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## **Beyond Rhetoric : Echoes of Cato's Moralism in Ammianus' *Res gestae***

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As is well known, apart from a few insights into the Republican period, the *Res gestae* by Ammianus Marcellinus contains some impressive accounts of affairs and everyday life in the late fourth-century Rome which show the author to be both an able historian as well as a perceptive eye-witness capable of collecting and recording individual details regarding the faults of his contemporaries<sup>1</sup>. Through the analysis of some passages which focus on this subject, my aim is to highlight that beyond his representation of Rome's decline and vices can be found some echoes of Cato's moralism.

In this vein, considering the first significant passage in *Res gestae* XIV, 6<sup>2</sup> it may be seen that the author's interest is sparked

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<sup>1</sup> In this vein, J. MATTHEWS' observations are still fundamental (*The Roman Empire of Ammianus*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989, p. 8-17) ; for recent remarks see also S. RODA, « Ammiano Marcellino storico contemporaneo », in R. UGLIONE (ed.), *Scrivere la storia nel mondo antico*, Alessandria, Ed. dell'Orso, 2006, p. 229-246.

<sup>2</sup> On the passage see the comments by L. CRACCO RUGGINI, « Ammiano Marcellino: un intellettuale greco di fronte all'impero e alla sua capitale », in *Atti del Convegno dell'Accademia Nazionale Virgiliana : Cultura latina pagana fra terzo e quinto secolo d. C.*, Florence, Olschki, 1998, p. 213-235, esp. p. 217-230 ; « Clientele e violenze urbane a Roma tra IV e VI secolo », in R. SORACI (ed.), *Atti del Convegno Internazionale su Corruzione, repressione e rivolta morale nella Tarda Antichità*, Catania, CULC, 1999, p. 7-52, esp. p. 13-30 (see also,

off by the riots which broke out during the first urban prefecture of Memmius Vitrasius Orfitus (353-356)<sup>3</sup>, his intention being to foreground the contrast between a past golden age and the degenerate present. Far from merely being a rhetorical description valuable as one of the erudite digressions which mark the work<sup>4</sup>, this section is to be included in the group of accounts

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« Rome in Late Antiquity: Clientship, Urban Topography, and Prosopography », *CPh* 98 (2003), p. 366-382). More generally, with respect to the literary models of *Res gestae* XIV, 6, that is the first of the two so called Roman digressions, cf. R. REES, « Ammianus Satiricus », in J. W. DRIJVERS & D. HUNT (eds), *The Late Roman World and its Historian. Interpreting Ammianus Marcellinus*, London / New York, Routledge, 1999, p. 141-155; moreover, see also R. PACK, « The Roman Digressions of Ammianus Marcellinus », *TAPhA* 84 (1953), p. 181-189; H.-P. KOHNS, « Die Zeitkritik in den Romexkurzen des Ammianus Marcellinus. Zu Amm. Marc. 14, 6, 3-26; 28, 4, 6-35 », *Chiron* 5 (1975), p. 485-491; D. ROHRBACHER, « Ammianus' Roman Digressions and the Audience of the *Res gestae* », in J. MARINCOLA (ed.), *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography, II*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2007, p. 468-473; D. DEN HENGST, *Emperors and Historiography. Collected Essays on the Literature of the Roman Empire*, Leiden, Brill, 2010, p. 274-292.

<sup>3</sup> On this figure and the episode see A. CHASTAGNOL, « Un scandale du vin à Rome sous le bas-Empire: l'affaire du préfet Orfitus », *Annales ESC* 5 (1950), p. 166-183, esp. p. 178 sq.; *La Préfecture urbaine à Rome sous le bas-Empire*, Paris, P. U. F., 1960, p. 341-345; *Les Fastes de la Préfecture urbaine à Rome*, Paris, Nouvelles éditions latines, 1962, p. 139-147; and *Memmius Vitrasius Orfitus signo Honorius* (s. v.), *PLRE*, I, p. 651-653.

<sup>4</sup> For a fuller discussion on the value and role of Ammianus' digressions, besides the contributions quoted *supra* n. 2, see especially H. CICHOVA, « Die Konzeption des Exkurses im Geschichtswerk des Ammianus Marcellinus », *Eos* 63 (1975), p. 329-340; A. M. EMMETT, « The Digressions in the Lost Books of Ammianus Marcellinus », in B. CROKE & A. M. EMMETT (eds), *History and Historians in Late Antiquity*, Sydney, Pergamon Press, 1983, p. 42-53; U. RICHTER, « Die Funktion der Digressionen im Werk Ammians », *WJA* 15 (1989), p. 209-222; M. CALTABIANO, « Il carattere delle digressioni nelle *Res gestae* di Ammiano Marcellino », in A. GARZYA (ed.), *Metodologie*

supplying information on the dramatic background of Ammianus' own times. In fact, the historian's own words are noteworthy where he seems interested on the one hand in offering an overall picture to his hypothetical readers taken to be foreigners<sup>5</sup>, and on the other in searching for the true reasons for recent corruption (*summatim causas perstringam, nusquam a ueritate sponte propria digressurus*).

Nonetheless, in the following part of the passage, having observed the major role played by Virtue and Fortune from the time when Rome first began to rise to a dominant position in the world and formulating the pact between them in metaphorical terms<sup>6</sup>, Ammianus describes this centuries-long evolution as a

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*della ricerca sulla tarda antichità*, Naples, d'Auria, 1989, p. 289-296 ; C. W. FORNARA, « The Prefaces of Ammianus Marcellinus », in M. GRIFFITH & D. J. MASTRONARDE (eds), *Cabinet of the Muses. Essays in honor of T. G. Rosenmeyer*, Atlanta, Scholars Press, 1990, p. 163-172.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Ammianus, XIV, 6, 2 : *Et quoniam mirari posse quosdam peregrinos existimo, haec lecturos forsitan (si contingerit), quam ob rem cum oratio ad ea monstranda deflexerit quae Romae geruntur, nihil praeter seditiones narratur et tabernas et uilitates harum similis alias* : « Now I think that some foreigners who will perhaps read this work (if I shall be so fortunate) may wonder why it is that when the narrative turns to the description of what goes on at Rome, I tell of nothing save dissensions, taverns, and other similar vulgarities ». Translation here and in the subsequent notes is from J. C. ROLFE (ed.), *Ammianus Marcellinus History. Books 14-19 ; Books 27-31*, Cambridge / London, Harvard University Press, 2005 (1935) ; 2001 (1939) ; on the interpretation of the term *peregrini* see recent remarks of G. KELLY, *Ammianus Marcellinus. The Allusive Historian*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 134-135.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Ammianus, XIV, 6, 3 on which cf. D. DEN HENGST, *op. cit. n. 2*, p. 259-268, esp. p. 261, who suggests textual correspondences with Florus, *Praef. 2* and Plutarch, *Fortuna Romanorum* 316f ; for further observations see also I. G. MASTROROSA, « La *Fortuna populi Romani* e l'ascesa egemonica di Roma fra tradizione antica e riletture moderne », in G. MORETTI & A. BONANDINI (eds), *Persona ficta. La personificazione allegorica nella cultura antica, fra letteratura, retorica*

biological process. Besides the links between his rhetorical narrative choice and the analogous image to be found in Florus' *Epitome*<sup>7</sup> as well as in some previous sources of the historiographical tradition<sup>8</sup>, three further points are worth noticing : firstly, the idea that Rome was declining into old age<sup>9</sup>, secondly, the depiction of the Eternal City as a thrifty parent, wise and wealthy who has passed laws intended to be the foundations of liberty, subsequently entrusting the management of her inheritance to the Caesars, considered to be her children<sup>10</sup>,

