has cast a long shadow over modern scholars’ interpretation of the altar of Victory controversy as a religious dispute, for it was Ambrose who first characterized the dispute as a “religious question” (*causa religionis*).⁵⁰ This interpretation was promoted by Ambrose’s decision to obtain a copy of Symmachus’

⁵⁰ For Ambrose’s lingering influence over the framing of the dispute, see Vera (1981) lxxxii, who classifies the *Third Relatio* as the only one to have religion as its subject; on the modern tendency to replicate Ambrose’s arrangement by printing it with Ambrose’s letters on the altar, see above. See also the judgment, concerning the basilica controversy of 385-6, reached by McLynn (1994) 171: “The Old Testament scene that Ambrose describes being reenacted in Milan has influenced all subsequent interpretations of this episode.”

Third Relatio and include it among his own letters. Although the recipients of Symmachus' letters might keep them for posterity—a prospect at which he affected to be anxious—Ambrose's tactic was of a different kind, since it involved using connections at court to obtain a copy of official correspondence addressed to the emperor. In any case, the ploy turned out to be a masterful publicity stunt, for it resulted in the publication of a document which Symmachus in all probability had not intended to publish. By publishing Symmachus' *relatio* with his two letters on the altar, Ambrose created the impression that there had been a literary debate about the altar, in which the bishop had scored a signal victory over the most eloquent orator of the day.⁵¹ Indeed, this is precisely how the episode was received in the years after Ambrose's death in 397. First, the Christian poet Prudentius wrote a two-book poem *Contra Symmachum* (*Against Symmachus*) in 402, in which the poet recast Ambrose's arguments against Symmachus in hexameter verse, and celebrated the conversion of senatorial families to the standard of Christ. Then, in 412-13, Paulinus of Milan, once a secretary in the bishop's service, composed a biography of Ambrose, in which he, too, followed Ambrose's lead, claiming that his rebuttal of Symmachus was so effective that the senator, despite being the most eloquent man of his day, did not dare to speak further on the subject.⁵² Meanwhile, on the pagan side, only silence: in all his hundreds of letters, Symmachus never mentioned the "debate" with Ambrose, indeed never mentioned the altar of Victory at all. The fame

⁵¹ For Symmachus' correspondents preserving his letters, see for example *Ep.* 5.85-86. Ambrose's request for a copy: *Ep.* 72(17).13, "detur mihi exemplum missae relationis, ut et ego plenius respondeam," 73(18).1, "poposci tamen exemplum mihi relationis dari." Thus Symmachus' *Third Relatio* was also transmitted independently as Ambrose, *Ep.* 72a(17a) (with only a few inconsequential discrepancies in the text). That Symmachus did not intend to publish his *relationes* is clear from the confusions in the headings: see above. McLynn (1994) 167, impression of a debate.

⁵² For the date of Prudentius' *Contra Symmachum*, see Barnes (1976) 376-8. Paulinus of Milan, *Vita Ambrosii* 26, "qua relatione adcepta praeclarissimum libellum conscripsit, ut contra nihil umquam auderet Symmachus vir eloquentissimus respondere."

of the episode, therefore, was entirely on the Christian side, and even today our understanding of the dispute has been shaped by Ambrose's framing of the question—a classic instance of history being written by the winner.

In order to understand Ambrose's real concerns more precisely, it is necessary to probe his insistence that the altar of Victory was fundamentally a religious question. The distinction Ambrose drew was between a civil and a religious dispute, with the conclusion that he as bishop had jurisdiction: "If it were a civil case, the right of reply would be reserved to the opposing party; [but since] it is a religious case, I as bishop am intervening." His insistence that it was a religious question directly contradicted Symmachus' claim that he was not speaking about religion alone. Ambrose reminded the emperor that he was specifically a Christian emperor, and that compliance with the request to return the altar was incompatible with his duty as a Christian emperor. In the salutation of his first letter on the altar, Ambrose addressed Valentinian as "most blessed prince and most Christian Emperor," and repeated the latter appellation in the body of the letter. "Your reign," he reminded the emperor, "is a Christian reign."⁵³ At the same time, Ambrose did not hesitate to bring more nakedly political—and effective—arguments to bear. Foremost among them, Ambrose recalled the service he had performed for Valentinian in journeying to Trier to forestall Magnus Maximus from invading Italy in the autumn of 383. The bishop also reminded Valentinian of his

⁵³ Ambrose, *Ep.* 72(17).1, "Ambrosius episcopus beatissimo principi et Christianissimo Imperatori Valentiniano," 2, "consensum saltem aliquem non debet colendis idolis et profanis caerimoniis cultibus exhibere," 3, "imperator Christianissime," 10, "temporibus vestris hoc est Christianis temporibus," 13, "si civilis causa esset, diversae parti responsio servaretur; causa religionis est, episcopus convenio" (to be contrasted with Symmachus, *Rel.* 3.15, "nemo me putet solam causam religionum tueri").

obligations to uphold the acts of his murdered half-brother Gratian, and suggested that he consult the ruler in the east, Theodosius, before making any decision to restore the altar.⁵⁴

The tangle of religious and political arguments is reminiscent of the fusion of these elements in Symmachus' plea for the return of the altar. This intermingling makes it difficult to characterize Symmachus and Ambrose narrowly as the representatives of political and religious perspectives on the altar, despite Ambrose's attempt in particular to portray his position in those terms. More surprisingly, however, it is also problematic to describe the dispute as a conflict between paganism and Christianity. On the one hand, Symmachus was able to point to Constantius II as an example of a Christian emperor who still honored pagan priests. On the other, Ambrose hinted that there were Christians in the imperial consistory who might be inclined to accede to Symmachus' request.⁵⁵ Instead, Ambrose was concerned to construct an image of the proper imperial rule, just as Symmachus had used the altar controversy to promote his vision of an emperor who defended the central importance of Rome. Ambrose wanted not just a Christian emperor, but specifically a Nicene Christian emperor. If Symmachus' task was complicated by the emperor's absence from Rome, Ambrose was in a delicate position because the emperor lived next door, and Valentinian II and his influential mother, Justina, were heterodox Christians in the bishop's eyes. From this perspective, it makes more sense to read Ambrose's letters on the altar in the context of his continuing battles within the Christian Church. The bishop's real confrontation in the altar of Victory dispute was with the

⁵⁴ Ambrose, *Ep. 72(17).12*, "memor legationis proxime mandatae mihi convenio iterum fidem tuam," with McLynn (1994) 167, "Ambrose relied above all upon the favor the government owed him." For Gratian, see *72(17).5*, 15, and for Theodosius, *72(17).12-13*.

