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Roman Senators and Absent Emperors in Late Antiquity

Abstract

It is often assumed that the political fortunes of the city of Rome and of its élite, the Senate, decline in late antiquity. Such decline is attributed to emperors residing in other centres closer to the frontiers and to the inflation of senatorial status in the fourth century. This article argues, however, that the senators of Rome continued to see themselves as important participants in imperial high politics throughout the period. Such ambitions were ably demonstrated by Q. Aurelius Symmachus, whose role as senatorial ambassador to the imperial court was predicated on the basis that the Senate in Rome was still an important political institution. Similar ambitions motivated Roman senators to give active support to rival sides in political usurpations in the fourth century; this activity was advertised, moreover, by an impressive series of dedications set up in the Forum Romanum in close proximity to the Senate House itself. The climax of these aspirations came in the unstable circumstances of the fifth century when, for the first time in over a hundred years, Roman senators seated themselves on the imperial throne. Far from being a moribund political anachronism, then, the Senate in Rome continued to act as a major partner in the running of the Empire throughout the last centuries of Roman rule in the West.

Introduction: Constantius II at Rome

On 28 April 357, the emperor Constantius II began a month long visit to the city of Rome.¹ His arrival in Rome and tour around its monuments is narrated for us in some detail by the historian Ammianus Marcellinus.² In his account of the emperor's ceremonial *adventus* into the city, members of the Senate first make their appearance as part of the delegation that met the imperial entourage outside the city; later, Constantius addressed them in the Curia in the Forum.³ Ammianus' account is, of course, no disinterested report. Constantius was not an emperor whom Ammianus favoured,⁴ and his account of the visit in 357 makes a series of sharp asides at the emperor's expense. During his procession into the city, the emperor bowed his head when passing under arches, even though, as Ammianus reminds us, he was rather short. Sometime later, when Constantius was visiting the sights of Rome, he was so full of admiration for Trajan's Forum that he mentioned his intention to erect an equestrian statue in imitation of the one Trajan had set up there. Immediately the Persian prince Hormisdas, a member of the imperial party, quipped that the emperor should make sure to furnish this new horse with as grand a stable as Trajan had provided for his. The Senate too figures in Ammianus' subversive assessment of the emperor's visit. When its delegation met Constantius outside the city, he — unlike Cineas, the famous envoy of king Pyrrhus of Epirus — failed to recognise their regal status.⁵ Yet this was all of a piece with Constantius' visit to Rome, which Ammianus deemed to be inappropriate. The emperor was coming to Rome to celebrate a victory, but only one over the usurper Magnentius, and he came accompanied by an army whose battle array made them look as if they were about to march on enemy territory, not enter the imperial capital.⁶

However negatively Ammianus might have presented it, Constantius' visit to Rome was no insignificant event. It was one of those rare occasions in the fourth century when an emperor visited the ancient capital: between the accession of Diocletian in 284 and the sack of Rome by Alaric's Goths in 410 only some thirteen imperial visits are known.⁷ Even so, imperial *praesentia*, if not actual, could be expressed in various symbolic ways: statues of emperors were set up around the city, and important building projects — such as baths and restorations of the Tiber banks — were conducted in their names.⁸ Equally, the rhythms of time were punctuated by celebrations in honour of the absent emperor, such as those recorded in the *Codex Calendar of AD 354* commemorating the victories of the Constantinian dynasty, or those honouring Theodosius I's eastern military successes noted by the urban prefect Symmachus in 384-5.⁹

In this paper, I want to examine the role played by the Senate in articulating the relationship between the city of Rome and its absent emperors. In many respects, the role played by the Senate in Ammianus' account of events in 357 finds echoes in other accounts of imperial *adventus* in late antiquity. Other emperors — and, later, the Ostrogothic king Theoderic — were met by delegations including senators outside the city and made a speech in the Curia one of the first deeds they performed on entering the Forum.¹⁰ It will emerge that this was part of a broader phenomenon, whereby members of the Roman Senate were active in facilitating relations between the city and its distant Augusti. This was a role not only expressed through political encounters between senators and emperors, but which also found concrete manifestation in terms of

monuments erected at Rome, not least in the Forum Romanum in close proximity to the senatorial Curia itself.