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*e iconografia*, Trent, Università degli studi di Trento, 2012, p. 301-324, esp. 313-314.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Ammianus, XIV, 6, 4, and Florus, *Praef.* 1-4, where the history of Rome is presented as a growing organism ; on this passage see L. BESSONE, *La storia epitomata. Introduzione a Floro*, Rome, L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1996, p. 31-41. For the influence of Florus on Ammianus' *Res gestae* XIV, 6, cf. D. DEN HENGST, *op. cit.* n. 2, p. 259-268.

<sup>8</sup> See also Lactantius, *Divinae institutiones* VII, 15, 14-16 ; *Historia Augusta, Carus* 2, 2-3 ; for useful remarks on this topic cf. M. RUCH, « Le thème de la croissance organique dans la pensée historique des Romains, de Caton à Florus », *ANRW* I, 2, 1972, p. 827-841 ; J. M. ALONSO-NUNEZ, *The Ages of Rome*, Amsterdam, Gieben, 1992 ; M. L. HAVAS, « Le corps de l'Empire romain vu par les auteurs latins et grecs. Un chapitre de l'historiographie et de la rhétorique gréco-romaines », in M. SORDI (ed.), *Autocoscienza e rappresentazione dei popoli nell'antichità*, Milan, Vita e pensiero, 1992, p. 239-259 ; L. BESSONE, « Biologismo e storiografia altoimperiale », *Patavium* 5 (1995), p. 65-87, and Senectus imperii. *Biologismo e storia romana*, Bologna, CLEUP, 2008.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Ammianus, XIV, 6, 4 : *Eius populus ab incunabulis primis ad usque pueritiae tempus extremum (...) deinde aetatem ingressus adultam (...) iamque uergens in senium, et nomine solo aliquotiens uincens, ad tranquilliora uitae discessit* : « Her people, from the very cradle to the end of their childhood (...) Then, entering upon adult life (...) And now, declining into old age, and often owing victory to its name alone, it has come to a quieter period of life ».

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Ammianus, XIV, 6, 5 : *Ideo urbs uenerabilis, post (...) latasque leges, fundamenta libertatis et retinacula sempiterna, uelut frugi parens*

thirdly, the conflict between positive values, such as the peace assured by Rome, as well as the respect and honours reserved for the Senate's authority and the name of the Roman people, compared with recent negative trends such as the license and vices of a few who appear to ignore their parentage<sup>11</sup>.

On this basis which — generally speaking — seems to reveal a conservative interpretation of Roman history<sup>12</sup>, Ammianus'

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*et prudens et diues, Caesaribus tamquam liberis suis regenda patrimonii iura permisit*: « Thus the venerable city, after (...) and making laws, the everlasting foundations and mornings of liberty, like a thrifty parent, wise and wealthy, has entrusted the management of her inheritance to the Caesars, as to her children ».

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Ammianus, XIV, 6, 6-7: *Et (...) licet (...) Pompiliani redierit securitas temporis, per omnes tamen quot orae sunt partesque terrarum, ut domina suscipitur et regina, et ubique patrum reuerenda cum auctoritate canities, populique Romani nomen circumspectum et uerecundum. Sed laeditur hic coetuum magnificus splendor, leuitate paucorum incondita, ubi nata sunt non reputantium, sed tamquam indulta licentia uitii, ad errores lapsorum atque lasciuiam*: « And although (...) but the tranquillity of Numa's time has returned, yet throughout all regions and parts of the earth she is accepted as mistress and queen; everywhere the white hair of the senators and their authority are revered and the name of the Roman people is respected and honoured. But this magnificence and splendor of the assemblies is marred by the rude worthlessness of a few, who do not consider where they were born, but as if license were granted to vice, descend to sin and wantonness »; on the passage cf. L. CRACCO RUGGINI, « Il senato fra due crisi (III-VI secolo) », in E. GABBA (ed.), *Il Senato nella Storia, I*, Rome, Libreria dello Stato, 1998, p. 223-375, esp. p. 312.

<sup>12</sup> As regards this aspect of Ammianus' perspective, among others contributions see T. D. BARNES, « Literary Conventions. Nostalgia and Reality in Ammianus Marcellinus », in G. CLARKE (ed.), *Reading the Past in Late Antiquity*, Rushcutters Bay, Pergamon Press, 1990, p. 59-92; D. ROHRBACHER, *The Historians of Late Antiquity*, London / New York, Routledge, 2002, p. 179-180; on the historian's attitude towards *uitia* cf. R. SEAGER, *Ammianus Marcellinus. Seven Studies in his Language and Thought*, Columbia, University of Missouri Press, 1986, p. 18 *sq.*; A. BRANDT, *Moralische Werte in den Res gestae des*

argument goes even further, focussing on symbols of magnificence and splendour loved by some of his high ranking contemporaries, such as erecting statues of themselves which were reputed to make a greater contribution to immortality than true glory, or riding in unusually large coaches and wearing splendid apparel (Cf. Ammianus, XIV, 6, 8-9). By comparing these various forms of contemporary extravagance with the habits of traditional past champions of good behaviour such as Cato, Publicola and Regulus, appreciated for their refusing honours and riches, the historian does not merely identify and condemn the emblems of a corrupt and artificial society where, among other things, attire and accessories signify high rank, status and authority<sup>13</sup>, but also takes up a moralistic stance, which seems strongly reminiscent of Cato's lesson, the influence of which can be observed throughout the passage in the fourteenth book as well as in some later ones.

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*Ammianus Marcellinus*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999, esp. p. 126 sq. ; with special reference to Ammianus' appreciation of the judicial practice of the republican Rome cf. also I. G. MASTROROSA, « Ammiano Marcellino e l'oratoria forense tardo repubblicana : un antidoto contro la *prauitas* giudiziaria dell'età di Valente ? », in F. LEONARDELLI & G. ROSSI (eds), *Officina humanitatis. Studi in onore di Lia de Finis*, Trent, Società di studi trentini di scienze storiche, 2010, p. 87-98.

