Man to Man

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INTRODUCTION

The emperors had a pervasive presence in late-Roman society. Triumphal arches commemorating their victories are found all over the empire; the Codex Calendar of 354 is replete with dates dedicated to anniversaries associated with various imperial houses; board games and even molds for cakes speak of imperial victories; coins hardly need be mentioned. A personage of awesome power, the emperor’s will was an ultimate source of physical benefit or torment. Coexisting with this physical presence, however, was a claim to transcendence of the world. Emperors throughout the history of the empire had claimed association with the divine to varying degrees, and pagan emperors had often been deified upon their demise.
While Christian emperors would not claim divine honors in the way pagan emperors had, in the legal *corpora* they were assiduous about claiming an association with things divine for themselves. The board of men tasked by Theodosius II edited the utterances of various emperors with the goal of revealing these utterances’ “sacred generality” (*CTh.* 1.1.5; *sacra generalitates*). It was an emperor’s *manus divina* which authored *epistulae* and other documents presented in a proprietary script: the “heavenly letters” (*caelestes litterae*). Though they were Christian, emperors in the *Codex* speak of godhead (*numen*) as a term of self reference. In sum, the emperor in late antiquity hyperbolically exemplified the recourse to the transcendent to secure *auctoritas* or ἄξιωμα.

All the same, even as he constituted an utter zenith, the emperor shared characteristics with other elite men in the late empire. The exemplary Antony and the *clarissimi, spectabiles,* and *illustres,* to take some examples, likewise had ambitions to transcendence. The emperor also was to have mastery of *paideia,* and “rustic” military emperors’ pretensions to learning and the provision of education to their sons show they understood its value. Emperors also had to function within the homosocial contexts of late-Roman manhood. There was an expectation that the emperor would consent to be bound by laws and display *civilitas.* As has already been seen, the emperor employed amatory language when addressing subordinates to show regard and ameliorate hierarchy’s asperity. And his own glamour, in...
turn, could be metaphorized as same-sex sexual attractiveness. Indeed, the emperor’s place at the apex of power made for an at times piquant relation with same-sex desire; the more forbidding and absolute the emperor was thought to be, the more vulnerable he was to discourse critical of tyrants, a feature of which was the attribution of effeminacy and enjoyment of passive same-sex sexual pleasure; admiring amatory metaphor could metamorphose into invasive and garishly sexualizing invective.

The frequent touchstone in this chapter dedicated to investigating the connections between same-sex desire, homosociality, and the making of imperial authority will be Ammianus Marcellinus’ *Res Gestae*. The focus of this late fourth-century work of historiography on the emperors Constantius II, Julian, Jovian, Valentinian I, Valens, and Gratian, as well as on *caesar* Gallus, and Ammianus’ manifest sensitivity to their place *vis-à-vis* Roman society make his narrative an obvious main-player in an investigation into ideas about late-Roman emperors. The famous scene of arrival or *adventus* of Constantius II to Rome in 357 in book 16 is considered first. This passage from the *Res Gestae* has assumed iconic status as the *locus classicus* to be canvassed if discussion of the fourth-century emperors is undertaken. In this scene, Ammianus recreates (and thereby endorses) the glamour of the emperor as transcendent of this world. Next follows discussion of a passage from book 15 in which Ammianus presents Constantius being flattered, signing his letters with the words “My Eternity,” and then having the temerity, in Ammianus’ opinion, to claim that he was equivalent to one of the “civil” emperors of the second-century c.e. Dismissing Constantius’ self-styling as a civil emperor and focusing on his absolute claims, Ammianus finds that Constantius goes too far in his assertion of transcendence when he signs his letters with this subscription. Ammianus’ depiction of Constantius’ behavior is compared throughout to his representation of Julian and to late-Roman society in general. It turns out that Constantius’ claim to eternity is typical imperial behavior and that Ammianus’ criticism is out of the mainstream. Ammianus’ view, however, is nonetheless informative in spite of its minority status: the conclusion to which Ammianus leads the reader shows an end-point to thinking oneself beyond captation by earthbound systems of morality, and it also serves a purpose within the *Res Gestae* of putting the moral virtues of his hero, Julian, into relief.10

contrasting portraits bear the marks of Ammianus’ special interest in praising his hero Julian; Constantius comes off badly so Julian can look good, and it is surely the case that the interests of History are not served. For present purposes, however, Ammianus’ prejudice is not an impediment but provides, instead, an opportunity.

Imperial authority’s complex relation to homosociality is in the interstices of this moralizing comparison of emperors. The imperial personae are radically different: Constantius’ is remote, otherworldly, while Julian’s is more approachable. Constantius jealously insists on hierarchal distinctions and does not wish to break them down amid warm homosociality of the kind Julian favors. In Ammianus’ opinion, Constantius’ behavior is an appropriate aspect of imperial deportment, and Julian would have done well to remember it. However, as Ammianus also asserts, Constantius is thoughtless of the people over whom he towers. He lacks civilitas, or a concern to remember that he is an emperor of men. There is obvious tension in Ammianus’ thought. The glamour emanating from association with the transcendent is desirable, but it also is praiseworthy to consider the society of other men and achieve accreditation through interaction with them. Ammianus wants otherworldly and transcendent glamour for his emperor (Constantius), while at the same time (and with contradiction) wanting the transcendent filled with civility, the provenance of which is earth: coming down from the heavens after starting on earth, civility graces Julian. Similar to Athanasius, Ammianus wants to fill the transcendent with earthly morals.

There is similar complexity in Ammianus’ use of and attitude toward same-sex desire and attractiveness in the Res Gestae. On the one hand, and recalling the glamorization of Marcus Aurelius by Julian himself, he metaphorizes the glamour of his civil paradigm, Julian, as a venustas that attracts the eyes of the soldiers. On the other hand, and similar to the writers of Collatio 5.3 and Athanasius, he is the knowing authority who can see through the manly transcendence of his grand emperor to a shameful covert relation to sexual passivity. Close examination of the language Ammianus uses to describe Constantius reveals the presence of a subtle discourse that attributes obscene desire to him.

Before proceeding to the argument, it is time to speak in general about the appropriateness of using Ammianus’ text in this study. In the first place, the broad learning on display in the Res Gestae strongly suggests its

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11. See Barnes (1998: 11–19) for discussion of how Ammianus shapes his account in ways that a documentary historian wouldn’t (cf., e.g., Blockley 1975: 100; Thompson 1947: 48).
relevance. The Res Gestae was clearly meant for the elite culture of late antiquity that valued **paideia** and the performative excellence it bestowed on men who mastered it. Positing knowledgeable and engaged contemporary reception is eminently reasonable. Also, as is likely, the Res Gestae would have been revealed to the world in recitations (**recitationes**) in Rome (where Ammianus lived in the 380s and 390s). While hard proof is not available, it seems this work was part of the intellectual scene in Rome at about the same time the **epistula** that is Collatio 5.3 was issued. It is intriguing that the forceful and knowing rejection of passive male sexual desire and pleasure that is part of the performative effect of Collatio 5.3 is contemporary with Ammianus’ imputation of this desire to Constantius II. It also is of interest that Theodosius I, one the signing emperors of Collatio 5.3, had his own **adventus** to Rome in 389. Ammianus’ historiography was therefore part of an intensely educated and homosocial milieu in which legislation concerning same-sex desire was written. The coming investigation, premised on the near certainty of the text’s educated reception and putting issues of homosociality and same-sex desire front and center, is consonant with likely societal dynamics in play at the place and time of the first hearing and reading of the Res Gestae.

**ADVENTUS**

In the year 357, Constantius II made a ceremonial arrival, or **adventus**, to Rome. In Ammianus’ depiction of it, Constantius is grand and impassive as he makes his splendid entrance into the eternal city. Ammianus

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14. Frakes (2000) persuasively suggests that the audience for the Res Gestae was first and foremost elites who served in the imperial government. Some of them, at least, would have heard this work in **recitationes** in Rome. There is no need, of course, to manufacture a circle presided over by Symmachus, which Alan Cameron cautioned against in 1964 (cf. Kelly 2008: 110).
15. Valerio Neri (1984: 54) and Guy Sabbah (1978: 329–32) see Ammianus’ written **adventus** of Constantius possibly making a comment on this **adventus** of Theodosius I. From here, then, a plausible contemporary reception of the Res Gestae will associate the entire portrait of Constantius with Theodosius for differences and similarities. It has occasionally been suggested that Theodosius himself could have heard sections of the Res Gestae in its probable **recitationes** (see discussion with bibliography in Frakes 2000: 397–98).
renders the scene’s grandeur and thereby gives his approval to at least this action of Constantius. He does carp a little around the edges, complaining, for example, that this *adventus*, practically a triumph, lacked a compelling victory for an occasion, and, instead, was put on because Constantius wanted to display his troops (16.10.2). And later, when Constantius has ambitions to leave a magnificent memorial of himself in Rome, he is overawed by the Forum of Trajan, and has to scale back his ambitions. At first, he thinks to make a copy of Trajan’s horse (16.10.15). He abandons that plan, however, and settles for the erection of an obelisk in the Circus Maximus (16.10.17). These relatively modest plans do cut Constantius down to size. Still, Ammianus’ lavish treatment of his appearance as he makes his way into the city indicates that the historiographer thinks that display of otherworldly grandeur is essential for an emperor, though asserting this bucks a trend in the scholarly literature that sees Ammianus predominantly critical of Constantius.17 Be that as it may, this impression of Ammianus’ approval is strengthened later when he criticizes Julian for being too informal. It is also good to remember that the *adventus* possessed such a feeling of divine epiphany that Victricius could trope the arrival of relics to Rotomagus as an imperial arrival.18