⁵⁵ Ambrose, *Ep. 72(17).8*, "quod si aliqui nomine Christiani tale aliquid decernendum putant," perhaps referring to Bauto, a Frank who was magister militum and consul in 385: *PLRE* 1:159-60, "Bauto."

heretic emperor Valentinian, rather than with the pagan Symmachus, from whom he had little to fear.

The problem of agreeing on one understanding of the Christian Trinity divided the Church throughout the fourth century. One faction supported the creed formulated at the Council of Nicaea (325) and endorsed by Constantine, which held that Christ the Son was as fully divine as God the Father. In the last years of his reign, however, Constantine inclined to the opposing view that Christ was similar (*homoios*) to God the Father, but not of the same substance (*homoousios*), and was therefore subordinate to Him. Constantine's son, Constantius II, had also espoused this "Homoian" version of the faith, and supported it vigorously by deposing bishops who adhered to the Nicene formulation.⁵⁶ When Constantius acquired control of the western, pro-Nicene provinces in the early 350s, his aggressive promotion of the Homoian creed in Italy had serious consequences in both Rome and Milan, which suffered schisms in their episcopal sees. In Rome, bishop Liberius was arrested by the urban prefect in 355 and bundled off to Milan, where the emperor pressured him to condemn the arch-Nicene Athanasius of Alexandria; likewise, in Milan, the Nicene bishop Dionysius was also exiled, and replaced with an easterner named Auxentius, who remained bishop, despite concerted opposition, until his death in 374. Auxentius was thus the direct predecessor of Ambrose, whose own election as bishop occurred amid strife between Nicene and Homoian factions in the city.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ The literature on the Trinitarian controversies between "Nicens" and "Homoians" (called "Arians" by their opponents) is vast; see, for example, Hanson (1988). For Constantine's theological inconsistency, see Van Dam (2007) 269-82, and for Constantius, Barnes (1993).

⁵⁷ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 15.7.6-10, Liberius' arrest; McLynn (1994) 13-22, exiles of Liberius and Dionysius, 1-13 and 44-52, Ambrose's election.

In the early years of his episcopate, Ambrose gradually consolidated his control of the Milanese church, and began to project his authority among the other sees of northern Italy and further abroad in Illyricum. The pattern of his contacts and interventions thus mirrored the fact that northern Italy was more closely connected with the western Balkans than with central and southern Italy, where the bishop of Rome enjoyed primacy. His first clash with the Homoian court faction led by the empress Justina probably came in the winter of 379. Ambrose went to Sirmium to ordain a Nicene bishop, and successfully faced down determined opposition from the Homoian faction there led by Justina. Not long after, Valentinian and Justina decamped to Milan, where they demanded the “sequestration” of a basilica for Homoian services. At the same time, the Homoian Illyrian bishops began to seek revenge, pressing Ambrose to furnish a statement of faith and hoping to catch him out at the Council of Aquileia (381). The death of Gratian in August 383 thrust Valentinian into the role of a ruling emperor in his own right, albeit a weak one. He turned to Ambrose to negotiate with Magnus Maximus in Trier and persuade him not to invade Italy. In a real sense, Valentinian owed Ambrose his throne and perhaps his life—but not his spiritual guidance, for the two were still divided by their common Christian faith. Throughout the first half of his episcopate, Ambrose’s most threatening opponents were his enemies among the Homoian bishops and their supporters in the palace, led by the emperor and his mother. This was the context in which Ambrose made a stand on the altar of Victory in the summer/autumn of 384.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ This summary of Ambrose’s activities owes much to McLynn (1994): 39, advisor to Probus, 88-106, activities in Illyricum, 124-37, Council of Aquileia, 121, *sequestratio*, 158-70, negotiations with Maximus and altar of Victory dispute.

Ambrose's broader concern to construct an emperor of limited authority is apparent in the first sentence of his first letter on the altar of Victory. "Just as all men who are under the Roman sway serve you, emperors and princes of the world, so also you yourselves serve the omnipotent God and the sacred faith."⁵⁹ This might seem a fairly innocuous introduction, but in fact it carried theological overtones. If there was as much distance between the emperor and his subjects as there was between the emperor and God, then the emperor could not be said to be similar to God; and since Nicene Christians did not distinguish more than divine essence, there was no subordinate element of the Trinity available (such as Christ the Son, or the Word) to whom the earthly emperor might be compared. The effect was to make a clear distinction between the divine nature of God's power and the strictly temporal nature of the emperor's authority. This principle had important consequences beyond the theological dispute about the nature of God's divine essence. By firmly separating the emperor from any special relationship to God, it buttressed the claim of bishops to be the only legitimate interlocutor before God; indeed, Ambrose was careful to present the emperor as subordinate not only to God, but to the "sacred faith"—and therefore to the Church's authority as embodied in its bishops. Ambrose is primarily concerned to establish the paramount authority of the bishop in matters concerning the Church. Hence his blunt insistence: "I make a claim on your faith as a bishop of Christ." This calculation also underlay a powerful threat: "you will be permitted to come to church, but there you will find no bishop, or you will find one

⁵⁹ Ambrose, *Ep.* 72(17).1, "cum omnes homines qui sub dicione Romana sunt vobis militant imperatoribus terrarum atque principibus, tum ipsi vos omnipotenti deo et sacrae fidei militatis."

who resists you.”⁶⁰ The discourse of episcopal resistance to the emperor was especially useful to Nicene bishops who faced intervention in Church matters by Homoian emperors, because Nicene theology already denied emperors any more-than-human status. Thus the preliminary theological point that God was of one essence had important consequences for the relationship between the emperor and the Church, implying that Church and secular affairs were strictly separate, and that emperors must defer to bishops on religious questions.⁶¹

Working out the Nicene implications of Ambrose’s argument sheds new light on the bishop’s stance in the altar of Victory controversy. Although this dispute is usually presented as a conflict between paganism and Christianity, there was a vitally important intra-Christian dimension to Ambrose’s argument that the altar was a “religious case,” in contradistinction to a “civil case.” What the bishop was really saying was not just that Christianity should trump paganism—which scarcely needed arguing—but that the emperor must defer to the bishop in a matter that concerned the Christian faith. The stakes attached to this claim were far higher in the internal battle within the Church than in any conflict between paganism and Christianity. If Ambrose could establish this vital principle in this “shot across the bow” in the question of the altar, then he could invoke the precedent in future battles over Christian doctrine.