<sup>13</sup> On this matter, in addition to R. MACMULLEN, « Some Pictures in Ammianus Marcellinus », *ABull* 46, (1964), p. 435-455, esp. p. 445-451, (repr. *Changes in the Roman Empire*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1990, p. 78-106, esp. 95-102), see R. F. NEWBOLD, « Attire in Ammianus and Gregory of Tours », *Studia Humaniora Tartuensia* 6 (2005), p. 1-14 ; more generally, as regards the meaning of clothes as indicators of social role in Late Antiquity cf. M. HARLOW, « Clothes Maketh the Man : Power Dressing and the Elite Masculinity in the Later Roman World », in L. BRUBAKER & J. SMITH (eds), *Gender in the Early Medieval World*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 44-69.

In addition to the explicit quotation of the Censor's famous words rejecting statues in his honour<sup>14</sup>, also mentioned by Plutarch<sup>15</sup>, other hints of Ammianus' debt towards Cato's ethical perspective may perhaps be seen in some subsequent sentences. The most striking of these is found in another passage of the same sixth chapter in the fourteenth book, where the historian's critical focus on various attractions of a life of luxury includes sumptuous banquets<sup>16</sup>, equally disapproved of by Cato, who was very active in defending sumptuary measures<sup>17</sup> and especially

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Ammianus, XIV, 6, 8 : *Quam autem sit pulchrum, exigua haec spernentem et minima, ad ascensus uerae gloriae tendere longos et arduos (...) Censorius Cato monstrauit. Qui interrogatus quam ob rem inter multos ipse statuam non haberet : « Malo — inquit — ambigere bonos, quam ob rem id non meruerim, quam, quod est grauius, cur impetrauerim mussitare »* : « But how noble it is, scorning these slight and trivial honours, to aim to tread the long and steep ascent to true glory (...) is made clear by Cato the Censor. For when he was asked why he alone among many did not have a statue, he replied : “ I would rather that good men should wonder why I did not deserve one than (which is much worse) should mutter ‘Why was he given one ?’ ” »).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Plutarch, *Regum et imperatorum apophthegmata* 10, 198f ; *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae* 27, 820b ; *Cato Maior* 19, 6 with further references to his intolerance of external marks of glory or luxury.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Ammianus, XIV, 6, 14 : *Cum autem commodis interuallata temporibus, conuiuia longa et noxia coeperint apparari (...)* : « And when, after a sufficient interval of time, the preparation of those tedious and unwholesome banquets begins (...) » ; 16 : *Mensarum enim uoragines et uarias uoluptatum illecebras, ne longius progrediar, pratermitto* : « But I pass over the gluttonous banquets and the various allurements of pleasures ».

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Livy, XXXIV, 4, 1 ; XXXIX, 44, 2 ; Nepos, *Cato* 2, 3 ; Plutarch, *Cato Maior* 8, 2 ; 6 ; 18, 2-3 ; A. E. ASTIN, *Cato the Censor*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2000 (1978), p. 91-100 ; M. COUDRY, « Luxe et politique dans la Rome républicaine : les débats autour des lois somptuaires, de Caton à Tibère », *Chroniques italiennes* 54 (1998), p. 9-20, esp. p. 10-13.



laws regulating excessive expenditures in banquet<sup>18</sup>, such as the *Lex Orchia*, enacted in 182 a. C. to restrict the number of guests, and the *Lex Fannia*, of 161 a. C., which placed a ceiling on the amount that could be spent on a banquet and limited the meat a person could consume in a year<sup>19</sup>.

In this light, more interesting is the reference to Cato's specific disapproval of too much interest in food in a passage of the sixteenth book of *Res gestae* regarding the merits of the Emperor Julian (Cf. Ammianus, XVI, 5). In this context, having recalled traditional Roman respect for sumptuary legislation and in so doing shown his knowledge of the matter, Ammianus firstly adds that, since these laws were no longer being observed, the *dictator*

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Macrobius, *Saturnalia* III, 17, 2 ; and G. ROTONDI, *Leges publicae populi Romani*, Hildesheim, Olms, 1962 (1912), p. 276 ; A. BOTTIGLIERI, *La legislazione sul lusso nella Roma repubblicana*, Naples, Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 2002, p. 132 sq. For a fuller discussion on sumptuary laws, their purpose and historical meaning see also E. GABBA, « Ricchezza e classe dirigente romana fra III e I sec. a. C. », *RSI* 93 (1981), p. 541-558, repr. in *Del buon uso della ricchezza. Saggi di storia economica e sociale del mondo antico*, Milan, Guerini, 1988, p. 27-44 ; G. CLEMENTE, « Le leggi sul lusso e la società romana tra III e II secolo a. C. », in A. GIARDINA & A. SCHIAVONE (eds), *Società romana e produzione schiavistica, III. Modelli etici, diritto e trasformazioni sociali*, Rome / Bari, Laterza, 1981, p. 1-14 ; M. DAUSTER, « Roman Republican Sumptuary Legislation : 182-102 », in C. DEROUX (ed.), *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History*, XI, Brussels, Latomus, 2003, p. 65-93.

<sup>19</sup> Suffice it to recall some fragments of the lost speech he made to keep in force the *Lex Orchia* : cf. Cato, *Orationes* XXXIV, *Dissuasio ne lex Orchia derogaretur*, frgm. 128 ; 131 Cugusi-Sblendorio Cugusi, I, p. 344-345, with comments by P. FRACCARO, « M. Porcio Catone e la *Lex Orchia Sumptuaria* », in P. FRACCARO, *Opuscula*, I, Pavia, Athenaeum, 1956, p. 233-237 ; F. STOK, « Catone e la *Lex Fannia* », *Maia* 37 (1985), p. 237-244. For further indications on Cato's attitudes to sumptuary excesses regarding banquets see also Cato, *Orationes* XXIV, *De suis uirtutibus*, frgm. 97 Cugusi-Sblendorio Cugusi, I, p. 314-315.

Sulla attempted to keep them in force<sup>20</sup>; he then quotes Cato of Tusculum, who, he notes, was well known for his austere manner of living that conferred upon him the surname of Censorius, according to whom great care about food implied great neglect of virtue (*magna — inquit — cura cibi, magna uirtutis incuria*)<sup>21</sup>.