The inhabitants of Rome line the path the procession is taking. When the emperor appears in the procession, he is surrounded by purple woven dragons attached to golden jeweled spears and these dragons, with the wind coursing through them, hiss, seeming to seethe in anger (16.10.7: *velut ira perciti sibilantes*). On either side of the emperor march two columns of warriors with occasional armored horsemen, whose mail-armor was form-fitting to such an extent that the observer would think them statues polished by the hand of the famous sculptor Praxiteles (16.10.8: *ut Praxitelis manu polita crederes simulacra*). Ammianus then shifts attention from the inanimate, and yet oddly animate, dragons hissing and soldiers marching to statue-like horsemen and, thence, to the heart of the matter, the emperor:

The *augustus*, named in auspicious cheers, did not shrink from the thundering roar of the hills and banks, showing himself as, and as immobile

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17. Much of the secondary literature prefers to focus on the ways in which Ammianus undercuts the impression Constantius makes in his *adventus*. See, e.g., Roberts 1988: 184; Neri 1984: 53; Rosen 1982: 40. I see the point, but prefer to see Ammianus, conflicted, preserving the emperor’s glamour (e.g., Kelly 1998b: 142–43; McCormick 1986: 84–91; MacCormack 1981: 39–45; MacMullen 1964 [=1990: 78–106, esp. 85–90]), even as he has some criticisms to make.

as he was usually seen in his provinces. He even bent his quite short body as he was making his way under the high gates. Holding his line of sight straight, as though his neck were chained, he did not turn his face either right or left. As though a statue of a man, he was never seen nodding when a wheel jolted, neither spitting nor rubbing his face, nor scratching his nose, nor moving a hand. Although he was affecting all these things, they, and other things in his life hidden from view, were proof of a not middling forbearance belonging to him alone, as was generally thought. (16.10.9–11)\(^{19}\)

The performance that is the emperor is placed before the eyes in Ammianus’ virtuosic writing. This representation of the icon-like emperor who seems almost inhuman when on display goes all the way back to Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia* (8.1.40–42)\(^{20}\) and also seems a reasonable portrayal when such *realia* as the Arch of Constantine are considered. Surrounded in the first instance by his soldiery and attendant pageantry and, in the second, by all of Rome in an uproar (for the crowd is calling out his name\(^{21}\)), Constantius is the nearly still, and impassive in any case, eye of a hurricane of movement and sound. It is as though he were more a divine epiphany than a human being. The enlivening of the material (the woven dragons seem alive) and iconization of the alive (the emperor seems a statue) are suggestive of the interpenetration of this world with the next, and both can be seen as allegories of the late-Platonic notion of the enlivening power of the transcendent suffusing this world. There is more than a little here that recalls Plotinus’ metaphorization of the emanation of the transcendent into the world as an imperial *adventus* (Enneads 5.5.3.1–15; discussed in chapter one).

In spite of occasional critique accompanying the passage, Ammianus in general approves of this grandeur. Ammianus’ summation of the good

\(^{19}\) Augustus itaque faustis vocibus appellatus non montium litorumque intonante fragore co-horruit talem se tamque immobilem, qualis in provinciis suis visebatur, ostendens. nam et corpus perhumile curvabat portas ingrediens celsas et velut collo munito rectam aciem luminum tendens nec dextra vultum nec laeva flectebat tamquam pigmentum hominis nec, cum rota concuteret, nutans nec spuens aut os aut nasum tegens vel fricans manumve agitans visus est umquam. quae licet affectabat, erant tamen haec et alia quaedam in citeriore vita patientiae non mediocris indicia, ut existimari concessae.

(Note: Although I wished to signal the endings of Ammianus’ *clausulae* by means of spaces, I decided that the difficulties in doing so were too great to justify the effort, especially as argument does not turn to them specifically.)

\(^{20}\) See Charlesworth (1947) and Matthews (1989: 233) for discussion.

and bad qualities of Constantius on the occasion of his death confirms it. He praises Constantius’ ability to embody the grandeur appropriate to an emperor:

Therefore, with distinction between his [sc. Constantius’] good qualities and faults truly preserved, it will suit that his special virtues be enumerated first. Always making the haughty glory of imperial power (imperatoriae auctoritatis coturnum) his concern, he, with a lofty and great spirit, counted at nothing the favor of the people. He was exceedingly frugal in the matter of conferring the higher dignities, having allowed no innovations (with a couple of exceptions) as far as adding to the bureaucracies was concerned, and never raising up the horns of the military men. (21.16.1)22

Chary with promotions and innovation, Constantius never allowed the impression of his loftiness to be compromised. Constantius (and Ammianus) had an understanding that imperial auctoritas had to be complected properly; it needed to be staged.23 Hence, the word coturnus, translated here by the phrase “haughty glory” (for which, see TLL 4.1088.43–45), refers first and foremost to the boot (kothornos/kόθορνος) worn by actors in tragedies (TLL 4.1087.26–1088.6). It shows up elsewhere in the Res Gestae where it designates someone acting in an outsized manner. For example, coturnus appears in Ammianus’ unflattering description of Probus, praetorian prefect at Rome in 368 (and evidently a blowhard):

When he felt confident, he rumbled from atop the tragic boot (de coturno . . . tragico), but when he was afraid, he was lower than the slipper the comic actors wear. (27.11.2)24

There are other instances of this word25 (and an adjective and adverb derived from it26) that all refer to the exaggerated emotions of the stage. Coturnus could be regarded as part of Ammianus’ criticism of the emperor, but that would be a mistake. The emperor, for all his faults, did occupy the apex of power and therefore had the position to back up dramatic entrances

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22. Bonorum igitur vitiorumque eius differentia vere servata praecipua prima conveniet expedi-ri, imperatoriae auctoritatis coturnum ubique custodiens popularitatem elato animo contemnentem et magno erga tribuendas celsiores dignitates impendio parcas nihil circa administrationum augmenta praeter paucarum novarum perpessus numquam erigens cornua militarum.
24. cum sibi fideret, de coturno strepere tragicum et, ubi paveret, omni humilior socco.
25. 20.1.2, 28.6.29.
26. 28.1.4, 28.4.27.
Chapter Three

and reactions (and non-reactions, say, in an *adventus*). Indeed, Julian, who is Ammianus’ ideal most of the time, receives a rare moment of criticism from the historiographer on this score:

Amidst these events, he spent much time in the senate in order to settle various matters, which cleverly resourceful factions were bringing to his attention. One day, as he was observing cases there [in the senate], when it had been announced to him that the philosopher Maximus had come from Asia, he leapt up in an unseemly manner, and having forgotten who he was, and having, at a full run, made his way far from the forecourt, he led him (Maximus), thoroughly kissed and reverently received, in with himself. He appeared, through this inappropriate performance to be an overzealous pursuer of empty glory and unmindful of that quite famous saying, criticizing such ones, of Cicero, which goes like this: “Those same philosophers write their own names in the very books which they write on the necessity of despising glory. The result of this is that in the very moment in which they despise renown and rank, they wish to be talked about and to be named.”

Ostentatiously rushing out to greet an inferior, Julian, the emperor, adds nothing to his stature because there is no way to increase it. He is already the greatest. What need could showing obvious favor to an inferior meet? Indeed this gesture can only diminish the emperor, pull him down to earth. In Ammianus’ opinion, an emperor should not look to develop relations with others like this as he has no peers among his subjects.

Ammianus is critical of similar behavior on two other occasions. At one point in 362 in Constantinople, Julian attended, on foot (and not riding, as Ammianus clearly believes he should have been doing), a ceremony honoring the consuls Mamertinus and Nevitta. This was thought by some to be cheap affectation (22.7.1: *affectatum et vile*), and on another occasion he fined himself ten pounds of gold for speaking out of turn at a ceremonial freeing of slaves at the circus (22.7.2). While Ammianus does not put down

27. den Boeft et al. (1995: 77) point out that words close to these are found in Cicero at *Tusc.* 1.34 and *Arch.* 26.