It was only one year after the altar of Victory dispute that the conflict between the Nicene bishop and the Homoian emperor and queen mother came to a head. Justina, the

⁶⁰ Ambrose, *Ep.* 72(17).10, “convenio fidem tuam Christi sacerdos,” 13, “licebit tibi ad ecclesiam convenire, sed illic non invenies sacerdotem aut invenies resistentem.”

⁶¹ McLynn (1994) 173, of the conflict over the basilica, “Ambrose has succeeded in drawing for posterity a firm distinction between emperor and church.” My reading of Ambrose’s letter on the altar as having an important theological subtext is influenced by the similar approach taken to Eusebius’ *Life of Constantine* by Van Dam (2007) 283-93.

chief supporter of the Homoian cause, had been trying various maneuvers to get Ambrose to leave Milan. These included a demand that a basilica be turned over for Homoian services, and an attempt to arrest Ambrose in church. When these tactics failed, the court issued an edict in January 386 threatening capital punishment against anyone who impeded the right of Homoians to assemble. The court also summoned Ambrose to a debate with Auxentius, who was acting as the equivalent of a Homoian bishop in the palace. This debate was to take place before an assembled jury of lay judges chaired by Valentinian himself.⁶² It is at this point in the conflict that our contemporary documentation begins in the form of a letter from Ambrose to Valentinian. In this letter, Ambrose refused the court's order to appear for the debate with Auxentius, and explained his reasons. Strikingly, Ambrose framed the question in the same terms as he had used the year before to formulate his position on the altar of Victory. He began by quoting a rescript issued by Valentinian I, that "in a case of faith" an accused cleric could only be judged by a cleric of the same rank. "When have you heard, most clement emperor, that in a case involving the faith laymen have sat in judgment of a bishop?" It would be a reversal of the natural order for a bishop to receive instruction from a layman. The layman in question was emperor Valentinian II, who was only a catechumen and had not been prepared for baptism. "Who would deny that in a case involving the faith—I repeat, in a case involving the faith—the usual practice is for bishops to pass judgment on Christian emperors, not emperors on bishops?" Ambrose sought to force the emperor to acknowledge that the dispute concerned a matter internal to the Church, and therefore

⁶² For this summary and chronology of the events of 385-86, see the account in Liebeschuetz (2005) 124-36, which differs in certain chronological details from McLynn (1994) 170-208; on the identification of the various churches at issue in this dispute, see also Krautheimer (1983) 88-92. Ambrose, *Ep.* 75(21).18, 75a(21a).1, imperial *mandatum* to leave Milan; *CTh* 16.1.4, edict.

that the emperor had no legitimate role to play as an arbiter. “The emperor is within and not above the Church.” He emphatically reiterated that it was a “case involving the faith” (*causa fidei*) three times in a single paragraph. His argument echoed what he had claimed the year before in characterizing the altar of Victory as a “religious case” (*causa religionis*), not a civil case.⁶³ Just as Ambrose had urged Valentinian to consult Theodosius before taking any decision to restore the altar of Victory, so now he reminded Valentinian that Theodosius followed the Nicene faith, as did the provinces of Gaul and Spain. This was a not-so-subtle reminder that Valentinian’s biggest threat, Magnus Maximus, controlled the western provinces and could invade Italy at any time; indeed, in 386 Maximus sent a threatening letter to Valentinian in which he praised his father for ruling in accord with the faith, and rebuked him for his treatment of catholic Christians.⁶⁴

Ambrose’s consistent stance throughout the crisis of 385-86 was that the emperor must submit to the bishop in matters concerning the Church. “I feared the Lord of the universe more than the emperor of this world.”⁶⁵ This uncompromising defiance of temporal authority, which became an inspiring example to popes in the Middle Ages, was already present in his warning to Valentinian not to return the altar of Victory to the senate-house in Rome. In effect, the altar controversy was a preview of the arguments Ambrose would marshal in the far more important conflict with the Homoian court in Milan. Ambrose used the altar controversy to stake out the ground on which he would fight the next year. In this perspective, Ambrose’s arguments against the altar are only

⁶³ Ambrose, *Ep.* 75(21).2, Valentinian I’s rescript, 4, “quando audisti, clementissime imperator, in causa fidei laicos de episcopo iudicasse? ... quis est qui abnuat in causa fidei, in causa inquam fidei, episcopos solere de imperatoribus Christianis, non imperators de episcopis iudicare?” *Ep.* 75(21).5, 75a(21a).29, Valentinian II as catechumen; 75a(21a).36, “imperator enim intra ecclesiam non supra ecclesiam est.”

⁶⁴ Ambrose, *Ep.* 75(21).14, Theodosius and western provinces; *Collectio Avellana* 39, letter of Maximus to Valentinian.

⁶⁵ Ambrose, *Ep.* 75a(21a).2, “plus dominum mundi quam saeculi huius imperatorem timerem.”

superficially against paganism; they are more accurately seen as a forceful claim about the proper attitude of an emperor toward the Church and its bishops, a test of his strength against the Homoian court led by Valentinian and Justina.

Looking back on the altar of Victory affair, it is clear that there was a conflict, but it is more accurately defined as a competition between two aristocrats for influence over the emperor, which was embodied in their different visions of emperorship. The competition in this case was heightened by another factor—the youth of Valentinian II, which made him a weak emperor who could be molded by his high court officials. Valentinian II had been elevated to emperor at the tender age of four, immediately after the death of his father Valentinian I in November 375. Since neither Gratian nor Valens was consulted in this decision, the elevation of Valentinian II was in truth little short of an act of usurpation on the part of senior military officers who did not want to become subordinates of one of the other imperial courts.⁶⁶ Valentinian was thus only thirteen years old when he was confronted with the letters of Symmachus and Ambrose on the altar of Victory. Symmachus tactfully refrained from mentioning this fact, but it probably underlay his repeated injunctions to follow the examples of his older brother and father. In his own mind, Symmachus may have been remembering his own earlier experience in Trier, when he addressed a panegyric to Gratian, who was not quite ten in the winter of 370; in that speech, too, Symmachus had been the spokesman for a distinctly Roman perspective.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 30.10.4-6, accession of Valentinian II; note also *Epitome de Caesaribus* 45.10, “auctore Equitio ac Merobaude,” and Zosimus, *Historia nova* 4.19, with the analysis in Potter (2004) 541-44.