Besides this statement, that scholars consider to be a fragment deriving from Cato's *Dissuasio ne Lex Orchia derogaretur*, another precise reference to the Censor's opinion on abuse of wine in a passage of the fifteenth book of *Res gestae*<sup>22</sup> cannot be

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. Ammianus, XVI, 5, 1: *Primum igitur factuque difficile, temperantiam ipse sibi indixit atque retinuit, tamquam adstrictus sumptuariis legibus uiueret, quas ex rhetris Lycurgi (id est axibus) Romam translatas, diuque obseruatas et senescentes, paulatim reparauit Sulla dictator, reputans ex praedictis Democriti, quod ambitiosam mensam fortuna, parcam uirtus apponit*: « First, then (and a hard thing to accomplish) he imposed moderation on himself, and kept to it, as if he were living bound by the sumptuary laws which were brought to Rome from the Edicts, that is, the wooden tablets, of Lycurgus; and when they had long been observed, but were going out of use, the dictator Sulla gradually renewed them, taking account of one of the sayings of Democritus, that a pretentious table is set by Fortune, a frugal one by Virtue »; with remarks of G. ZECCHINI, « Greek and Roman Parallel History in Ammianus », in G. ZECCHINI (ed.), *Ricerche di storiografia latina tardoantica II. Dall'Historia Augusta a Paolo Diacono*, Rome, L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2011, p. 15-29, esp. p. 17. With respect to Sulla's sumptuary measures see Plutarch, *Sulla* 35, 4; Aulus-Gellius, II, 24, 11; Macrobius, *Saturnalia* III, 17, 11; for the social context of the promulgation of the *Lex Cornelia sumptuaria* of 81 a. C., besides G. ROTONDI, *op. cit.*, p. 354-355, see P. WYETZNER, « Sulla's Law on Prices and the Roman Definition of Luxury », in J.-J. AUBERT & B. SIRKS (eds), *Speculum iuris. Roman Law as a Reflection of Social and Economic Life in Antiquity*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2002, p. 15-33.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Ammianus, XVI, 5, 2 = Cato, *Orationes* XXXIV, *Dissuasio ne lex Orchia derogaretur*, frgm. 131 Cugusi-Sblendorio Cugusi, I, p. 344-345 with further bibliographical references.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Ammianus, XV, 12, 4: *Vini auidum genus, affectans ad uini similitudinem multiplices potus, et inter eos humiles quidam, obtunsis*

overlooked. This reveals Ammianus' anthropological interest in foreign people<sup>23</sup> and, in this instance, in the origins and customs of the Gauls, including the continual drunkenness of some of them judged by Cato as a voluntary kind of madness (*quam furoris uoluntariam speciem esse Catoniana sententia definiuit*<sup>24</sup>). On the other hand, the recollection of Cato's specific words on the abuse of wine can be compared with Ammianus' own belief which is inserted at the beginning of the description of Roman degenerate customs in the above mentioned passage of fourteenth book, where in particular the violent behaviour on the part of regular drinkers is attributed to scarcity of wine, dependence on which is evidently seen in a negative light<sup>25</sup>. Nonetheless, in the middle of the same passage is found another interesting observation where Ammianus stigmatises the lowest multitude's

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*ebrietate continua sensibus* (...): « It is a race greedy for wine, devising numerous drinks similar to wine, and some among them of the baser sort, with wits dulled by continual drunkenness ».

<sup>23</sup> Among numerous studies on this topic, cf. T. E. J. WIEDEMANN, « Between Men and Beasts : Barbarians in Ammianus Marcellinus », in I. S. MOXON, J. D. SMART & A. J. WOODMAN (eds), *Past Perspectives. Studies in Greek and Roman Historical Writing*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 189-201 ; J. DEN BOEFT, « The Eastern World of Ammianus Marcellinus », *Euphrosyne* 27 (1999), p. 293-299 ; F. J. GUZMÁN ARMARIO, « Las *externae gentes* bajo los estandartes de Roma : asentamiento y reclutamiento bárbaros en las *Res gestae* de Amiano Marcelino », *RomBarb* 17 (2000-2002), p. 85-115.

<sup>24</sup> Ammianus, XV, 12, 4 = Cato, *incertorum librorum fragmenta*, frgm. 84 Cugusi-Sblendorio Cugusi, II, p. 536-537) ; on this topic see also M. B. LANÇON, « *Vinolentia* : l'ivrognerie en Gaule à la fin de l'Antiquité d'après les sources littéraires », in R. CHEVALLIER (ed.), *Archéologie de la vigne et du vin*, Paris, De Boccard, 1990, p. 155-161.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Ammianus, XIV, 6, 1: *Quo administrante seditioes sunt concitatae graues ob inopiam uini, cuius auidis usibus uulgus intentum, ad motus asperos excitatur et crebros* : « During his term of office serious riots broke out because of the scarcity of wine ; for the people, eager for an unrestrained use of this commodity, are roused to frequent and violent disturbances ».

habit of spending the night in wine-shops<sup>26</sup>. In this respect, besides the possibility to contextualise this reference historically<sup>27</sup> or interpret the historian's opinion on the abuse of wine as expression of a moralistic perspective<sup>28</sup>, it may be seen as another trace of the influence of Cato's views.

More generally, a further suggestion that the rhetorical representation of the faults of Roman citizens in the sixth chapter of the fourteenth book also reveals the echoes of the Censor's outlook is Ammianus' critical rebuttal of the bad behaviour of matrons who rush about through all quarters of the city, with their heads covered and in closed litters<sup>29</sup>. Indeed, suffice it to compare

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. Ammianus, XIV, 6, 25 : *Ex turba uero imae sortis et paupertinae, in tabernis aliqui pernoctant uinariis (...)* : « But of the multitude of lowest condition and greatest poverty some spend the entire night in wineshops (...) ».

<sup>27</sup> Among other contributions, see e. g. L. CRACCO RUGGINI, « Clientele e violenze urbane a Roma tra IV e VI secolo », in R. SORACI (ed.), *Atti del Convegno Internazionale su Corruzione, repressione e rivolta morale nella Tarda Antichità*, Catania, CULC, 1999, p. 14-15.

<sup>28</sup> In this vein, see J. H. D'ARMS, « Heavy Drinking and Drunkenness in the Roman World : Four Questions for Historians », in O. MURRAY & M. TECUSAN (eds), *In uino ueritas*, London, British School at Rome, 1995, p. 304-317, esp. p. 305, in whose view « wine and wine drinking hold special fascination for moralists, philosophers and other members of the educated elite, owing in part to their inherent potential for danger » ; for further observations see also M. HUMPHRIES, « The Lexicon of Abuse : Drunkenness and Political Illegitimacy in the Late Roman World », in G. HALSALL (ed.), *Humour, History, and Politics in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 75-88, esp. p. 80 sq. Moreover, on the relationship with wine of the *externae gentes* cf. F. J. GUZMÁN ARMARIO, « *In uino ciuilitas* : los bárbaros y el vino en Amiano », *RomBarb* 16 (1999), p. 77-95.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Ammianus, XIV, 6, 16 : *quidam per ampla spatia urbis (...) sine periculi metu properantes equos uelut publicos, ignitis quod dicitur calcibus agitant (...) Quos imitatae matronae complures, opertis capitibus et basternis, per latera ciuitatis cuncta discurrunt (...)* : « certain persons hasten without fear of danger through the broad streets

the historian's notes with Cato's attack on women's unacceptable behaviour on the occasion of the debate in the early second century a. C. on the proposal to abrogate the *Lex Oppia* recorded by Livy (Cf. Livy, XXXIV, 2-4). According to this latter's reconstruction, particularly focussing on the account of the great crowd of matrons who poured into the streets appealing for some concessions as to the limits imposed on their dress<sup>30</sup>, the Censor had accused women of violating all forms of reserve required by the role of a matron by protesting their ideas openly in the streets<sup>31</sup>.