28. frequentatbat inter haec curiam agendo diversa, quae divisiones multiplices ingerebant. et cum die quodam ei causas ibi spectanti venisse nuntiatus esset ex Asia philosophus Maximus, exsiluit indecorum et, qui esset, oblitus effuso cursu a vestibulo longe progressus exosculatum susceptumque reverenter secum induxit per ostentationem intempestivam, nimius captator inanis gloriae visus praecellarique illius dicti immemor Tulliani, quo tales notando ita relatum: “ipsi illi philosophi etiam in his libris, quos de contemnenda gloria scribunt, nomen suum scribunt, ut in eo ipso, quo praedicationem nobilitatemque despicuunt, praedicari de se ac se nominari velit.”
his, or anyone else’s, reaction to this self-finishing, it is fair to conclude that he found this affectation too, especially in light of the following comments from the summation of Julian's life in book 25:

Pleased by the applause of the common people, he was an excessive pursuer of praise for the smallest things, through desire for popular favor often affecting to speak with unworthy persons. (25.4.18)²⁹

An abiding sin of Julian was that he did not keep the throne as grand as it should have been: rushing to Maximus at a full run (effuso cursu); Maximus not just kissed, thoroughly kissed (exosculatum). As John Matthews puts it, Ammianus’ view was that “an emperor ought in his public appearances to set a certain standard of dignified behavior, to do otherwise being a perverse ostentation” (1989: 236). In contrast, Valerio Neri sees in these refusals of imperial protocol evidence of Julian’s civilitas (1984: 52) and Guy Sabbah judges them manifestations of his lively humanity and free will (1978: 444). These latter points are true in a way, but the first point predominates. Ammianus criticizes Julian for not understanding that he, as emperor, needed to be seen as awe-inspiring. Ammianus notes that both Julian and Constantius in their own ways were engaging in affectation (22.7.1, 25.4.18 [Julian] and 16.10.11 [Constantius], all discussed above), but only approves of it in the case of the latter, and it is because of the need for an emperor to be grand.

But even as he reproduces and at times endorses the effect Constantius aimed at and no doubt made, Ammianus nonetheless resists the spell. Praise and blame so far have been allotted on the bases of one emperor making himself appropriately grand and beyond regular men and the other for being too down to earth. Now it is time for the reverse. Showing ambivalence about the office and ambitions of the emperor, Ammianus elsewhere reprehends Constantius’ reach beyond this world.

**IMPERIAL SIGNATURE**

In book fifteen, Ammianus depicts the situation in Constantius’ court after he hears the news of the “fall” of caesar Gallus. The year is 355. Gallus was a cousin (and Julian’s half-brother) whom Constantius had been groom-

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²⁹. Volgi plausibus laetus, laudum etiam ex minimis rebus intemperans appetitor, popularitatis cupiditate cum indignis loqui saepe affectans.

ing to become *augustus*. He turned out to be unsatisfactory as a sharer in the rule. Constantius became suspicious of him and, stripped of office, he was executed. Prone to giving flattery, Constantius’ ministers attribute this welcome event to the emperor’s manly excellence/bravery/virtue (*virtus*) and good fortune, exalting both of them to heaven.\(^{31}\) And so, according to Ammianus, in a fever brought on by his sudden freedom from the threat Gallus posed, Constantius takes the manipulative words of his ministers to heart and sees himself in the proffered panegyrical terms. He claims to be beyond this world, assigning to himself in subscription the appellation, “My Eternity”:

Raised up by the well-wrought zeal of [his ministers’] flattery and confidently supposing that he would be untouchable by every discomfort of mortality, he forthwith swerved from justice (*a iustitia declinavit*) so rashly that during dictation he sometimes would sign “My Eternity” below, and, while writing in his own hand, he would often call himself master of the entire world. If others were saying this, he surely would have had to have taken it badly—he who labored, with all due diligence expended, to model his life and *mores* in emulation of the emperors who valued civility (*civilium principum*), as he kept on declaring. For even if he were ruling Democritus’ infinity of worlds, of which Alexander the Great dreamed with Anaxarchus’ encouragement, yet reading or listening he should have reflected upon the fact that, as the astronomers in universal agreement teach, the circuit of the entire earth, which seems immeasurable to us, next to the greatness of the universe has the image of a tiny point. (15.1.3–4)\(^{32}\)

As one of his abiding sins is susceptibility to flattery (according to Ammianus), Constantius believes the unrelievedly affirming words of his advisors and comes to think himself untouchable. Thereupon behaving “unjustly” (literally “swerving from Justice,” which, as will be seen, indicates a lack of civility [*civilitas*]), he signs his correspondence with the title “My Eternity”

\(^{31}\) 15.1.2: *virtutem felicitatemque imperatoris extollebant in caelum.*

\(^{32}\) *quo ille studio blanditiarum exquisito sublatus immunemque se deinde fore ab omni mortalitatis incommodo fidenter existimans confestim a iustitia declinavit ita intemperanter, ut “Aeternitatem meam” aliquotiens subsereret ipse dictando scribendoque propria manu orbis totius se dominum appellaret; quod dicentibus aliis indignanter admodum ferre deberet is, qui ad aemulationem civilium principum formare vitam moresque suos, ut praedicasset, diligenter laborasset etiam si mundorum infinitates Democriti regetret, quos Anaxarcho incitantem Magnus somniabat Alexander, id reputasset legens vel audiens, quod, ut docent mathematici concinentes, ambitus terrae totius, quae nobis videtur immensa, ad magnitudinem universitatis instar brevis obtinet puncti.*
and calls himself master of the entire world. Attracting Ammianus’ particular disapproval is the claim to transcendence that Constantius makes, and that his ministers also make, as they exalt the emperor’s manly excellence or virtus to heaven.

This claim to transcendence is false in a number of ways: the emperor is mortal; the world of which he falsely claims mastery (the Sassanid empire exists), and of which he is inescapably a part, is material and subject to decay. Ammianus also finds unpersuasive Constantius’ evidently oft-repeated claim that he was like one of the good/civil emperors, i.e., Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, or Marcus Aurelius. This passage benefits from exegesis that, taking its cue from the passage itself, considers the dichotomization of eternity (aeternitas) to civility (civilitas) both in the *Res Gestae* and outside of it. This investigation reveals that Constantius, though more than capable of a good show, does not succeed to his claimed transcendence, and this failure is the result of his lack of civilitas: for Ammianus, devotion to civilitas and iustitia bring about a desirable and true transcendence, as his hero Julian demonstrates. Ammianus has also placed in the interstices of his depiction of the uncivil Constantius details that suggest an interest in masculine same-sex sexual passivity. The ease with which he crafts his portrait along these scandalous lines and its ready legibility to an educated readership (in the present moment and at the time of the writing of the *Res Gestae*) suggest that an emperor who removes himself from association with other men and has uncanny connection with things beyond this world is uniquely susceptible to such a hostile reading precisely because he is embracing things that are beyond this world. As practiced by Ammianus’ Constantius, transcendence is recourse to things beyond morals and it compromises his identity as a vir. Rejecting homosociality leavened with civility, Constantius comes to seem a sexualized passive man instead. Rejecting civility, the tyrant is prey to desire.

**AETERNITAS IN THE RES GESTAE AND BEYOND**

In addition to being a self-chosen title for Constantius, the noun aeternitas appears on two other occasions in the *Res Gestae*. At 14.6.8, in a digression

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33. Civilitas of course does not appear in this passage. Present instead is the adjective derived from it, civilis. For ease of discussion the noun is used, and it does, in any case, appear elsewhere in the *Res Gestae* (25.4.7, 28.4.17, 30.4.3), as does its antonym, incivilitas (18.2.7, 29.5.6). Matthews (1989: 235–36) and Neri (1984: 3–34, but, esp., 12, 24–27 and n. 52 on pp. 24–25) were helpful in formulating comments on Constantius’ failed claim to civilitas.
on the city of Rome, Ammianus remarks that the rich Romans make statues of themselves in the belief that they can secure immortality in this way:

Of these some, thinking that they can be recommended to eternity (aeternitati) by means of statues, strongly desire them as though they would acquire more benefit from bronze images that lack all feeling than from the knowledge of deeds done honestly and morally. (14.6.8)34

Having these statues made is similar to Constantius’ subscription since these men claim eternity for themselves too. Ammianus also prefigures the distinction he makes in the passage about the signature: these men think only of eternity and not of moral deeds. Their failing is similar to the one with which Ammianus charges Constantius when he refuses to credit his claim to be similar to the civil emperors. A short time later in the Res Gestae, the daughter of Justice, the goddess of just-vengeance (more or less), Nemesis or Adrastia, who oversees mortal affairs “from a certain hidden eternity” (14.11.25: ex abdita quxadam aeternitate), brings an end to both the tyrannical Gallus and those who, although Gallus needed to be stopped, used underhanded methods to bring him down. Ammianus anticipates Constantius’ self-styling to come in the next book and lays the groundwork for its skeptical reception; justice comes from a hidden eternity and not from a visible emperor claiming to be an eternity.