⁶⁷ See Chapter 6 above.

The true influence over Gratian, however, had belonged to Ausonius, the boy's tutor, who enjoyed the advantage of living at court full-time. This was the same advantage which Ambrose enjoyed over Symmachus at Milan. Unlike Symmachus, Ambrose did not shrink from mentioning Valentinian's age explicitly. "Let no one creep up on your youthful age," the bishop warned. More contemptuously, in a public sermon preached to his congregation during the conflict of 385-86, Ambrose expressed his disbelief that "a boy catechumen" could possibly be judge between himself and his antagonist.⁶⁸ If Ambrose was thinking of a model after which to pattern his own role as an advisor, it was probably Petronius Probus, praetorian prefect of Italy and Illyricum from 368-75. Probus had an unmatched reputation as a bureaucratic heavyweight, famously described as like a "fish out of water" when not holding the praetorian prefecture; in the late 380s he and Symmachus were on bad enough terms that Symmachus had to restrain himself from expressing joy at Probus' death.⁶⁹ Ambrose had served as an advisor in Probus' lawcourt at Sirmium, and it was Probus who appointed him governor of the northern Italian province of Aemilia and Liguria in about 372/3. Ambrose's biographer, Paulinus, remembered a close bond between the two men. Probus' parting advice to the young governor was to govern "not as a magistrate, but as a bishop," words which turned prophetic when Ambrose engineered his election as bishop in 374. Subsequently, Probus had sent one of his slaves to Ambrose to be cured of demonic possession. Paulinus joined the two men again in an anecdote of two Persian

⁶⁸ Ambrose, *Ep.* 72(17).6, "nullus obrepat iuniori aetati tuae," 75a(21a).29, "[Auxentius] dicens iudicare debere adolescentem catechuminum sacrae lectionis ignarum."

⁶⁹ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 27.11.3, "ut natantium genus, elemento suo expulsum, haud ita diu spirat in terris, ita ille marcebat absque praefecturis." Sogno (2006) 75-77, relationship with Symmachus.

ambassadors who were equally impressed by the wisdom of Ambrose and the splendor of Probus.⁷⁰

The young age of Valentinian also afforded openings for other advisors besides Symmachus and Ambrose. If we knew more about these other power brokers in Milan, there is little doubt that a multiplicity of perspectives would emerge, and that Symmachus and Ambrose would be made to share the stage with additional actors in the altar of Victory controversy. Some characters may be mentioned in passing. When Ambrose's first letter on the altar was read in the consistory, those present included Bauto and Rumoridus, both of whom held the rank of *comes* and *magister militum*. About Rumoridus we know relatively little, beyond Ambrose's remark that he was a lifelong pagan. By implication, Bauto was a Christian, which would accord well with the fact that his daughter, Eudoxia, went on to marry Arcadius, the son of Theodosius who inherited the eastern throne. Bauto was a sometime correspondent and acquaintance of Symmachus, to whom he sent gifts in token of his consulship in 385, and may have been one of the Christians in the consistory whom Ambrose feared might side with Symmachus. Although we hear nothing of him, Symmachus' friend and fellow pagan Vettius Agorius Praetextatus may also have been present at court, since he was praetorian prefect at least through early September 384.⁷¹ Most influential of all was presumably

⁷⁰ Paulinus, *Vita Ambrosii* 5, service with Probus, 8, "[Probus] dixerat enim proficiscenti, cum mandata ab eodem darentur, ut moris est: 'vade, age non ut iudex sed ut episcopus,'" 21, Probus' slave, 25, Persian ambassadors, with *Res gestae* 27.11.1, Probus *cognitus orbi Romano*. For a critical reexamination of Ambrose's election as bishop, see McLynn (1994) 1-13, 44-52, especially 49-50 on Probus' role, and for Ambrose's apprenticeship in Sirmium, 31-44.

⁷¹ For Bauto and Rumoridus in the consistory, see Ambrose, *Ep. extra Collectionem* 10.3. Symmachus' letters to Bauto are *Ep.* 4.15-6. See further *PLRE* 1:159-60, "Bauto," 786, "Rumoridus," 722-4, "Praetextatus 1," attested in office on September 9, 384 (Jones (1964b) 89).

Justina, Valentinian's mother, whom Ambrose in a letter to his sister referred to as "that woman" who persecuted him as Jezebel had persecuted Elijah.⁷²

Theodosius and Rome

The sudden invasion of Italy by Magnus Maximus in the late summer of 387 resulted in the hasty departure of Valentinian II to Thessalonica; his hopes for restoration now lay in the hands of the eastern emperor Theodosius. The presence of a new ruler in Milan also disrupted the patterns of senatorial politics in Rome. It brought new men to power in the city and forced individual senators to weigh how closely they ought to associate themselves with a new regime which might not last. Symmachus was ensnared in this guessing game when he went to Milan to deliver a panegyric for Maximus early in 388; that summer Maximus was defeated and killed by Theodosius, who now in his turn became the new ruler in Milan. Theodosius celebrated his victory by coming to Rome the next summer and staying from mid-June to the end of August, during which time he granted Symmachus the opportunity to recant his ill-judged panegyric of Maximus. Symmachus was not alone in his difficulty; indeed, his embassy to Milan had presumably been commissioned by the senate and conducted on behalf of the whole city. Rome was thus once again hosting a triumph in which it had backed the losing side.⁷³

The pageantry of Theodosius' arrival in Rome evidently lacked the emphasis on military display which had elicited Ammianus' vivid description of Constantius'

⁷² Ambrose, *Ep.* 76(20).12, "femina ista," 18, "etiam Heliam Iezabel cruenta persecuta est." Liebeschuetz (2005) 124 goes so far as to title his chapter, "Ambrose's conflict with the empress Justina at Milan in 385-6," but McLynn downplays her importance and calls for a more sophisticated analysis of the court faction at (1994) 170-74.