Besides the implicit appreciation in both Ammianus and Cato of the proper Roman model of female life confined to the home,

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of the city and over the upturned stones of the pavements as if they were driving post-horses with hoofs of fire (...) And many matrons, imitating them, rush about through all quarters of the city with covered heads and in closed litters ».

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Livy, XXXIV, 1, 5 : *Matronae nulla nec auctoritate nec uerecundia nec imperio uirorum contineri limine poterant, omnes uias urbis aditusque in forum obsidebant, uiros descendentes ad forum orantes ut florente re publica, crescente in dies priuata omnium fortuna, matronis quoque pistrinum ornatum reddi paterentur* (...): « The matrons could not be kept at home by advice or modesty or their husband's orders, but blocked all the streets and approaches to the Forum, begging the men as they came down to the Forum that, in the prosperous conditions of the state, when the private fortunes of all men were daily increasing, they should allow the women too to have their former distinctions restored (...) ». Translation here and in the subsequent note is from E. T. SAGE (ed.), *Livy, Books XXXI-XXXIV*, Cambridge / London, Harvard University Press, 1967 (1935).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Livy, XXXIV, 2, 9 : *Quid hic mos est in publicum procurrendi et obsidendi uias et uiros alienos appellandi ? Istud ipsum suos quaeque domi rogare non potuistis ?* : « What sort of practice is this, of running out into the streets and blocking the roads and speaking to other women's husbands ? Could you not have made the same requests, each of your own husbands, at home ? ». On this passage see I. G. MASTROROSA, « Speeches pro and contra Women in Livy 34, 1-7 : Catonian Legalism and Gendered Debates », *Latomus* 65 (2006), p. 590-611, esp. p. 595-596.

the second part of the sixth chapter of the fourteenth book deserves closer attention. Here, together with sketches of throngs of eunuchs, condemned by the historian who uses them as examples of a society in decline where the possibility to propagate for posterity is ignored<sup>32</sup>, other signs of moral decadence of fourth century Rome are again related to women's behaviour. In fact, having strongly criticized the recent preference for the sound of singing and the music of flutes and lyres in the place of philosophy as well as for stagecraft in the place of oratory (XIV, 6, 18), Ammianus clearly condemns the choices made by some types of unmarried women who prefer dancing to maternity and by means of their bad example makes clear his disapproval of the recent acceptance of being childless and

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. Ammianus, XIV, 6, 17 : *postrema multitudo spadonum a senibus in pueros desinens, obluridi distortaque lineamentorum compage deformes (...) quae inter ipsa oriundi crepundia, per primigenios seminis fontes, tacita quodam modo lege uias propagandae posteritatis ostendit* : « finally, the throng of eunuchs, beginning with the old men and ending with the boys, sallow and disfigured by the distorted form of their members (...) since she at the very beginning of life, through the primitive founts of the seed, by a kind of secret law, shows the ways to propagate posterity ». The condemnation of eunuchs in the above mentioned passage of *Res gestae* XIV, 6, as well as in *Res gestae* XXII, 4, reflects not merely a moralistic viewpoint but also the perception that they formed an integral part of imperial bureaucracy and played a significant role in the decline of Rome ; on this matter see H. SCHOLTEN, *Der Eunuch in Kaisernähe. Zur politischen und sozialen Bedeutung des praepositus sacri cubiculi in 4. und 5. Jahrhundert n. Chr.*, Frankfurt am Main, P. Lang, 1995 ; concerning their representation in *Res gestae*, in addition to P. GUYOT, *Eunuchen als Sklaven und Freigelassene in der griechisch-römischen Antike*, Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1980, p. 164-166 ; M. KUEFLER, *The Manly Eunuch. Masculinity, Gender Ambiguity, and Christian Ideology in Late Antiquity*, Chicago / London, University of Chicago Press, 2001, p. 61-69, see especially S. TOUGHER, « Ammianus and the Eunuchs », in J. W. DRIJVERS & D. HUNT (eds), *The Late Roman World and its Historian. Interpreting Ammianus Marcellinus*, London / New York, Routledge, 1999, p. 64-73.

unmarried<sup>33</sup>. Apart from the condemnation of dance as indicator of moral decline<sup>34</sup>, all the passage is a clear sanctioning of the meaningful role of marriage bonds and family institutions, and it implicitly reminds readers that, from Augustan legislation onwards, marriage should be the proper state of any adult Roman man or woman<sup>35</sup>. In other words, one might conclude that in Ammianus' opinion all the female components of Roman society, be they matrons or women of lower rank such as dancers, with their un-Roman behaviour equally represented a risk for moral stability and rectitude.

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. Ammianus, XIV, 6, 20: *Et licet, quocumque oculos flexeris, feminas affatim multas spectare cirratas, quibus (si nupsissent) per aetatem ter iam nixus poterat suppetere liberorum, ad usque taedium pedibus pavimenta tergentis, iactari uolucriter gyris, dum exprimunt innumera simulacra, quae finxere fabulae teatrales*: « And, wherever you turn your eyes, you may see a throng of women with curled hair, who might, if they had married, by this time, so far as age goes, have already produced three children, sweepings the pavements with their feet to the point of weariness and whirling in rapid gyrations, while they represent the innumerable figures that the stage-plays have devised »; see also § 22.

<sup>34</sup> A further evidence of this can be found in the criticism of the exclusion of three thousands dancing girls, their choruses and dancing masters from the expulsion in Ammianus, XIV, 6, 19. More generally, for the interpretation of dance as expression of immorality see e. g. A. CORBEILL, *Controlling Laughter. Political Humour in the Late Roman Republic*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1996, p. 135-137.

<sup>35</sup> Suffice it to remember here the prescriptions of the *Lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus* (18 a. C.) and the *Lex Papia Poppaea* (9 p. C.) that encouraged marriage and the bearing of children: cf. Suetonius, *Augustus* 34, 1-2; Cassius Dio, LIV, 16, 1-2; LV, 2, 6; LVI, 2-9, on which see R. ASTOLFI, *La Lex Iulia et Papia*, Padua, CEDAM, 1996 (4<sup>th</sup> edition); C. FAYER, *La familia romana. Aspetti giuridici ed antiquari. II: Sponsalia, matrimonio, dote*, Rome, L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2005, p. 563-598; T. SPAGNUOLO VIGORITA, *Casta domus. Un seminario sulla legislazione matrimoniale augustea*, Naples, Jovene, 2009 (3<sup>rd</sup> edition), p. 29 sq.; 76 sq.