The adjective aeternus is a word often used in the Res Gestae (appearing 22 times). Fifteen of these references are to Rome, calling it “the eternal city” (urbs aeterna), which is an exceedingly common name for Rome.35 Ammianus uses the word twice to describe the fires of the sun as eternal36 and once to portray the shadows in the Underworld as likewise everlasting.37 Aeternus also appears in the periphrasis in aeternum, which means, more or less, “eternally,” and Ammianus uses this phrase to designate the way in which the magnificent Capitoline hill through its temple makes Rome eternally venerable.38 Conquered by Caesar so long ago, Gaul is joined to Rome “by means of an eternal treaty.”39

34. ex his quidam aeternitati se commendari posse per statuas aestivalis eas ardenter affectant quasi plus praemii de figmentis aereis sensu carentibus adepturi quam ex conscientia honeste recteque factorum.
36. 20.3.6, 25.10.3.
37. 17.7.13.
38. 22.16.12.
39. 15.12.6: foederibus . . . aeternis.
Virtue and Fortune came together in a treaty of eternal peace” (14.6.3: *foedere pacis aeternae Virtus convenit atque Fortuna*) and enabled magnificent Rome to conquer nearly the whole world.

If the ways Ammianus uses *aeternitas* and *aeternus* are considered closely, it will be seen that he uses them, naturally enough, to describe divinity and entities that last beyond the span of an individual human life and don’t suffer the effects of time. As regards emperors in general and Constantius in particular, the infinity and freedom from limit that are the marks of eternity are things that Ammianus is reluctant to grant them, while, at the same time, he wants emperors to be grand. Indeed, the association between Rome and eternity, which is found everywhere in writings from late antiquity—Rome is the eternal city, after all—, makes this maneuver of the emperor an effort to secure the glamour of Rome for himself. Of course, Ammianus is more than happy to recognize that there is a special relationship between the emperors and Rome, as is seen here in his depiction of eternal Rome in its old age putting itself into the caretaking hands of the emperors:

> Therefore, the venerable city, as though a thrifty, careful and wealthy parent, afterwards entrusted the proud necks of the savage nations that had been crushed and the laws, the foundations and eternal halters of freedom that had been set in place, [these] she entrusted to the caesares, as though these things were the terms of an inheritance to be managed. (14.6.5)\(^{40}\)

At this point in its life, which implies that the eternal city is less than eternal—but no matter that—Rome, as the venerable parent, is in the custodianship of the emperors. The emperors are but the current authorities and the thing eternal, according to Ammianus, is Rome. But Ammianus’ skepticism of imperial eternity is not the only view taken of it. In other sources, emperors (and other men) frequently claim eternity. Although Ammianus disapproves, the hyperbolic self-styling evident in the self-appellation of “My Eternity” is something seen often in other sources.

On a plaque at the base of an equestrian statue of Constantius II, perhaps dedicated at the time of his visit to Rome in 357, there is an inscription of thanksgiving to the emperor for putting down the usurpation of Magnentius in 352. He is “restorer of the city of Rome and the world and extinguisher of the pestiferous tyranny, Our Lord Flavius Julius Constan-

\(^{40}\) *ideo urbs venerabilis post superbas efferatarum gentium cervices oppressas latasque leges fundamenta libertatis et retinacula sempiterna velut frugi parens et prudentes et dives Caesaribus tamquam liberis suis regenda patrimonii iura permisit.*
tifian, Victor and Triumphator, *perpetual* (semper) *augustus*.41 He has always been *augustus* and always will be, and Constantius’ subscribing hand is not alone in saying that he is unbounded in time. Indeed, in spite of what Ammianus says, the claim of *Mea Aeternitas* was not merely something that emerged from a fog of flattery-induced bad judgment on Constantius’ part. In the *Codex Theodosianus*, for example, other emperors claim eternity as an imperial attribute, and are also liable to insist that their judgments have force that will/should never lose potency.

“We affirm the dignity of the equestrian order bestowed upon you by the divine Constantine and Julian, the Eternal emperors...”42 With these words whose original version dates from 380 (this of course is the *sacra generalitas* that Theodosius’ board crafted to come into effect in 439), in legislation meant to benefit this class of Roman society, the emperors Gratian, Valentinian II, and Theodosius I associate their predecessors Constantine and Julian with eternity. From 390, the addressee in the law “will be revering the eternity” of the three emperors then ruling.43 The brother emperors, Arcadius and Honorius, speak of their deceased father, Theodosius I, on his birthday as the an “eternal emperor” (*CTh*. 6.4.30: *aeterni principis* [probably originally from 396]) and Arcadius, a few year later in 398, refers to himself as *Mea Aeternitas*.44 A little further along in time, the year 408 sees three emperors making reference to the way in which their predecessor (and father/grandfather) in death “has now changed his human eternity into a celestial one.”45 Also, emperors did not only call themselves and their co-emperors eternal (or welcome this appellation coming from others), they often figured their actions as having eternal force. Eternity and

41. *ILS* 731; *CIL* 6.1158: *Restitvtori vrbis Romae a<d>qve or[bis] et extinctor(i) [p]estiferae tyrannidis Fl(avio) Ivl(io) Constanti[o] victori [ac] trium<f>atori semper Avgvsto...; see McCormick 1986: 40. It is worth noting that Ammianus has Constantius claiming eternity elsewhere in the terms seen on this plaque. In book 17, Constantius begins a letter to Sapor, king of the Parthians, in this way: “I, Constantius, victor on land and sea, *perpetual Augustus*, do heartily greet my brother, king Sapor...” (17.5.10) (“Victor terra marique Constantius *semper* Augustus fratri meo Sapori regi salutem plurimam dico...”).

42. *CTh*. 13.5.16: Delatam vobis a divo Constantino et Iuliano principibus aeternis equestris ordinis dignitatem nos firmamus... .

43. *CTh*. 10.22.3: *adoraturus aeternitate nostram*; Valentinian II, Theodosius I, and Arcadius are the emperors in question. See MacCormack (1981:61) for more.


45. *CTh*. 5.16.31: “... pater iam humanam in caelest<em >aeternitate mutavit; Arcadius, Honorius, and Theodosius II are the signees and Theodosius I is the object of this reverence. See Matthews 1989: 235. For further examples of emperors associated with eternity, see the *Gesta Senatus* (four occurrences), *CTh*. 1.12.5, the first *novella* of Theodosius II, and the first *novella* of Valentinian III.
perpetuity also can be seen associated with the force of emperors’ law in the *Codex* and in the *novellae* of Theodosius II and Valentinian III. Ammianus is also at variance with evidence of previous centuries, which needs no discussion in the present instance.

Ammianus’ criticism of Constantius for calling himself *Aeternitas Mea* is taking him to task, then, for behavior in the mainstream of imperial behavior and exemplary of a developing situation. Be that as it may, this criticism of his claim is connected to Ammianus’ rejection of Constantius’ claim that he is one of the civil emperors. Having swerved from justice, the emperor is no longer civil, and this disallows the absolute claim. Canvassing *civilis* and *civilitas* in the *Res Gestae* reveals that Ammianus believes that an emperor could only be truly admirable, and not just properly awe-inspiring, if he were “civil.” This, however, is a site of conflict in Ammianus’ thought: as far as Ammianus is concerned, a claim to the absolute can only be underwritten by a commitment to civility and homosociality, both of which are non-absolute.

An eternity claimed with justice is one that is responsive to earthly standards of moral behavior and this is a contradiction in terms, for eternity, by definition, is transcendent of this world. As does Athanasius, Ammianus moralizes the transcendent, fills it with earthly morals. Also similar to Athanasius’ depiction of Antony, the pressure of filling the transcendent with earthly morals leads to physical manifestations on earth. Earth is where mysteries are and faults emerge. Similar to what happens with Antony’s body and other physical phenomena in *Vita Antonii*, e.g., the intimate itching, the wrestling match, or the dust storm, Constantius “swerves” like a most material atom, and the world over which he claims dominion is but a material point. Furthermore, amid the demonstration of incivility and materiality, Ammianus’ language also reveals that Constantius vitiates his masculinity when he is not civil. Authority made in despite of homosociality causes scandalous same-sex desire, the desire to be penetrated, to emerge. When Constantius puts himself over and beyond other men, it is at this moment that a connection to passive male sexuality emerges at the fine lexical level in a way similar to what happens in the *Vita Antonii*. Furthermore, instead of Antony’s tacit “no” to a material and scandal-

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46. E.g., 4.22.2, 6.24.6, 8.4.23, 10.10.22, 10.20.11, 13.3.14, 13.10.8, 14.4.4, 14.5.1, 16.1.4, 16.2.47, 16.5.5, 16.10.20.
47. Nos. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 26.
48. Nos. 2, 7, 16, 18, 21, 22, 23, 32, 35.
ous reality, a tacit “yes” to same-sex desire and pleasure is perceptible in Constantius.