⁷³ Socrates, *HE* 5.14, Symmachus' panegyric for Maximus and Theodosius' pardon, with Symmachus, *Ep.* 2.31. Theodosius arrived in Rome on June 13, 389 and left on either August 30 or September 1: Seeck (1919) 275-77, with Nixon and Rodgers (1994) 443 n.16. Sogno (2006) 68-71 explains Symmachus' imprudent support of Maximus by his friendship with Rusticus Julianus, whom Maximus appointed prefect of Rome.

adventus in 357.⁷⁴ Although he did use a chariot, he also processed at times on foot, “triumphant now in war, now over [his own] pride.” He appeared in public without his military guard, endured the jests of the plebs, and mingled with senators on equal terms, even condescending to visit them in their homes. In short, Theodosius “conducted himself as a citizen, enrolling himself among the better *exempla*,” unlike the emperors who had failed to demonstrate respect for Rome’s customary expectations of imperial behavior. Finally, like Constantius, Theodosius also delivered speeches in the Curia and from the rostra, thus paying homage to the city’s ancient political identity, embodied in the Senate and People of Rome.⁷⁵

Theodosius would have found his visit to the senate-house especially gratifying if he also paused to admire a group of four statues in front of the building. The inscribed bases of these statues have survived, and one is still standing near the entrance. All four were dedicated by the urban prefect Ceionius Rufius Albinus, though their placement in front of the senate-house suggests that the prefect was fulfilling his role as spokesman for the senate as a whole. Albinus doubtless hoped to have them ready in time for Theodosius’ visit in 389. Three of the inscriptions were identical, honoring each of the ruling emperors—Valentinian II, Theodosius, and the latter’s elder son, Arcadius—as the

⁷⁴ For the possibility that Ammianus’ description of Constantius’ visit was influenced by Pacatus’ panegyric of Theodosius, see Sabbah (1978) 327-32; the descriptions have little in common, however, and the view of Matthews (1989) 11 is preferable, that Ammianus’ description would have acquired additional interest and meaning in light of Theodosius’ visit. For Constantius’ *adventus*, see Chapter 4 above.

⁷⁵ *Panegyrici latini* 2(12).47.3, “nunc de bellis, nunc de superbia triumpharis,” “remota custodia militari,” Curia and rostra. Claudian, *De sexto consulatu Honorii Augusti* 58-62, “cum se melioribus addens / exemplis civem gereret terrore remoto, / alternos cum plebe iocos dilectaque passus / iurgia patriciasque domos privataque passim / visere deposito dignatus limina fastu.” By contrast, Diocletian was unable to pull off this kind of performance: Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 17.2, and Chapter 2 above.

“extinguisher of tyrants and author of public security.”⁷⁶ The language of Albinus’ dedications was scrupulously correct in according equal honor to each member of the imperial college, including Valentinian, who, though the senior member, was manifestly powerless to act independently of Theodosius. It also evoked comparison with an earlier statue which likewise stood in the vicinity of the senate-house: the urban prefect Naeratus Cerealis had dedicated an equestrian statue to Constantius II, praising him too as the “extinguisher of pestiferous tyranny.” The earlier inscription had honored the restoration of legitimate rule after the suppression of Magnentius in 353, but it had also been set up in anticipation that Constantius would visit Rome during his thirtieth anniversary year. Although Constantius kept Rome waiting for several years, he was in fact the most recent emperor to visit the city before Theodosius appeared in 389.⁷⁷

Notwithstanding the formal propriety of Albinus’ three dedications to the emperors, it was the fourth which truly captured the ambitions of the Theodosian court: a statue of Thermantia, the mother of Theodosius. She was a “lady of most holy and most noble memory, the spouse of the deified Theodosius the Elder, a man of illustrious rank and the count in charge of both [infantry and cavalry] services, the mother of our lord Theodosius, perpetual emperor, and the grandmother of our lords Arcadius, most brave *princeps*, and Honorius, most pious youth, who has by her outstanding natural qualities extended the divine lineage.”⁷⁸ This inscription made no mention of Valentinian II—an

⁷⁶ *CIL* 6.3791a = 31413 (Valentinian II), 3791b = 31414 = *ILS* 1:175, no. 789 (Arcadius), 36959 (Theodosius), “extinctori tyrannorum | ac publicae securitati<s> | auctori.” The plural form of “tyrants” may refer to Magnus Maximus and his young son Victor, or it may simply be generalizing. The dedications cannot be dated more closely than to Albinus’ prefecture, attested from June 17, 389 to February 24, 391: see Chastagnol (1962) 233-6.

⁷⁷ *ILS* 1:164, no. 731, “extinctori pestiferae tyrannidis”; see Chapter 3 above.

⁷⁸ *CIL* 6.36960 = *ILS* 3.2:XXVI-XXVII, no. 8950, “[Thermantia]e | [sanctissimae] ac nobilissimae | [memoriae femi]nae coniugi divi | [Theodosi inlust]ris comitis utrius | [que militiae m]atri d(omini) n(ostr)is

odd omission, considering that he was now Theodosius' brother-in-law—a silence echoed in his absence from the formal ceremonies which marked Theodosius' arrival in Rome in 389. Valentinian and his mother Justina had in fact been sent ahead to Italy by sea when Theodosius moved west against Maximus, it was instead Theodosius' younger son, Honorius, who accompanied his father to Rome and was presented to the senate.⁷⁹

The inscription had to gloss over some technicalities: Honorius was called an emperor, even though he was not raised to the rank of Augustus until January 393. More significantly, Theodosius' father, Theodosius the Elder, who had not been an emperor, was nonetheless called *divus*, an epithet normally reserved for emperors who were deified after their death. By drawing attention to Theodosius' father and mother as well as to his sons, the inscription advertised Theodosius' desire to portray himself as part of a continuing dynasty; moreover, this dynasty was limited to his own family, and was therefore independent of the Valentinianic dynasty that had actually raised him to imperial rank. In effect, Theodosius the Elder replaced Gratian as the original author of the emperor's power; he was not an emperor, but “he should have been.”⁸⁰ That he was not was due to his execution in 375-6 in extremely murky circumstances, despite (or because of) his military successes in Britain and Africa. Writing about the time of Theodosius' visit in 389, the historian Ammianus Marcellinus accorded full and laudatory treatment to the elder Theodosius' campaigns in Africa, calling him “that

Theodosi | [perpetui Aug(usti)] aviae dd(ominorum) nn(ostrorum) | [Arcadi fortis]simi principis | [et Honori piis]imi iuvenis | [praestantia indo]lis suae | [augenti divinam] prosapiam.”