Finally, from the same ethical viewpoint specifically regarding relations between men and women, another probable echo of Cato's work is also to be found in a passage of the twenty-eighth book of *Res gestae*, which reports a famous anecdote, also used by Plutarch, concerning the expulsion from the Senate inflicted on a man who had publicly kissed his wife and therefore offended Roman customs<sup>36</sup>.

That being said, it must not be forgotten that through this latter passage, concerning the period about twenty years later than that recorded in *Res gestae* XIV, 6, Ammianus once again offers the reader a profile of the vices of the Senate and people of Rome, which is the second of his Roman digressions<sup>37</sup>. In this context, having highlighted the prefecture of Olybrius (369-370 p. C.)

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. Ammianus, XXVIII, 4, 9 : *Et haec admittunt hi quorum apud maiores censoria nota senator afflicto est, ausus dum adhuc non deceret, praesente communi filia coniugem osculari* : « And those who stoop to do such things are men in the time of those forefathers a senator was punished with the censor's brand of infamy, if he had dared, while this was still considered unseemly, to kiss his wife in the presence of their own daughter » ; and Plutarch, *Cato Maior* 17, 7 ; *Coniugalium praecepta* 13, 139c (= Cato *incertorum librorum fragmenta*, frgm. 23 Cugusi-Sblendorio Cugusi, II, p. 510-511) with further comments by O. SCHONBERGER, « Der gluckliche Cato », *RhM* 112 (1969), p. 190 ; A. E. ASTIN, *op. cit.* n. 17, p. 80-81.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Ammianus, XXVIII, 4 ; for the analysis of Ammianus' second Roman Digression, in addition to the contributions quoted *supra* n. 2, cf. C. SALEMME, *Similitudini nella storia. Un capitolo su Ammiano Marcellino*, Naples, Loffredo, 1989, p. 12-35 ; D. DEN HENGST, « Literary Aspects of Ammianus' Second Digression on Rome », in J. DEN BOEFT & ALII (eds), *Ammianus After Julian : The Reign of Valentinian and Valens in Books 26-31 of the Res gestae*, Leiden, Brill, 2007, p. 159-179 (repr. in *op. cit.* n. 2, p. 274-292) ; J. DEN BOEFT, J. W. DRIJVERS, D. DEN HENGST & H. C. TEITLER, *Philological and Historical Commentary on Ammianus Marcellinus XXVIII*, Leiden / Boston, Brill, 2011, *ad loc. cit.* ; L. VAN ABBEMA, « Ammianus Marcellinus 28, 4 : Juvenalian Vice and the Writing of History », in C. DEROUX (ed.), *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History*, XVI, Brussels, Latomus, 2012, p. 614-638.



with special reference to his debauched private life, that is inclination to luxury as well as love affairs (XXVIII, 4, 2), the description goes on to deal with the prefecture during the years 371-372 of Ampelius, originally also from Antioch, who privately seemed to lust after pleasures similar to those popular with the Romans he governed, though admirable for having tried to fight against excess gluttony by means of measures very much like sumptuary laws. Indeed, according to Ammianus' words (XXVIII, 4, 3-4), he had ordered that no wine-shop should be open soon in the morning, that none of the common people should heat water, evidently for mixing with wine and, up to a fixed hour of the day, that no « victualler should offer cooked meat for sale ». But it is important to note that, having reported Ampelius' interventions, the historian highlights once again that shameful acts because they were constantly overlooked had so increased that not even the Cretan sage Epimenides would have been able to purify Rome (XXVIII, 4, 5).

In the same light, which in general seems not far from Cato's perspective, Ammianus' attention on misconduct of senators and women of senatorial families in another passage of the twenty-eighth book of *Res gestae* (1, 36-39), should be noticed. In this context, once again revealing a rhetorical emphasis on the decline of the society of late antiquity and recounting a terrible series of trials, homicides and adulteries which under Maximinus' rule made Rome weep for its dead, the historian stigmatises his crimes as a blot on the fair aspect of the Eternal City and remarks that his menaces as well as his actions would have been capable of terrifying wise men such as Numa Pompilius and Cato<sup>38</sup>.

Furthermore, Ammianus' equal interest in excess by members of the Church should not be overlooked either: suffice it to concisely mention the reference to misuse of banquets even by

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. Ammianus, XXVIII, 1, 39: *Quae uerba effectui propere iuncta, terruissent profecto Numae Pompilii similis, et Catonem*: « Such words, which accomplishment quickly followed, would surely have terrified men like Numa Pompilius, and a Cato », on which see J. DEN BOEFT, J. W. DRIJVERS, D. DEN HENGST & H. C. TEITLER, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

Roman bishops in a passage of the twenty-seventh book, covering the years 365-366 and focussing on rivalry between Damasus and Ursinus for the Roman Episcopacy<sup>39</sup>. In this context, having remarked once again the ostentation in city life, the historian does not merely limit himself to attacking them for their ambition with respect to the offerings of matrons, carriages or clothes<sup>40</sup>, but precisely notes their care for banquets which can be considered more sumptuous than those of kings (*epulas curantes profusas, adeo ut eorum conuiuia regales superent mensas*) and recommends they imitate the ascetic lifestyle of provincial bishops<sup>41</sup>.

The above mentioned passages showing the historian's perception of luxury and excess in meals as well as his

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. Ammianus, XXVII, 3, 14-15, with the remarks of R. LIZZI TESTA, *Senatori, popolo, papi. Il governo di Roma al tempo dei Valentiniani*, Bari, Edipuglia, 2004, p. 153-155; for further observations on the episode see also L. CRACCO RUGGINI, «Rome in Late Antiquity: Clientship, Urban Topography, and Prosopography», *CPh* 98 (2003), p. 374 *sq.*, with other bibliographical references.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Ammianus, XXVII, 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 uehiculis insidentes, circumspecte uestiti (...): « Bearing in mind the ostentation in city life, I do not deny that those who are desirous of such a thing ought to struggle with the exercise of all their strength to gain what they seek; for when they attain it, they will be so free from care that they are enriched from the offerings of matrons, ride seated in carriages, wearing clothing chosen with care (...) ».*

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Ammianus, XXVII, 3, 15: *Qui esse poterant beati re uera, si magnitudine urbis despecta, quam uitii opponunt, ad imitationem antistitum quorundam prouincialium uiuerent, quos tenuitas edendi potandique parcissime, uilitas etiam indumentorum (...) ut puros commendant et uerecundos: « These men might be truly happy, 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 (...) commend them (...) as pure and reverent men ».*

condemnation of some female behaviours make it reasonable to suggest that his viewpoint was not far from Cato's attitude to the same matters. Nonetheless, the hypothesis of the influence of this latter's conservative ideals and stigmatising views, more or less rhetorically recalled with special reference to sumptuary measures, family institutions and women's role, deserves to be considered in connection with the intentions of Ammianus' depiction of the declining morality of the élites in late fourth-century Rome.