NOT A CIVIL EMPEROR

Going all the way back to the earliest days of the Roman polity, *civilis* denotes behavior of rulers respectful of laws and limits on their power\(^5\) and even graciously bound by a sense of identification with those over whom they have authority.\(^6\) When the emperor claims to be *civilis*, he is portraying himself as having some manner of position within the polity and rejecting the notion that he towers over it.\(^7\) Valerio Neri (1984: 33) suggests that the *genius publicus* which Julian saw when he was acclaimed emperor in the Gauls (20.5.10) is an instantiation of the Roman people and traditions who watch over him as he, with *civilitas*, watches over them. As he lay dying, Constantius said that a certain being which he could only see dimly (not Julian’s being of clarity) no longer came to him (21.14.2; Neri 1984: 23–24). The matter of the *genius publicus* shows that both Julian and Constantius have connections to the transcendent, but Julian’s *civilitas* makes for a stronger link.

As the paragon of what an emperor is supposed to be much of the time in the *Res Gestae* in matters of moral consistency, Julian exhibits civil behavior. For example, when he presides at a trial in which the prosecutor, who seemingly lacks the means to make his case, attempts to change the terms of his argument to impugning the obviously and unavoidably interested motive of the defendant to beat the charge, Julian advocates for the downtrodden:

“Will anyone ever be found guilty, most flourishing caesar, if to deny the charge will be sufficient?” Against this one and impelled wisely in just that moment, Julian said, “And who will ever be found innocent if to have brought the charge will be sufficient?” These words indeed and many


\(^6\) J. den Boeft et al. (1991: 258–59) note that *civilitas* is a central imperial virtue and that it can even tend toward synonymity with *clementia*. Ammianus idealized a notion of an empire in which

[strong] emperors had inherited the protection of law and settled life from the senatorial government of the Republic. Their function was to defend men of good will . . . there were properly instituted courts and regular procedures, and in the observance of these was the essence of what Ammianus, in just this context, called a “civil and rightful empire” [*civile iustumque imperium*]. (Matthews 1989: 252)

\(^7\) For these claims about *civilis* and also its profound and long-lasting implication with law/ius (and hence *iustitia*), see *TLL* 3.1213.58–1215.47.
Constantius, by contrast, fails at being civilis, and it is a failure that stems from his ambition to be transcendent and his insistence that he is not bound by things of this earth.\(^54\) Indeed, “His Eternity” lacks all sense of civilitas or iustitia when he feels that his majesty has been lessened. He becomes predatory and looks to extend the misery of his enemies by torture, behaving “more fiercely than civilly,” if he judges that their constitutions can handle it:

His bitterness (and rage and suspicions swollen against all things of this sort) was added to miseries of those poor ones who were denounced in the matter of diminishing or slighting his majesty. If something of this kind had made a peep, he, rising up into investigations more fiercely than civilly (acrius . . . quam civiliter), placed savage judges in charge of these trials and, in case of some of those being punished—and more fierce than even [the third-century emperor] Gallienus in some cases of this kind—, he used to try to have their deaths extended, if nature would permit it. \(^{21.16.9}\)

Constantius was so unreliable when it came to matters of iustitia that Silvanus (an infantry commander on the northern frontier) felt that he had no hope, and so had himself acclaimed emperor:

[K]nowing the pliant/soft mind of the fickle emperor and fearing that he would be butchered without being heard and with no process of condemnation . . . through the means of purple insignia taken on the spur of the moment from the standards of the dragons and vexilla, Silvanus rose to imperial loftiness. \(^{15.5.15–16}\)

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\(^{53}\) “ecquis, florentissime Caesar, nocens esse poterit usquam si negare sufficiet?” contra quem Iulianus prudenter motus ex tempore,”et quis,” ait, “innocens esse poterit si accusasse sufficiet?” et haec quidem et huius modi multa civilia.


\(^{55}\) addebatur miserorum aerumnis, qui rei maiestatis imminutae vel laesae deferebantur, acerbitas eius et iracundia suspicionesque in huiusmodi cuncta distentae. Et si quid tale increpuisset, in quaestionem acerius exsurgens quam civiliter spectatores apponebat his litibus truces mortemque longius in puniendis quibusdam, si natura permetteret, conabatur extendi in eiusmodi controversiarum partibus etiam Gallieno fericior.

\(^{56}\) sciens animum tenerum versabilis principis timensque, ne trucidaretur absens et indemnatus . . . cultu purpureo a draconum et vexillorum insignibus ad tempus abstracto ad culmen imperiale surrexit.
Driven by fear of Constantius’ eagerness to destroy those whom he viewed as a threat—and note that he fears being tortured (probably at length) and executed without a trial—Silvanus rationally decided that, as he had nothing to lose, he might as well go into revolt. Indeed, on Constantius’ watch, as it were, the caesar Gallus displayed decidedly uncivil behavior. Through his penchant for preying on elites and abuse of authority, confiscations and executions occurred with abandon and “a civil and just empire (civile iustumque imperium) had been converted to bloody caprice.”

**DECLINATIO AND EMPEROR**

Ammianus intimately connects the failure of civility in Constantius with physical manifestations that pull him down to earth and eventually lead to a reader’s perception of a desire in the emperor to be sexually penetrated. The springboard of the discussion that reveals this connection is Ammianus’ remark that Constantius “has swerved from justice” (15.1.3: a iustitia declinavit) when he claims the title “My Eternity” and evidently feels free of mortality and, as his behavior elsewhere suggests, of morality. Constantius’ declinatio from justice to claim eternity creates an initial impression that his claims are “unjustified” because he is mortal, and if he is going to claim the mantle of civil emperor, he should hardly be embracing a strategy of justicial declension. Indeed, given that the emperor was the premiere source of ius on account of the simple fact that he was emperor, this passage is bitterly ironic.

Subsequent to Ammianus’ mention of Constantius’ assertion that he makes it his business to imitate the civil emperors, the historiographer places His Eternity, the self-naming supposed master of the world, into a much larger frame (quoted again for convenience):

> For even if he were ruling Democritus’ infinity of worlds, of which Alexander the Great dreamed with Anaxarchus’ encouragement, yet reading or listening he should have reflected upon the fact that, as the astronomers in universal agreement teach, the circuit of the entire earth, which seems immeasurable to us, next to the greatness of the universe has the image of a tiny point. (15.1.4)

In the first place, the mention of the fifth-century B.C.E. philosopher Democritus attracts attention. One of his beliefs, to which Ammianus refers,

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57. 14.1.4: civili iustoque imperio ad voluntatem converso cruentam.
was that this world was one of an infinite number of worlds composed out of random motions of atoms.\footnote{de Jonge 1972a: 11.} This larger prospect cuts Constantius’ claim to being master of the world down to size: it is “unjust” of him to pretend to grandeur when so great a scheme of things renders him so small. Cognizance too of the well-known fact that Democritus was an exponent of atomism suggests that interpretation of this imperial swerve is not complete. Indeed, the mention of atomism presages the dissipation of Constantius’ transcendence into physical symptoms.

Locating ultimate reality in the interplay of atoms and the void, atomism is a doctrine quite precisely not transcendent. And it is the physicality of this doctrine that sheds light on the phrase characterizing Constantius’ claim of mastery of the world as a swerve from justice (\textit{a iustitia declinavit}). \textit{Declinare} (and the related noun \textit{declinatio}) are words used to describe the movement of atoms in atomic theory.\footnote{TLL 5.1 191.72–73; 75–6 (\textit{declinare}); TLL 5.1 188.63–65 (\textit{declinatio}).} A critical Cicero, for example, reports Epicurus’ belief that the necessity of fate could be rendered irrelevant through the swerving of an atom (\textit{declinatione atomi}).\footnote{Fut. 22: Epicurus \textit{declinatione} atomi vitari necessitatem fati putat.} Employing \textit{declinare}, Lucretius connects the swerve of atoms to impulses leading people to act in various ways.\footnote{Luct. 2.249–60.} Ammianus’ use of \textit{declinare} accordingly physicalizes Constantius’ embrace of eternity and mastery of the world, pulling him from the transcendental register that he claims for himself. Indeed the impression of physicalization is reinforced by Ammianus’ use of \textit{declinare} in a haughty letter the Persian king of kings, Sapor II, writes to Constantius in book seventeen:

\begin{quote}
At no place swerving (\textit{declinans}) from his inborn arrogance, he gave a letter for Constantius to a certain legate Narseus, who had been sent with gifts. I have been given to understand that this is the sense of the letter: “I, Sapor, king of kings, partner of the stars, brother of the sun and moon, wish to my brother, the \textit{caesar} Constantius, health to the greatest degree. . . .” (17.5.2–3)\footnote{missoque cum muneribus Narseo quodam legato litteras ad Constantium dedit nusquam a genuino fastu declinars, quaram hunc fuisse accepimus sensum: “Rex regum Sapor, particeps siderum, frater Solis et Lunae, Constantio Caesarì fratri meo salutem plurimam dico. . . .”}
\end{quote}

Sapor claims to be transcendent of this world in a letter which, content-wise, could have come from Constantius himself. Noting that Sapor is “at no place \textit{swerving} from his inborn arrogance,” Ammianus employs with
irony the same verb he used earlier of Constantius. Also, in calling this arrogance of Sapor inborn, he identifies a material basis for it. Both born into imperial houses, Constantius and Sapor accordingly come by their arrogance because of their enmeshment in the physical world. The implication is that they will be true to material things and not to the abstract values to which the truly virtuous ruler should hew.