⁷⁹ Zosimus, *Historia nova* 4.45.4, Valentinian sent ahead; Socrates, *HE* 5.14, Honorius in Rome; Claudian, *De sexto consulatu Honorii Augusti* 73-5, presentation to the senate: “fulgentia tecum / collecti trabeatus adit delubra senatus / Romano puerum gaudens offerre favori.”

⁸⁰ *Panegyrici latini* 2(12).6.2, “O digna imperatore nobilitas, eius esse filium principem qui princeps esse debuerit,” 8.3, *patre divino*. The elder Theodosius is called *divus* also at Claudian, *De quarto consulatu Honorii Augusti* 190, *divi sidus avi*.

general of renowned name” and “that magnificent leader of armies” and omitting any mention of his death and disgrace.⁸¹ Emperor Theodosius’ glorification of his father thus represented a restoration of his memory at the expense of the dynasty that had killed him. Nor was this the first time that the elder Theodosius received imperial honors in Rome, for as early as 384, the senate had dedicated equestrian statues to him as the “author of your family and line,” thereby “consecrating him among the ancient names” of Rome’s history.⁸²

In his search for biological and political ancestors, Theodosius did not limit himself to his own father. Like so many emperors, he encouraged a comparison with Trajan, but he went one step further to claim actual descent from the paradigmatic prince who ruled nearly three hundred years earlier: Trajan was his “ancestor and founder,” and Theodosius “traced his origins to emperor Trajan.” In fact, this claim was based on nothing more than the coincidence that Trajan and Theodosius had both been born in Spain (and not even in the same region, since the former was a native of Baetica in the south, the latter of Gallaecia in the north). A Christian historian of the early fifth century, himself a Spaniard, identified a further parallel in that Trajan and Theodosius had both been promoted to imperial rank at times of crisis. Another contemporary observer, perhaps interpreting the court’s rhetoric too literally, looked for resemblances between

⁸¹ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 28.3.1, “dux nominis incluti,” 28.6.26, “Theodosius ductor exercituum ille magnificus,” *Panegyrici latini* 2(12).31.1, “te esse triumphalis viri filium.” Many scholars have speculated about his demise and enemies; see for example, Thompson (1947) 87-107, arguing that Theodosius may have been guilty of treason, Demandt (1969), followed by Potter (2004) 544, that he was a victim of the Gallic faction led by Maximinus, and Nixon and Rodgers (1994) 453 n.18, who are inclined to finger Valens.

⁸² Symmachus, *Rel.* 9.4, “nam familiae vestrae et stirpis auctorem, Africanum quondam et Britannicum duces status equestribus inter prisca nomina consecravit” (see also *Rel.* 43). Symmachus’ high opinion of the elder Theodosius is also evident in *Ep.* 10.1 and *Orat.* 6.4, “Theodosio quondam militarium magistrorum celeberrimo.”

Trajan and Theodosius on the basis of ancient writings and paintings. He concluded that they were in fact similar in their mental qualities, though he doubted whether Theodosius could match Trajan's grace, rosy complexion, or dignity of bearing.⁸³

The general comparison between Trajan and Theodosius took on a more specific complexion in the city of Rome, which had its own distinctive memories of Trajan as a senatorial emperor and a great builder. The first of these qualities was captured by his unique epithet *optimus* ("best"), which lived on in the fourth century in the senate's acclamation of emperors as "more fortunate than Augustus, better than Trajan." The orator who addressed Theodosius in 389 observed that he surpassed the "best" of emperors in his kindness and affection for his friends; after his death, Theodosius was praised as the "best of the deified emperors."⁸⁴ Trajan's reputation as a builder resided primarily in his immense Forum and basilica and towering column. In the fourth century, Trajan's Forum was increasingly the favored venue in which to erect honorific statues of senators, but Theodosius, too, received a statue there, one of only two emperors to be so honored in the fourth century. Probably just before his visit in 389, the urban prefect Aurelius Victor set up a statue in his honor. The inscription praised Theodosius for having "surpassed the clemency, uprightness, and munificence of the ancient emperors." This dedication was doubly appropriate. As a historian of Rome's emperors, Victor was especially qualified to render this judgment. Victor may have previously erected a

⁸³ Themistius, *Orat.* 16.205a, "ὁ σὸς πρόγονος καὶ ἀρχηγέτης," with Vanderspoel (1995) 196 n.46; *Epitome de Caesaribus* 48.1, "originem a Traiano principe trahens," 8-10, physical resemblances; note also Claudian, *De quarto consulatu Honorii Augusti* 19, where Honorius is called "Ulpia progenies." Orosius, 7.34.2, Gratian's choice of Theodosius compared to Nerva's of Trajan. The apparent currency of the supposed link between Trajan and Theodosius led Syme to conclude that it was encouraged by the court: (1971) 91.