In the light of this, one cannot overlook the role played by personal events regarding the biography of the historian, and first of all his disapproval of the expulsion of foreigners because of an imminent famine (*Res gestae* XIV, 6, 19), probably the same episode as the one mentioned by other writers<sup>42</sup> and presumably dating from the year 384 under the prefecture of Quintus Aurelius Symmachus, who also regretted the need for the measure in one of his letters<sup>43</sup>. Although we are not specifically told by Ammianus that he was personally involved in the episode, his emphatic disapproval (*ad id indignitatis est uentum*) of an order which besides the *peregrini*, cast out those who practiced the liberal arts but which exempted attendants upon actresses of the mimes, three thousand dancing girls with their choruses and dancing masters<sup>44</sup>, shows how deeply struck he was by the matter.

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. for instance Ambrose, *De officiis* III, 49-50.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Symmachus, *Epistulae* II, 7, 2-3, and remarks of J. MATTHEWS, *op. cit. n. 1*, p. 13 ; A. CAMERON, « The Roman Friends of Ammianus », *JRS* 54 (1964), p. 15-28, esp. p. 28 ; for different proposals see e. g. E. A. THOMPSON, *The Historical Work of Ammianus Marcellinus*, Gröningen, Bouma's Boekhuis, 1969, p. 14, who prefers to date the expulsion to 383 when an Anicius was prefect, to fit in with Ammianus' evident dislike of the Anicii.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Ammianus, XIV, 6, 19 : *Postremo ad id indignitatis est uentum, ut cum peregrini ob fomidatam haud ita dudum alimentorum inopiam pellerentur ab urbe praecipites, sectatoribus disciplinarum liberalium, impendio paucis, sine respiratione ulla extrusis, tenerentur mimarum asseculae ueri, quique id simularunt ad tempus, et tria milia*

Moreover, probable evidence of his partially unpleasant stay in Rome can be found in another passage from the sixth chapter of the fourteenth book, which gives, as one example among others, the case of the foreigner who, having entered the house of any rich man whatsoever will at first be hospitably received and made welcome, afterwards will be considered as one unknown and unexpected the next day and, finally, when having returned later, will never be asked about his absence<sup>45</sup>. Apart from the rhetorical focus on the demeaning nature of patron-client relationships, it is possible to read here a reflection of Ammianus' own memory of sad events which had occurred to him<sup>46</sup>. If the passage offers a true symptom of the historian's own misadventures in the City, as it seems, we might assume that his stay there was not originally agreeable; moreover, besides his criticism of lack of hospitality in Rome, the reference to the little interest shown in culture by the Roman aristocracy, recorded in two other passages of the same sixth chapter<sup>47</sup>, should not be forgotten. In addition, it is

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*saltatricum, ne interpellata quidem, cum choris totidemque remanerent magistris*: « At last we have reached such a state of baseness, that whereas not so very long ago, when there was fear of a scarcity of food, foreigners were driven neck and crop from the city, and those who practiced the liberal arts (very few in number) were thrust out without a breathing space, yet the genuine attendants upon actresses of the mimes, and those who for the time pretended to be such, were kept with us, while three thousand dancing girls, without even being questioned, remained here with their choruses, and an equal number of dancing masters ».

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Ammianus, XIV, 6, 12-13, where should be also noticed the regret for not having come to Rome ten years before (*ut paeniteat ob haec bona tamquam praecipua non uidisse ante decennium Romam* (...): « as to make you regret, because of such special kindness, that you did not see Rome ten years earlier »).

<sup>46</sup> In this vein, see J. MATTHEWS, *op. cit. n. 1*, p. 13.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Ammianus, XIV, 6, 15: *Homines enim eruditos et sobrios, ut infaustos et inutiles uitant*: « For they avoid learned and serious people as unlucky and useless »; 18: *paucae domus studiorum seriis cultibus antea celebratae, num ludibriis ignaviae torpentis exundant* (...) et

worthwhile also mentioning the hostility towards other leading members of aristocratic families which may be seen from a passage in the sixteenth book, where focussing on the age of Constantius when men of every rank were inflamed with a boundless eagerness for riches (*infinita cupidine diuitiarum arserunt*), Ammianus particularly attacks those of the Anician family, whose younger generations could never be satisfied with always greater possessions<sup>48</sup>.

All the same, we know that some years after the order of expulsion, Ammianus was in Rome and he was well reputed. His fame may be testified by the letter, of which many scholars agree in recognizing Ammianus as recipient<sup>49</sup>, the sophist Libanius of

*bibliothecis sepulcrorum ritu in perpetuum clausis* : « the few houses that were formerly famed for devotion to serious pursuits now teem with the sports of sluggish indolence (...) while the libraries are shut up forever like tombs ».

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Ammianus, XVI, 8, 13 ; on the role of the Anicii in late Antiquity, see especially D. M. NOVAK, « The Early History of the Anician Family », in C. DEROUX (ed.), *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History*, I, Brussels, Latomus, 1979, p. 119-165 ; G. ZECCHINI, « La politica degli Anicii nel V secolo », in L. OBERTELLO (ed.), *Congresso Internazionale di Studi Boeziani*, Rome, Herder, 1981, p. 123-138 ; L. CRACCO RUGGINI, « Gli Anicii a Roma e in provincia », *MEFRM* 100 (1988), p. 69-85 .

<sup>49</sup> In favour of this identification cf. esp. J. MATTHEWS, *op. cit. n. 1*, p. 8 and 478, n. 1 ; P. A. BARCELÒ, « Überlegungen zur Herkunft des Ammianus Marcellinus », in U. VOGEL-WEIDEMANN & J. SCHOLTEMEIJER (eds), *Charistion C. P. T. Naudé*, Pretoria, University of South Africa, 1993, p. 17-23 ; J. MATTHEWS, « The Origin of Ammianus », *CQ* 44 (1994), p. 252-269 ; S. ROTA, « Ammiano e Libanio : l'epistola 1063 Foerster di Libanio. A proposito di un articolo di C. W. Fornara », *Koinonia* 18 (1994), p. 165-177 ; G. SABBAH, « Ammien Marcellin, Libanius, Antioche et la date des derniers livres des *Res gestae* », *Cassiodorus* 3 (1997), p. 89-116, esp. p. 92, n. 15 ; L. CRACCO RUGGINI, « La storiografia latina da Ammiano Marcellino a Cassiodoro (e anche più in là): documenti, relitti e fantasmi reinterpretati », *Cassiodorus* 3 (1997), p. 175-187, esp. p. 178-179 ; R. LIZZI TESTA, *op. cit. n. 39*, p. 52-53 ; on the other hand, it was

Antioch sent to him in the year 392, stating that he was gaining a good reputation in the city even thanks to public readings of his work (*Epistulae* 1063 Foerster). Despite his former master's congratulations on his successful stay in Rome, it is however probable that the historian had not really been admitted to the circle of Symmachus<sup>50</sup>: in fact, if he had indeed become intimate with members of the Roman aristocracy, it is unlikely that he would have attacked their excesses in so many passages of his work, from the fourteenth book on, regarding the contemporary age and belonging to a section already published in the year 392.