These characterizations of Sapor and Constantius anticipate what Claudian will soon write in 398, when he depicts (with irony) emperor Theodosius I saying to his son Honorius (destined to be emperor—and his brother Arcadius is already one) that it is through virtue and worthiness of deeds that he will deserve the throne and not, as is the case always with the Persian kings, through lineage:

If fortune had given you the throne of the Persians,
my dear boy, the barbarian tiara (a thing to be worshipped from afar
by eastern lands) would rise above [your] Arsacid face.
Sublime lineage would suffice and nobility alone
would be able to protect you as you idly fell into luxury.
Very much other is the condition for the rulers of Roman
royal power. It is right that it [Roman royal power] is
supported through virtus and not through blood. (4H 214–220)

While the absolute monarch may claim transcendent dessert and status, if there are no good works and civility, it will be mere physical assertion with no warrant beyond its evanescent existence here on earth. Indeed, ruling without a connection to transcendent values, as Ammianus says Constantius does, associates Constantius with emperors in the past whose behavior was a poisonous mixture of sexual deviance and tyrannical incivility. Nero, Commodus, and especially Elegabalus come to mind. While the known facts of Constantius’ life don’t report him straying from being the impen-

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63. Si tibi Parthorum solium Fortuna dedisset,
care puer, terrisque procul venerandus Eois
barbarus Arsacio consugeret ore tiaras:
sufficeret sublime genus luuxque fluentem
deside nobilitas posset te sola tueri.
Altera Romanae longe rectoribus aulae
condicio. Virtute decet, non sanguine niti.

64. For more on connections between sexual deviance and absolute imperial power, see Mathew Kueffer’s discussions (2001: 56–61, 88–90) of both the retrospective portrait of the early third-century emperor Elegabalus in the late fourth-century Historia Augusta and similar notions in Claudian and Pacatus.
etraible penetrator in his sexual practice, his absolutist *mores* as ruler make him susceptible to critique on this basis. The argument now turns specifically to how Ammianus creates the impression that Constantius is open to playing the passive role in same-sex sexual activity.

A short time after the swerve and in the midst of a narrative of the activities of informants and subsequent betrayals after the deposition and execution of *caesar* Gallus, Ammianus characterizes Constantius most interestingly when he is led to believe, as he could be so easily, that conspirators were plotting against him. Africanus (the governor of Lower Pannonia) gave a dinner party in Illyricum where the guests, in their cups, criticized the current regime. Unfortunately for the participants, Gaudentius, a member of the secret service (*agens in rebus*), was in attendance and he reported back:

One of those present, Gaudentius, an *agens in rebus*, a stupid man with an impetuous mind, had denounced the matter as a serious one to Rufinus, who was at that time chief of staff of the praetorian prefecture, and a man always greedy for extreme things and notorious for his ingrained evil. And this one (Rufinus) flew without delay as if raised aloft on wings to the court of the emperor, and inflamed him (the emperor), who was soft and penetrable (*mollem et penetrabilem*) in the matter of suspicions of this kind—[he inflamed him] so sharply that, without any thought, Africanus and all the guests at the fatal banquet were ordered to be snatched up and away. (15.3.8–9)

In a significant choice of vocabulary, Ammianus terms Constantius “soft and penetrable” to those who use words that play to his ever-ready paranoia. The two words, *mollis* and *penetrabilis*, are well-known for their reference to gender dissidence (*mollis*) and to passive male sexuality (both *mollis* and *penetrabilis*). Indeed, Constantius’ well-known openness to hear and believe such things is characterized by the verb *pateo* (“to lie open”) a little before the passage just now presented:

Because of this and going forward, Constantius, as though he would tear out the already decreed order of the fates, *was lying open* (*patebat*) with

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65. E quorum numero Gaudentius agens in rebus mente praecipiti stolidus rem ut seriam detulerat ad Rufinum apparitionis praefecturae praetorianae tunc principem, ultimorum semper avidum hominem et coalita pravitate famosum. qui confessim quasi pinnis elatus ad comitatum principis advolavit cunquae ad suspiciones huismodii mollem et penetrabilem ita acriter inflammavit, ut sine deliberatione ulla Africanus et omnes letalis mensae particeps iuberentur rapi sublimes.
heart disclosed all the more powerfully to the many who were planning
treachery. (15.3.3)

The verb *pateo* is obscene when applied to a person: legs are spread. *Pateo* will appear in 399 in Claudian’s first invective against the eunuch consul Eutropius, where the sexualized nature of this word is evident. This excerpt from a passage full of *doubles-entendres* (IE 1.358–70) shows this side to *pateo*: “He fears nothing from the back. With his concern everywhere vigilant he lies open (*patet*) night and day” (362–63: *Nil timet a tergo; vigilantibus undique curis / nocte dieque patet*). Although there is perhaps enough evidence that Ammianus is mounting a challenge to Constantius’ impenetrable manhood when he speaks of him as *mollis* and *penetrabilis* with

66. vehementius hinc et deinde Constantius quasi praescriptum fatorum ordinem convulsurus recluso pectore *patebat* insidiantibus multis.

67. In the *TLL* (10.1 699.58–660.16, cf. 667.15–16), *pateo* often refers to bodily openings and sexualized meanings are frequent.

68. Claudian puts a speech full of sexual *doubles-entendres* in the mouth of one of three men in conversation about the marvelously distressing fact that a eunuch is consul:

Another one more playful chimes in with a healthy amount of salty language: “Do you marvel? There is nothing great which Eutropius does not conceive in his heart. Always new things, big things always he loves and he gives a taste to every single one of them with a swift sense. He fears nothing from the back. With his concern everywhere vigilant, he lies open night and day. Gentle and easy to be moved by entreaties, yet most yielding in the midst of anger, he says no to nothing and offers himself even to those who are not demanding. What pleases the mind, he handles and serves it up to be enjoyed. Whatever you like, that hand will give it. He performs every duty in common and his power loves to be turned aside. He has given birth to this [position of his] through his “consultations” and the merit of his exertions. He receives the consul’s robes as a reward for a skillful right hand.” (Claud., IE 1.358–70)

Subicit et mixtis salibus lascivior alter:

“Miraris? Nihil est, quod non in pectore magnum concepit Eutropius. Semper nova, grandia semper diliget et celeri degustar singula sensu.

*Nil timet a tergo; vigilantibus undique curis nocte dieque patet*; lenis facilisque moveri supplicibus mediaque tamen mollissimus ira nil negat et sese vel non poscentibus offerit.

Quidlibet ingenio subigit traditique fruendum; quidquid amas, dabit illa manus; communiiter omni fungitur officio gaudentque potentia flecti.

Hoc quoque conciliis peperit meritoque laborum accipit et trabeas argutae praemia dextrac.”

Tasting implies fellatio. That “he fears nothing from the back” and that “he lies open night and day” refers to his availability for anal intercourse. Claudian’s designation of Eutropius as “most yielding” (*mollissimus*) further confirms this availability. The reference to hands suggests willingness to give a hand-job. For more, see Long (1996: 142–43).
his mind lying open, the case becomes even stronger if Ammianus’ use of another word is considered: *tener* (“pliant, soft”).

*Tener* historically had a valence of effeminacy and was similar to *mollis* in this regard. *Tener* designates the opposite of tough masculinity, and is often applied to the beloved object in love/erotic poetry. Ammianus twice describes Constantius’ mind as *tener*. The usurper Silvanus was driven into revolution partially because he feared the “pliant/soft mind of the fickle princeps” (*15.5.15: animum tenerum versabilis princeps*). And, at *14.5.2*, Ammianus describes Constantius’ mind as narrow and *soft* (*angustus et tener*):

> As an ill body is accustomed to be shattered by even light illnesses, so his narrow and *soft* (*tener*) mind, thinking that whatever made a peep was a thing done or contemplated with a view toward making him unsafe—[so his soft mind] made his victory [over Magnentius] a thing full of grief through the slaughter of innocent persons. (*14.5.2*)

At a moment when the emperor is acting in a manner not at all civil, Ammianus again uses language that casts aspersions on Constantius’ manhood.