In particular, this paper will investigate those factors that drove members of the Roman Senate to seek out relations with their distant rulers. The political emasculation of Rome's senators is an assumption common in scholarship on this period. As W. V. Harris put it recently: "Smooth relations with the Senate and with the city-population always no doubt had some marginal prestige-value, but it was exceptional ... if either exercised influence over any important imperial decision."¹¹ Yet even if their clout in the circles of high imperial politics was limited, this does not mean that Rome's senators were content to ignore their rulers. On the contrary, it will be seen that, like other western aristocrats, they actively sought relationships with their distant emperors, and the motivations that impelled them to do so reveal much about the attitudes and ambitions of the senatorial order.¹² I will suggest that the horizons of senatorial ambitions extended, in theory if not in practice, far beyond the city of Rome itself or those areas where senators had patronal interests. It seems to me that the dealings of Roman senators with their usually absent emperors were predicated not simply on the basis that, as Rome's aristocracy, the Senate was the most obvious body to articulate the relationship between the city and the imperial court. Rather, as a group convinced that it was, as Quintus Aurelius Symmachus put it, "the élite of the human race (*pars melior humani generis*)",¹³ Rome's senators maintained a vision of the Empire in which they were still the emperors' partners in government — this in spite of the concentration of effective political power in the hands of the emperor. Such aspirations explain aspects of senatorial activities in the fourth century, the period that will form the focus of my discussion. In a coda, I will argue that the fifth century saw

a final effort by the Senate to assert its centrality to the political life of the Empire. Taken in total, I hope that such data will suggest that, far from seeing itself as having lost its political importance, members of the Senate in Rome continued to cling to the idea that they could aspire to exercising influence even over emperors whom they seldom saw.

1. Senatus Romanus and ordo senatorius from principate to dominate

Before examining these aspects of the relationship between Roman senators and their absent emperors, it will be useful to summarise the position of the Senate in the Roman Empire in late antiquity. Under the principate of the first two centuries AD, the emperor himself, though not always living in the city, still saw it as his preferred place of residence: it was at Rome that emperors celebrated their triumphs through spectacles and monuments; it was also at Rome that the remains of emperors were entombed.¹⁴ This presence of the emperor in Rome itself, or in adjacent areas of central Italy, greatly facilitated frequent links between emperors and senators.¹⁵ From the late-second and early-third century, however, the emperor was usually away from the city, and from the tetrarchic period, new imperial residences sprang up in cities closer to the frontiers, at Trier, Milan, Thessalonike, or Antioch, and later at Constantinople.¹⁶ Just as the emperors tended to reside away from Rome, so too now they were not buried there. Diocletian was laid to rest in a specially constructed mausoleum at his retirement palace in Split, and similar mausolea were built Milan and Thessalonike.¹⁷ After the dedication of Constantinople in May 330, this rival capital seems to have been preferred as a location for imperial tombs.¹⁸ This was so not only for members of the Constantinian

dynasty or eastern emperors generally: in December 376, more than a year after his death, the mortal remains of the western Augustus Valentinian I were brought to the *nova Roma* on the Bosphorus.¹⁹ From the reign of Arcadius (395-408), at which point the eastern court became more or less permanently located in Constantinople, the city also became a principal imperial residence and stage for imperial triumphs and celebrations.²⁰ This movement of the emperors away from Rome meant that the opportunities for regular interaction between sovereign and Senate declined sharply. Yet the eclipse of Rome was neither immediate nor swift. In ideological terms particularly, the city retained considerable symbolic capital as the ancient heart of the Empire, a view espoused by authors in both poetry and prose through the fourth century and into the fifth.²¹ Moreover, the city's senators were, for many authors, an embodiment of all that was venerable about Rome.²² Even after the third century, when the trend was for the court to reside away from the city, some emperors still saw Rome as the focus of their political ambitions. Thus between 306 and 312 Maxentius ruled the city as *de facto* Augustus, and embellished both the urban centre and its surrounding suburbs with lavish buildings.²³ In the fifth century too, as we will see (below p. 000), Rome reasserted itself as an important residence for emperors.

Even so, late antique Rome was for the most part a city without a permanent imperial presence. How might this have affected the relationship between the city's Senate and its rulers? In the early empire, emperors expended great efforts on cultivating a good relationship with the Senate in Rome, and that in spite of the fact that real power lay in the emperor's gift and that, even under the principate, the emperor was often away from the city of Rome.²⁴ Between the late third century and the early fifth, however, the

relationship between emperors and Rome's senators was subject to sweeping changes.²⁵ Constantine created a new Senate, which he bestowed on his new capital at Constantinople.²⁶ Later emperors substantially widened the bracket of senatorial membership (while at the same time introducing various grades within it), extending it to a much broader cross-section of the land-owning classes throughout the Empire and tying senatorial status closely to service in the imperial administration.²⁷ At the beginning of the fourth century the Senate had numbered, much as it had for centuries, some six hundred extremely wealthy individuals, many belonging, or claiming to belong, to long-established families. By the fifth century the senatorial order, among its various grades, encompassed thousands of men, and senatorial status was extended to individuals whom, we may imagine, the ancestors of the Roman Senate would never have considered social equals.²⁸

Such transformations had an impact on the political activities of Roman senators. The increasing reliance of emperors on provincials as opposed to the aristocracy of Rome to provide imperial administrators and the incorporation of those provincials into the senatorial order were processes that had been going on for centuries.²⁹ Nevertheless, the decisive move away from Rome as a strategic and political centre that began in the late-second and third centuries, together with the inflation of senatorial status that we have just seen in the fourth, led to a greater reliance by late Roman emperors on men drawn from provincial élites when it came to making administrative appointments.