On the other hand, it is hard to believe that Ammianus' pictures of the vices of Roman society should be considered merely as satirical pieces or literary digressions; most probably, their aim was to persuade listeners and readers to the point of view of the author. In this light, we can hypothesize that beyond the rhetorical stigmatisation, in some parts reflecting ideals of Cato, Ammianus' work also contains precise pragmatic purpose. Therefore, looking for the meaning of his portrait of the Rome of late antiquity, it might be useful to compare his perspective with those of his contemporaries<sup>51</sup>, beginning with Symmachus and his representation of Rome in the third *Relatio* dating from the year 384 p. C. Here, as it is well known, pleading for the restoration of the altar of Victory to the Senate-House, by means of a metaphor he imagines Rome standing up and recalling the need to live in accordance with ancient customs and institutions, as well as to

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questioned or denied by G. W. BOWERSOCK, « Review of J. MATTHEWS, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* », *JRS* 80 (1990), p. 244-250, esp. 247-248; C. W. FORNARA, « Studies in Ammianus Marcellinus. I. The Letter of Libanius and Ammianus' Connection with Antioch », *Historia* 41 (1992), p. 328-344; T. D. BARNES, « Ammianus Marcellinus and his World », *CPh* 88 (1993), p. 55-70, esp. p. 57-58.

<sup>50</sup> As rightly pointed out by A. CAMERON, *op. cit.*, p. 15-18, who also persuasively rejects the possibility of exploiting the letter which some scholars supposed was addressed by the Roman prefect Symmachus to Ammianus (*Epistulae* IX, 110) as evidence of their friendly connection.

<sup>51</sup> As suggested, among others, by L. CRACCO RUGGINI, *op. cit. n. 27*, p. 221 *sq.*; L. CRACCO RUGGINI, *op. cit. n. 39*, p. 20 *sq.*

preserve ancient religious practices which could offer hope for protecting her from her enemies<sup>52</sup>. Furthermore, we should also recall analogous contributions made in the last years of the fourth century and afterwards by poets such as Claudian, Prudentius and later Rutilius Namatianus with their metaphorical representation of Rome as a woman whom they praised in many ways, most of all insisting on her nature as the Eternal City capable of surviving destruction and reflecting religious changes, as has been shown by recent studies<sup>53</sup>.

However, apart from the analogies and the common conception of history as sum of past and present, Ammianus' outlook seems to reflect his personal conception of Rome as domicile of every virtue (*uirtutumque omnium lar*, XVI, 10, 13). In this vein, there should be little wonder at the references to Cato's sayings and behaviour in *Res gestae*, the knowledge of which the historian might have had even by means of quotations of his speeches in Livy's work, which was in those years being appreciated and corrected under the auspices of Symmachus and the Nicomachi family<sup>54</sup>. More precisely, like the famous Censor who had perceived risks deriving from the fall of ancient values, Ammianus, thanks to his living in Rome and observing its everyday life as a foreign eyewitness, had become aware that increasing loss of ancient morality would bring the Eternal City

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<sup>52</sup> Cf. Symmachus, *Relationes* III, 9, with remarks of D. VERA, *Commento storico alle relationes di Quinto Aurelio Simmaco*, Pisa, Giardini, 1981, p. 38-40.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Claudian, *Bellum Geticum* 50-53; Prudentius, *Contra Symmachum* II, 655-660; Rutilius Namatianus, I, 115-120; on which see e. g. M. ROBERTS, «Rome Personified, Rome Epitomized: representations of Rome in the Poetry of the Early Fifth Century», *AJPh* 122 (2001), p. 533-565, esp. p. 535-541 with further bibliography.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Symmachus, *Epistulae* IX, 13, with remarks of S. RODA, *Commento storico al libro IX dell'epistolario di Q. Aurelio Simmaco*, Pisa, Giardini, 1981, p. 119-122; C. W. HEDRICK JR., *History and Silence. Purge and Rehabilitation of Memory in Late Antiquity*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 2000, p. 177 sq.; A. CAMERON, *The Last Pagans of Rome*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 499 sq.

to the point of final collapse. Therefore, his painting of Roman society in dark colours, combining ideal features and real vices, should not simply be interpreted as a literary exercise, but rather as a use of rhetoric in order to prompt members of the aristocracy to look back to the past to discover the foundations of the Roman Empire<sup>55</sup>, and to find in these models to assure their survival in the future<sup>56</sup>, that is to read history as *magistra uitae*.

In the light of this perspective, the passages of *Res gestae* containing echoes, references and quotations of Cato's ideas, considered above, show the utility and fruitfulness of focussing on rhetorically formulated sections of Ammianus' work, as they provide the opportunity both to appreciate his ability to represent reality without renouncing the expression of his personal ethical vision and to perceive once again the particular link which survives even in Late Antiquity between Rhetoric and Historiography.

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<sup>55</sup> With respect to Ammianus' approach towards the Republican Rome see T. D. BARNES, « Literary Convention. Nostalgia and Reality in Ammianus Marcellinus », in G. CLARKE (ed.), *Reading the Past in Late Antiquity*, Rushcutters Bay, Pergamon Press, 1990, p. 59-92 ; A. PELLIZZARI, « *Haec ut antiquitatum peritus exposui*. (Ammianus, XXIII, 5, 21). Le conoscenze e l'uso della storia romana antica in Ammiano », in A. M. BIRASCHI, P. DESIDERI, S. RODA & G. ZECCHINI (eds), *L'uso dei documenti nella storiografia antica*, Naples, Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 2003, p. 645-658.

<sup>56</sup> On the moralizing perspective of Ammianus' historiography and his use of ancient models see H. TRANKLE, « Ammianus Marcellinus als romischen Geschichtsschreiber », *A&A* 11 (1962), p. 21-33 ; J. DEN BOEFT, « *Non consolandi gratia, sed probrose monendi* (*Res gestae* 28, 1, 4). The Hazards of (Moral) Historiography », in J. DEN BOEFT & ALII (eds), *op. cit. n. 37*, p. 293-311, esp. p. 300 sq.