*Tener* elsewhere suggested effeminacy in contemporary literature concerned with political figures. In an oration for Theodosius I given in 389, Pacatus develops a fanciful comparison between Theodosius’ manly Gothic troops and the unmanly troops from Egypt that Octavian/Augustus defeated when he bested Mark Antony in the first century B.C.E. These troops were “shining in their *soft* costume” (*tenero perlucentes amictu*), and they are, significantly, depicted as coming from “*effeminate* Canopus” (*mollis Canopus*) (Pacat., *Pan. Lat.* 2 [12] 33.4). Claudian uses *tener* in his first invective against Eutropius when he wishes for an eclipse to the political power eunuchs have come to possess in the eastern part of the empire:

> Let them [the eunuchs] recede from the brow of Power. Public majesty knows nothing of being wielded by a soft (*tenero*) heart. (*IE 1.422–24*)

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70. *OLD* 6b; see, e.g., Tibullus 1.4.9, 1.6.33; Propertius 2.25.41; Ovid, *Amores* 2.1.33, 3.4.1; Martial 1.109.16.
71. utque aegrum corpus quassari etiam levibus solet offensis, ita animus eius angustus et tener, quicquid increpuisset, ad salutis suae dispensium existimans factum aut cogitatum, insontium caedibus fecit victoriam lucutosam.
72. . . . a fronte recedant imperii. Tenero tractari pectore nescit publica maiestas.
The other four appearances of tener in the Res Gestae also support the notion that tener imputes an unmanly softness to whatever or whomever it describes.

The peach fuzz just coming out onto caesar Gallus’ face is described as soft (14.11.28: emergente lanugine tenera), and the children enslaved by the Persians and immature males castrated by the mythical Queen Semiramis are both described as soft (18.10.2: tenerioris aetatis; 14.6.17: teneros mares). The Chinese make silk that has the softest sort of subtlety to it (23.6.67: subtilitatem tenerrimam). And so, for Ammianus tener designates luxury items, children, and immature males who historically were objects of sexual desire for older males. It is telling, then, that the one who signs his name Mea Aeternitas should also have his mind described in this way. Furthermore, these four instances, when added to the two times tener is applied to Constantius’ mind, exhaust the number of times tener appears in the Res Gestae.

A return now to declinare. When Constantius has swerved from justice, which means he is leaving behind civility and strongly suggests a surrender to materiality, and when the present reading of tener, mollis, penetrabilis, and pateo as descriptive of Constantius is kept in mind, the anonymous fourth-century Latin physiognomy (a work mentioned in the introduction to this book which features the sneeze telling Cleanthes that the man before him is no man) provides a relevant intertext. In this work, the verb declinare and the related noun, declinatio, describe the way unmanly cinaedi turn their heads and necks:

The neck leaning (declinata) to the left side signifies to some extent a stupid man and even more a cinaedus. Aristotle even attributes leaning (declinationem) of the head to the right side to cinaedi. (Anon. Lat. 55)73

If this intertext is added to the preceding evidence, is there much to choose between a swerve from justice and a come-hither lean of the head? With this question in mind, it is of great interest that Ammianus’ paragon of civility, Julian, is quite precisely not about to swerve; he is, rather, “unswervable” (indeclinabilis).

Where Constantius is all materializing swerves and transcendent insistence which make him uncivil and raise questions about his sexual desires, Julian engineers his transcendence through being unswervable (indeclinabilis) in the matter of justice and civility:

73. Cervix in sinistram partem declinata stultum aliquatenus ac cinaedum magis significat. Aristoteles etiam ad dexteram partem declinationem capitis cinaedis attribuit.
Julian set great store by civil behavior and this, consistently enough, led to a passion for legality and to seeing himself within a regularized legal context. He cultivated a limited majesty that contrasts sharply with the grand claims that Constantius made for himself. There is mild censure present when Ammianus identifies occasional inflexibility in Julian, but clearly this is better than the pliant paranoia of Constantius. The passage continues with an economical nod in the direction of transcendence: Julian knows that true value lies in the mind and not in the body. Julian’s thoughtful and just engagement with the world is the way to a transcendence of which Ammianus would approve. This engagement is tantamount to an immortality, indeed an eternity, secured through “the knowledge of deeds done honestly and morally.”

On another occasion, an entirely approving Ammianus again terms Julian indeclinabilis in his capacity as judge. When it was possible that important personages could trample on the rights of the less powerful, “he was an unswervable judge of the just and the unjust” (18.1.2: erat indeclinabilis iustorum iniustorumque distinctor). The contrast between Julian and Constantius could not be balder, as the one will not swerve from justice while the other makes a practice of doing so. Further observation of Ammianus’ use of this adjective supports the idea that Julian’s civil behavior eases his access to the transcendent. At 29.1.34, indeclinabilis describes the power of fate, and, at 19.8.2, a stalemate of two valiant armies in battle is broken “by an unavoidable accident” (eventu . . . indeclinabili). This adjective marks things as being beyond mortal control; Julian’s being indeclinabilis is perhaps something superhuman (cf. TLL 7.1 2573–7).

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74. civilitati admodum studens, tantum sibi arrogans, quantum a contemptu et insolentia distare existimabat . . . studiosus cognitionum omnium et indeclinabili aliquotiens iudex; censor in moribus regendis acerminus, placidus opum contemptor, mortalia cuncta despiciens, postremo id praedicabat, turpe esse sapienti, cum habeat animum, captare laudes ex corpore.
75. 14.6.8: ex conscientia honeste recteque factorum (from the passage on the inhabitants of Rome thinking they can secure immortality from statues).
CONCLUSION

Embodied in the contrasting portraits of Julian and Constantius, Ammianus’ thoughts on the emperor speak to the panorama of late-ancient manhood’s homosociality, same-sex desire and the construction of authority elaborated in this book so far. The emperor, apex though he be of auctoritas or ἀξίωμα, is in some respects typical.

The ambitions of late-ancient manhood to grandeur depend on homosociality and yet, connecting auctoritas to things greater than the approval of other men is a desiderandum. His writing reflecting this dynamic outside the Res Gestae, Ammianus both wants and does not want transcendence for the emperor, or, put differently, he both enjoins and devalues connection to things of this world: he is conflicted over Constantius’ grandeur and Julian’s approachability. There is also conflict around same-sex desire and pleasure. Being desirous of another male’s penetrative sexuality is shameful for a man in Ammianus’ world (as it is elsewhere in late antiquity), but knowledge of this desire as a real possibility allows Ammianus to sharpen his critique of Constantius. Ammianus’ pulling Constantius to earth through deployment of forbidden knowledge makes him as authoritative as the contemporary consistory of Theodosius I who wrote Collatio 5.3. In this vein, then, a return to the take-down of Constantius that, at the same time, shows Ammianus’ penetrating powers of criticism.

In a passage previously discussed, Ammianus scandalously figures Constantius’ susceptibility to those telling him about talk against his maiestas as a sort of lying open:

Because of this and going forward, Constantius, as though he would tear out the already decreed order of the fates (quasi praescriptum fatorum ordinem convulsurus), was lying open with heart disclosed all the more powerfully to the many who were planning treachery. (15.3.3)

Earlier analysis pointed out the sexual subtext that the verb pateo (“to lie open”) imports. It is time to build on this observation. At this moment, Constantius would do nothing less than overwhelm fate (“as though he would tear out the already decreed order of the fates”). About as forceful an assertion of transcendence as can be imagined—Constantius is aiming to place himself beyond the power of fate—, what is he doing to get to this absolute place? Constantius renders fate immaterial through throwing his gates wide open. The authoritative and knowledgeable Ammianus presents an embodiment of tyrannical power’s obscenity.
There are further points to be made. As outrageous as this revelation of imperial obscenity is, it is of a piece with the figuration of same-sex attractiveness as a metaphor for masculine admirability and power in late antiquity. Just as it is possible to go up and down the “ladder of love” from the *Symposium*, so the sublimation of sexual desire inherent in its use as a metaphor for masculine grandeur can be desublimated or undone, and unacceptable desire is suddenly rampant. Julian himself figures the imperial glamour of Marcus Aurelius as a *kallos amēchanon*, which has its lineage of same-sex desire commencing with Plato, and the immediacy of desire brings a compelling liveliness to the portrait. In the case of Ammianus’ Constantius, same-sex desire, not adding liveliness via metaphor this time, appears sans metaphor to besmirch Constantius’ reputation and render his grandeur obscenely vital.

Furthermore, while Ammianus is no fan of same-sex desire, he is a man of the ancient world and his knowledgeable and negative use of it in Constantius’ case is not the whole story of it in the *Res Gestae*. As did many men in late antiquity, he appreciates beauty in younger males (see, e.g., 14.11.28 on the beauty of *caesar* Gallus), but he is of a school of “look, but don’t touch” (as his condemnation of initiatory pederasty among the Taifali at 31.9.5 shows). Where *viri* are concerned, Ammianus generally, though not always (see below), avoids a glamorization of masculine authority via same-sex sexual attractiveness. As has been seen, same-sex sexual attractiveness and desire lurk as obscene dimensions to absolutist authority, manifesting in the texture of Ammianus’ language and in a series of images and vocabulary that slander. But, interestingly, the charm of celestialized manly authority, metaphorized as same-sex sexual attractiveness, nonetheless proves irresistible to Ammianus in the case of Julian.