Prosopographical studies have shown the rise, at various points in the fourth century, of groups from particular provinces in association with the regimes of individual emperors. Under Valentinian I (364-75), for example, numerous of the emperor's fellow

Pannonians found themselves in high office.³⁰ Even more prominently, under Valentinian's son Gratian (375-83), a Gallic aristocratic clique associated with the emperor's former tutor, Ausonius, dominated high administrative posts.³¹

The involvement and periodic pre-eminence of such provincials in imperial administration had ramifications for the career patterns of senators from Rome. There is a noticeable change in the *cursus* of Roman senators in late antiquity as compared with earlier centuries. Such high administrative posts in provincial government as they held were tied particularly to Italy, Sicily, and Africa, regions with which the Senate was closely linked by patterns of landholding and networks of patronage.³² More generally, the *cursus* of senatorial offices was focused on the city of Rome itself. Thus the quaestorship and praetorship, at one time important stepping stones on the path to high administrative office, were, by the fourth century, primarily associated with the provision of spectacles at Rome. The summit of senatorial ambition likewise showed the Rome-centred horizons of the fourth century urban aristocracy. For most senators, it was the chief administrative post in their own city, the urban prefecture of Rome, that set the seal on a splendid career.³³

This is not to say, of course, that senators ceased altogether from filling important posts in the imperial administration. The dazzling career of Sextus Petronius Probus, head of the wealthy Anician clan, encompassed the praetorian prefectures of Gaul, Illyricum, Italy, and Africa.³⁴ In addition, several senators held proconsulships of Achaëa or Asia.³⁵ Yet such exceptions were rare enough, and in general the scope of senatorial public service was limited to the city of Rome itself or to regions closely dependent on it. In such circumstances it is easy to see how some might view the Roman Senate of late

antiquity as nothing more than a city council, albeit of a particularly important and populous centre.³⁶ The questions to be asked now, then, are, in the light of the restricted career possibilities open to Roman senators, what opportunities were there for members of Rome's aristocracy to interact with their largely absent emperors, and how were such relationships perceived by Rome's senators themselves?

2. Emperors, senators, and honours: the example of Quintus Aurelius Symmachus

To answer such questions as completely as possible requires access to sources that permit detailed observation of Roman senators' attitudes and actions. For the fourth century, there is no Roman aristocrat so well known as Quintus Aurelius Symmachus. His voluminous correspondence provides a fascinating *entrée* into the mental world of the late Roman aristocrat and gives a meticulous record of his activities both as a private individual and a public official.³⁷ Symmachus' public duties made him one of the most distinguished senators of his day, and this distinction was reflected above all in his role as an envoy to the imperial court. In 369-70, he visited Valentinian I at Trier as representative of the Senate (see below pp. 000). As envoy of Rome's pagan senators he sought, and failed, to gain an audience with Gratian at Milan in 382 to plead for the restoration of the Altar of Victory to the Curia Senatus.³⁸ He was in Milan again to see the inauguration of the consuls for 387 by Valentinian II.³⁹ In the following year, it was most probably also in Milan that he delivered a panegyric in honour of the ephemeral imperial overlord of Italy, Magnus Maximus (see below pp. 000). Although they were numerous, it must be remembered that such visits — with the exception of that to Trier in

369-70 — were generally brief, so it is not without reason that John Matthews remarks of Symmachus “that his contacts with the imperial court ... were not at all intensive”.⁴⁰