⁸⁴ Eutropius, *Breviarium ab urbe condita* 8.5.3, *felicior Augusto, melior Traiano. Panegyrici latini* 2(12).16.1, "optimus ille ditabat, non etiam diligebat," Claudian, *De sexto consulatu Honorii Augusti* 55-56, *optimus ille / divorum*, with Dewar (1996) 102-3.

dedication to Julian that effectively served as an epilogue to his *Emperors*; the dedication to Theodosius was thus a second epilogue that contained his evaluation of the most recent emperor. Moreover, the placement of this dedication in Trajan's Forum flattered Theodosius' desire to be connected with this most illustrious of predecessors.⁸⁵ Trajan's Forum evidently made as great an impression on Theodosius as it had on Constantius in 357; after returning to the East, Theodosius built his own forum in Constantinople, inaugurated in 393, whose plan imitated what he had seen in Rome in 389: a large colonnaded square, closed on one side by a transverse basilica, beyond which rose a towering spiral column covered in sculptured relief panels. Theodosius' forum not only evoked associations with Trajan, his alleged ancestor from Spain; it also set him apart from Constantius, the emperor who had done much to turn Constantinople into a capital city, but had not dared to imitate Trajan's Forum. "Theodosius therefore did, more or less, what Constantius had felt himself unable to achieve."⁸⁶

⁸⁵ *ILS* 1:575-6, no. 2945, "[ve]terum principum clementiam | [sa]nctitudinem munificentiam | supergresso." The course of Victor's career between his governorship of Pannonia Secunda in 361 and his appointment to the urban prefecture is completely unknown: Matthews (1975) 226-7; his prefecture is dated to 388/89 by Chastagnol (1962) 232-3. Constantine also received a dedication in the Forum of Trajan: see *ILS* 1:156, no. 692, and Chapter 2 above; on Victor's *Caesares* and his dedication to Julian, see Chapter 3 above; and on the Forum of Trajan's senatorial flavor in the fourth century, see Chapter 4 above.

⁸⁶ Mango (1985) 43-5, Forum of Theodosius. Mango (p.43) raises the possibility of direct imitation concerning the precise resemblance between the column of Arcadius in Constantinople and that of Trajan in Rome: "La ressemblance est si parfaite qu'il ne s'agit pas seulement d'une imitation, mais d'une copie qui n'aurait pu être réalisée qu'à l'aide d'un dessin exécuté à Rome." For Theodosius and Constantius, see p.45: "Théodose fit donc, tant bien que mal, ce que Constance se sentait impuissant à réaliser."

Chapter 8

Conclusion

The twenty years between Theodosius' visit to Rome in 389 and Alaric's sack of the city in 410 brought momentous changes to the empire generally and to the city of Rome in particular. For convenience, the period can be divided into three phases. The first of these, lasting through the usurpation of Eugenius and the death of Theodosius (395), was characterized by a high degree of continuity with the patterns of senatorial politics as they had developed in the fourth century. The second, corresponding to the ascendancy of Stilicho (395-408), witnessed the fragmentation of these patterns and the unraveling of senators' ability to shape events even in Rome. Finally, in the course of the sieges and sack of Rome by Alaric (408-10), the delusions of the city's senators were cruelly unmasked.

Less than three years after Theodosius left Rome and less than one after he left northern Italy to return to the East, he received the news that his fellow emperor and brother-in-law Valentinian II had been found dead in his quarters at Vienne in southern Gaul. The western provinces of the empire were now effectively under the control of a Frankish general. Although this revolt has often been characterized as the result of pagan senatorial resistance to the Christian regime of Theodosius, its origins were unmistakably political in nature. The central problem was that Valentinian II was not a genuinely

independent authority in the western provinces; indeed he owed his throne entirely to Theodosius, who had rescued and restored him after he had fled the advance of Magnus Maximus in 387. Subsequently, Theodosius had established him at Vienne, and confirmed Arbogast as his chief military officer. The hostility between the weak emperor, now about twenty years old, and his domineering general finally came to a head when Valentinian attempted to relieve Arbogast of his command. Unfazed, Arbogast tore up the emperor's letter in his face and replied that, since Valentinian had not appointed him, neither could he remove him. This statement made plain the true source of the problem: although Valentinian was by rank a senior emperor (Augustus), in practice he was very much a junior emperor (Caesar) with little or no freedom to act independently. His position was thus analogous to that of other Caesars, including Gallus and Julian in the 350s, who had tried to remove officials that had been appointed by the senior emperor. The cause of the revolt "lay not in the realm of religion, but rather in that of bureaucratic politics."¹

When it became clear that war with Theodosius was inevitable, Arbogast created his own emperor in Gaul in August 392. Eugenius, like Ausonius, had made his career as a teacher of rhetoric before entering the imperial administration. When Eugenius and Arbogast crossed into Italy in spring 393, they were recognized at Rome and quickly won the support of Nicomachus Flavianus, the praetorian prefect in Milan. Arbogast possibly, and Flavianus certainly was a pagan, but there is no reason to attribute their actions to religious motives (Eugenius himself was a Christian). On the contrary, Arbogast could

¹ The full statement of the "pagan revival" thesis was given by Bloch (1945); his starting point was the restoration of a temple of Hercules at Ostia during the reign of Eugenius. Zosimus, *Historia nova* 4.53, conflict between Valentinian and Arbogast, with Potter (2004) 552, bureaucratic politics. For the view that Eugenius' regime was not noticeably friendly to paganism, see Cameron (forthcoming).

boast of being on friendly terms with no less a Christian than Ambrose of Milan, and Flavianus' motives were primarily defensive; his quick defection was no different from the adjustments made by other holders of high office in response to previous Gallic usurpers, such as Constantine and Magnentius. Indeed, the main piece of evidence for Flavianus' pagan zealotry—an anonymous Christian poem filled with mockery of an unnamed pagan prefect—is increasingly doubted.²

Without any claim to dynastic legitimacy, the regime of Eugenius in Milan inevitably looked for support to the senators at Rome. The price of this support was much the same as it had been a decade before, when Symmachus had lobbied for a “Rome emperor” who would defend the traditional prerogatives of Rome and its aristocracy. Many of his reports as urban prefect in 384-5 had requested that the emperor confirm the traditional primacy of Rome by supplying it with food and spectacles, and by showing deference to the senate and the ancient cults, including that of Victory in the senate-house. These same priorities were again conspicuous in the relations between Eugenius and high-ranking members of the aristocracy at Rome. For example, Eugenius hoped to win the support of Symmachus by sending him a gift of twenty-nine Saxon prisoners-of-war to be used in the games Symmachus was sponsoring for his son's quaestorship. Such a gift would both entertain the plebs and enhance the reputation of the senator in whose games they appeared. In a similar fashion, Eugenius also made grants of money to various high-ranking senators, perhaps with the understanding that

² For a narrative of Eugenius' revolt, see Matthews (1975) 238-52. Paulinus, *Vita Ambrosii* 30.1, Arbogast's friendship with Ambrose. On Flavianus' defection, see McLynn (1994) 343-4, emphasizing that his decision was the result of political calculation. A number of scholars now argue that the so-called *Carmen contra paganos* was written against Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, who died in 384: see Cameron (forthcoming).