In book fifteen Constantius ennobles Julian, a full-grown man of twenty-four years, with the title of *caesar*. The dramatic date is 355 and Constantius presents Julian to the soldiery in Milan:

“We stand before you, best defenders of the empire, in order to champion our cause with one shared spirit, one almost of all humanity. How I will do this, I will tell you briefly as though before impartial judges. After the destruction of those rebellious tyrants whom savagery and fury compelled to those gambits they tried, the barbarians, as though sacrificing with Roman blood to their evil Manes, dance through the Gauls as the peace of the boundaries has been shattered; they are heartened by the belief that difficult necessities hold us fast throughout our provinces so exceedingly far from one another. If, while time permits, the opinion of you and us, both
consulted, should meet this evil already slithering beyond bounds, the
necks of the proud tribes will sag and the boundaries of our empire will be
inviolate. It remains for you to make strong with favoring action the hope
for future affairs which I have. This Julian, this brother, my cousin, as you
have known, one rightly known (lit. “seen” [spectatum]) for his modesty
(on account of which he dears to us, as much as for the fact he is a relative)
and already a young man of gleaming purpose (elucentis industriae), [this
Julian] I wish to bring into the rank of caesar, with this action, if it seems
good to you, confirmed by your agreement.” (15.8.5–8)

Looking for help after Gallus disappointed him and proposing Julian
as the new caesar, Constantius uses revealing words. Constantius describes
Julian’s good character as something visible (spectatum) and his sense of
purpose (industria) is likewise able to be seen: it shines (elucens). This
admirable man has about him a play of light, and this calls to mind the
clarissimi, spectabiles, illustres, and Julian’s Marcus Aurelius. As Ammianus
continues, the soldiers cannot remain still and they disrupt the ceremony:

Interrupting, the gathering (contio) was gently was keeping him [Con-
stantius] from saying more about these things, even as he was trying to
continue. As though knowing beforehand what was to come, the gather-
ing was proclaiming that [this elevation of Julian] was the work of highest
godhead (summi numinis) and not of mortal mind. (15.8.9)

While Constantius’ final words certainly primed the soldiery to make their
interruption, the interruption becomes an occasion for Ammianus to por-
tray Julian’s progress into higher office as the work of providential and tran-
scendent divinity (summum numen). As he continues, Constantius speaks
more of Julian, and develops the connection to the divine further:

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76. “Assistimus apud vos, optimi rei publicae defensores, causae communi uno paene omnium
spiritu vindicandae, quam acturus tamquam apud acuos iudices succinctius edocebo. Post interitum
rebellium tyrannorum, quos ad haec temptanda, quae moverunt, rabies egit et furor, velut impiis
eorum manibus Romano sanguine parentantes persulti barbari Gallias rupta limitum pace hac
animati fiducia, quod nos per disiunctissimas terras arduae necessitates adstringunt. Huic igitur malo
ultra apposita iam proserpenti, si dum patitur tempus occurrerit nostri vestrique consulti suffragium,
et colla superbarum gentium detumescent et imperii fines erunt intacti. Restat ut venturorum spem,
quam gero, secundo roboretis effectu. Julianum, hunc fratrem meum patruelum, ut nostis, verecundia,
dia, qua nobis ut necessitudine carus est, recte spectatum iamque elucents industriae iuvenem, in
Caesars adhibere potestatem exopto coeptis, si videntur utilia, etiam vestra consensione firmandis.”

77. Dicere super his plura conantem interpellans contio lenius prohibebat arbitrium summi
numinis id esse non mentis humanae velut praescia venturi praedicamans.
Standing still until they were silent, the emperor finished his speech more confidently: “Because your happy roar shows your assent present with us now, let this young man of steady vigor whose tempered mores are more to be imitated than talked about, [let this young man] rise up to this almost expected honor, [this young man] whose most excellent natural talents (praecelaram indolem), schooled in an excellent education (bonis artibus institutam), I believe I have made fully evident because I have chosen him (for this office). Therefore, with the present approval of God in heaven (praesente nutu dei caelestis), I will put the imperial robe on him.”

(15.8.9–10)

Constantius points out the various excellences of Julian. Light gleams again with the shining of his excellent natural talents (praecelara indoles). He is in possession of paideia, his natural talents “schooled in an excellent education” (bonis artibus instituta). It also is significant that the investiture occurs both within the homosocial space of a gathering of men (15.8.9: contio) and with the approval of heaven (praesens nutus dei caelestis): civility and absolute grandeur are both represented.

Somewhat later in book fifteen and after Julian makes his remarks to the contio, Ammiianus metaphorizes his grandeur as same-sex sexual attractiveness. The mode and effect of this evocation of same-sex sexual attractiveness contrasts markedly with the graphic desire Ammiianus imputes to Constantius. Instead of calling penetration to mind (e.g., pateo or penetrabilis), Ammiianus offers loveliness (venustas) as a metaphor for the admirability of this well-educated, virtuous young man whose auctoritas has been approved by other men and who has been touched by heaven itself. The soldiers gaze upon him and they see in him an awe-inspiring beauty that is tantamount to the kallos améchanon that Julian himself attributed to Marcus Aurelius: “Looking for a long time and intently on his eyes were terrible with loveliness (venustate terribiles) and on his countenance rather animatedly pleasing, the soldiers could tell who he was going to be . . . ” (15.8.16). The mechanics of sex between men are not present in the way they are in the depiction of Constantius, but desire’s affect and power, and perhaps even the goddess of love herself, nonethe-

78. stansque imperator immobils, dum silerent, residua fidentius explicavit: “quia igitur vestrum quoque favorem adesse fremitus indicat laetus, adolescens vigoris tranquilli, cuius temperati mores imitandi sunt potius quam praedicandi, ad honorem prope speratum exsurgat: cuius praecelaram indolem bonis artibus institutam hoc ipso plene videor exposuisse, quod elegi. ergo cum praesente nutu dei caelestis amicu principali velabo.”

79. cuius oculos cum venustate terribiles vultumque excitatius gratum multumque contu-
less provide a metaphor for the glamour of Julian’s present and future auctoritas that Ammianus connects to corporeal arousal.

Consideration of ideas found in the sources surveyed in the first chapter and the contrast they have with those of Ammianus and Athanasius bring this chapter well and truly to an end. Discourses discussed in chapter one (late-Platonic philosophy and theorizing concerned with myths) feature an embrace of paradox and an accompanying belief in the diffusion of transcendent powers into the material world. This diffusion exceeds the power of logic to describe it definitively and a broader ontological order contextualizes this world of human laws and morals; the power of earthbound morals is only sufficient for this world and more exists than can be accounted for according to them. Hence, same-sex desire can be invoked to metaphorize masculine admirability, even though it is officially frowned upon: the forbidden indicates distinction. In contrast, when Ammianus describes Julian’s admirable connection to the transcendent, he projects men’s morals and laws into the transcendent and Julian’s connection to the transcendent is, in the end, accomplished through playing by the rules and being civil.80 Ammianus’ association of the transcendent with earthbound civilitas resembles Athanasius’ moralization of it. In Athanasius’ case, the need for his Antony to exemplify earthly morals with no remainder (even as his auctoritas or ἀξίωμα assertively emanates from transcendent sources) leads, ultimately, to an association of all men’s bodies with same-sex desire. It is arguable that something similar happens with Ammianus’ Constantius. When Ammianus packs the transcendent with civility, the failure of Constantius on this score short-circuits his connection to absolute grandeur and the emergent human fault is all too corporeal same-sex desire. Does it “itch” (gargalizei/γαργαλίζει)? Unlike Athanasius, though, Ammianus is conflicted. Even though he reviles what he characterizes as Constantius’ tyrannical ways, he nonetheless finds steep hierarchical distinctions praiseworthy and necessary, for he faults Julian for not remembering this. Ammianus also, and again at variance with Athanasius, takes a page from the late-Platonic playbook and metaphorizes the admirability of Julian as a thing capable of inspiring desire: the liveliness of erotic regard electrifies the respect Julian commands.

Ammianus holds, therefore, multiply contradictory viewpoints on imperial auctoritas or ἀξίωμα, and his important historiography has insolubilities at its heart on this score. He envisions appropriate imperial grandeur,

80. For more on Ammianus’ moralization of things beyond this world, see de Bonfils’ interesting discussion of transcendent faut guaranteeing ius (1986: 109–111).
otherworldly, as ultimately something obscene, while, at the same time, proposing a moralized transcendent embodied by earthbound morals. Still, this moralizing effort is countered by his desire for mystery and something greater than this world. This world disappoints him over and over again, as is well-known; all one has to do is read the *Res Gestae*: humanity is feral all too often. And though he wants mysteriously remote imperial grandeur, he ultimately must refuse it; Constantius’ fearlessness must be perverted, and what good can be salvaged from men and their institutions must flood heaven instead.

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81. Auerbach 1953.