these funds might be used to pay for pagan cult ceremonies. Nevertheless, these private grants did not and could not amount to a reestablishment of the cults as public institutions; they were, rather, instances of the customary virtue of imperial largesse. With such actions, Eugenius signaled that he was willing to accommodate the priorities of Rome's most powerful senators. Their concerns did not revolve around the restoration of paganism. As in 384, senators at Rome were seeking recognition from the imperial regime in Milan of their own claims to special status, and by extension, an acknowledgement that Rome was still the most important city in the empire.³

In the event, Theodosius returned from the East and suppressed the revolt of Eugenius by defeating Arbogast's army at the battle of the Frigidus River late in the summer of 394. Following the lead of Theodosius' propaganda, the Christian interpretation of Eugenius' regime and its downfall took shape quickly. According to one story, Eugenius' forces had fought under the banner of Jupiter and Hercules, the deities once favored by the Tetrarchs a century before. The Christian version, however, has obscured the basic continuities that linked this revolt to other usurpations of the fourth century. Moreover, it has helped shape interpretations of the senators' involvement in much the same way that Ambrose's influence has influenced our understanding of the altar of Victory affair. In each case, a religious motive has been attributed to senators who were primarily concerned about their own worldly status.⁴

³ Symmachus, *Ep.* 2.46, Saxon prisoners; Ambrose, *Ep. extra collectionem* 10(57).6, grants to senators. On Eugenius' success in conciliating senatorial opinion, see McLynn (1994) 343, "all that was required was an open hand."

⁴ Augustine, *Civitas Dei* 5.26, statues of Jupiter; Theodoret, *HE* 5.24.4, images of Hercules. The contrarian position is maintained by McLynn (1994) 352, who points to the influence of Theodosian propaganda; this argument is enlarged and expanded by Cameron (forthcoming), who denies that the battle at the Frigidus contributed to the defeat of paganism, or even that it was perceived to have done so by the earliest Christian sources for the battle.

Following the defeat of Eugenius and the death of Theodosius in January 395, senators at Rome were confronted with a number of changes that threatened to overturn the categories in which they had become accustomed to view the world. The most sudden of these reversals was the rapid contraction of the empire's northern frontier. When Symmachus made what would be his last visit to the imperial court at Milan early in 402, he had to dodge bands of Goths who had invested the roads in northern Italy. It was also at this time that Rome itself made hasty improvements to its own city walls. The initiative for this work was attributed to Stilicho, a half-Vandal general who had married into the imperial family and was now the effective head of government under Honorius. The degree to which Rome's fortunes now depended on Stilicho received official recognition in the form of a dedication to him by the senate. This dedication thanked Stilicho for defeating a rebel in Africa whose blockade of the grain ships had reduced the city to the brink of famine. The most significant aspect of this dedication, however, was its placement: it was set up in the Roman Forum, a space usually reserved for dedications to the emperor. It seemed to suggest that the replacement for an emperor in Rome could be a barbarian general, rather than a member of Rome's own aristocracy.⁵

The collapse of the northern frontier also brought the emperor and his court back into closer contact with Rome. In the wake of the Gothic incursions of 402, the court abandoned Milan and moved to Ravenna, which had the advantage of being surrounded by marshes on its landward approaches and directly accessible to the Adriatic. In 404, the emperor Honorius even inaugurated his sixth consulship in Rome, and stayed for

⁵ Symmachus, *Ep.* 7.13, dangerous journey to Milan. For the inscriptions mentioning Stilicho, see *ILS* 1:176-7, no. 797, improvements to the Aurelian Wall, and 1:284, nos. 1277-8, dedications in Roman Forum.

seven months, the longest time any emperor had spent in the capital since the days of Maxentius. A poet who commemorated the occasion declared that “truly no other place was fitting to be the home of the rulers of the world.” Honorius returned for another seven months in 407-8. It was during this second spell in Rome that there occurred two events which dramatically illustrated the city’s weakness. First, the senate met at the palace to decide whether to declare war on Alaric. Although most members initially voted for war, Stilicho proposed instead to purchase peace by paying him four thousand pounds of gold. This prompted one former prefect of Rome to denounce the scheme as “not peace, but the terms of slavery.” Subsequently, as Stilicho was preparing to return to Ravenna, Honorius expressed his intention to accompany him. Stilicho vigorously opposed the emperor’s plans to return to Ravenna, lest Honorius constrain his freedom of maneuver. Rome was evidently the best place to keep an emperor politically isolated.⁶

If Alaric’s initial demands had shocked the senators, little could have prepared them for what happened in 409-10. Alaric laid siege to Rome three separate times, and each disaster seemed to produce new challenges to senators’ view of the world. After the first siege, the senate sent an embassy to Ravenna to beg for relief. One of the envoys sent was none other than Innocent, the bishop of Rome. While previous bishops had also enjoyed direct access to the emperor, none had participated on terms of equality with senators. The second siege was lifted only after the senate agreed to Alaric’s plan to raise Priscus Attalus, the prefect of Rome, to imperial power. Rome’s senators at last had what they had so often wanted: an emperor who was one of them, a Roman of Rome. Indeed,

⁶ Claudian, *De sexto consulatu Honorii Augusti* 39-40, “non alium certe decuit rectoribus orbis / esse larem.” Zosimus, *Historia nova* 5.29-30, deliberations in the senate and Stilicho’s attempts to keep Honorius at Rome.

Attalus celebrated his promotion by returning to the senate and making a grand speech in which he promised to make Rome the true capital of the empire once again. The words bore little semblance to reality. Attalus had been crowned by a Gothic chieftain to be a figurehead, and was deposed just as quickly. Finally, the third siege ended with Alaric's capture and sack of Rome in 410. The fall of Rome to the Visigoths not only punctured the aura of Rome's invincibility; it also shattered senators' comfortable delusions of grandeur. Henceforth, they would have to contend with increasingly powerful barbarian generals and Christian bishops, fellow beneficiaries of the emperors' weakness.⁷

⁷ On the sieges and sack of Rome, see Matthews (1975) 284-306. For Attalus' speech in the senate, see Zosimus, *Historia nova* 6.7.

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