Like many others of his class, Symmachus’ public career was inscribed on stone by a dutiful relative, in this case his son, Quintus Fabius Memmius Symmachus.⁴¹ Among the offices listed in the inscription, many conform to the career pattern standard among the Roman senatorial order in the fourth century.⁴² Symmachus had held the basic offices for the administration of Rome by its senators, the quaestorship and praetorship. As a notable pagan, he also served on a Roman priestly committee as *pontifex maior*. In terms of high administrative office, his career had been limited to Italy (he had been *corrector* of Lucania and Bruttium), Africa (where he had been *proconsul*), and Rome (he was urban prefect in 384-5, whence survives his *Relationes*, letters to the emperor advising him on the minutiae of urban administration at Rome).⁴³ Also mentioned in the inscription, however, are two rather more unusual honours: *comes tertii ordinis* and *consul ordinarius*. That Symmachus’ tenure of the ordinary consulship, which he held in 391, should be recorded ought not to occasion any surprise: this position represented the apogee of any official career and for that reason alone deserved commemoration.⁴⁴ Rather more striking, however, is the mention of *comes tertii ordinis*. This was the basic rank for entry into the senatorial order but, since Symmachus was already a senator when he received it, its appearance in his roll call of honours at first seems strange.⁴⁵ That it merits inclusion in the *cursus* listed in the inscription suggests that, in spite of its lack of distinction, the title nevertheless represented some honour received by Symmachus that was deemed worthy of commemoration.⁴⁶ As we will see, the explanation is quite straightforward: like the consulship, the rank of *comes tertii ordinis* was an honour

conferred on Symmachus by the emperor. Moreover, the circumstances in which Symmachus received these two exceptional honours are instructive of how the relations between Senate and emperor worked and how senators perceived them, so let us look at them more closely.

(i) Trier 369-70: Symmachus and Valentinian I

Symmachus received the first of his extraordinary titles, that of *comes tertii ordinis*, during a sojourn at the imperial court of Valentinian I at Trier in 369 and 370.⁴⁷ The beginning of Symmachus' visit coincided with celebrations of the emperor's *quinquennalia*. Indeed, that was the very reason Symmachus had travelled from Rome to Gaul. He came as the official representative of the Roman Senate, bringing with him the *aurum oblativum*, a voluntary tax paid by the Senate to Valentinian honouring his achievement of his fifth anniversary.⁴⁸ In the course of his visit, Symmachus delivered three panegyrics. The first two were delivered in February 369, probably soon after his arrival at Trier: one extolled the virtues of Valentinian himself, the other pledged loyalty to his son Gratian, recently elevated to the rank of Augustus. The third oration was delivered on New Year's Day 370, to celebrate Valentinian's third consulship.⁴⁹ Taken together, Symmachus' visit, the gift of the *aurum oblativum*, and the three panegyrics made an ostentatious display of the Roman Senate's loyalty to its absent emperor. As such, however, they tell only half the story.

At the same time as Symmachus was staying at the imperial court in Trier, the finishing touches were being put to a new bridge over the Tiber at Rome. This was not

the first time an intervention had been made along the Tiber under Valentinian: his reign had been inaugurated with the restoration of the Pons Aurelius in Valentinian's name by none other than Symmachus' father, then urban prefect.⁵⁰ The second bridge was dedicated, by the Senate and People of Rome, in honour of Valentinian's son, Gratian. It bore the following inscription:

DOMINI NOSTRI IMPERATORES CAESARES
 FL(avius) VALENTINIANVS PIVS FELIX MAXIMVS VICTOR AC
 TRIVMF(ator) SEMPER AVG(ustus) PONTIF(ex) MAXIMVS
 GERMANIC(us) MAX(imus) ALAMANN(icus) MAX(imus) FRANCO(icus)
 MAX(imus) GOTHIC(us) MAX(imus) TRIB(unicia) POT(estas) VII
 IMP(erator) VI CONS(ul) II P(ater) P(atriciae) P(roconsul) ET
 FL(avius) VALENS PIVS FELIX MAXIMVS VICTOR AC TRIVMF(ator)
 SEMPER AVG(ustus) PONTIF(ex) MAXIMVS
 GERMANIC(us) MAX(imus) ALAMANN(icus) MAX(imus) FRANCO(icus)
 MAX(imus) GOTHIC(us) MAX(imus) TRIB(unicia) POT(estas) VII
 IMP(erator) VI CONS(ul) II P(ater) P(atriciae) P(roconsul) ET
 FL(avius) GRATIANVS PIVS FELIX MAXIMVS VICTOR AC TRIVMF(ator)
 SEMPER AVG(ustus) PONTIF(ex) MAXIMVS
 GERMANIC(us) MAX(imus) ALAMANN(icus) MAX(imus) FRANCO(icus)
 MAX(imus) GOTHIC(us) MAX(imus) TRIB(unicia) POT(estas) III
 IMP(erator) II CONS(ul) PRIMVM P(ater) P(atriciae) P(roconsul)

PONTEM FELICIS NOMINIS GRATIANI IN VSVM SENATVS AC POPVLI
ROM(ani) CONSTITVI DEDICARIQVE IVSSERVNT.⁵¹

Titles accorded to the emperors in the dedicatory inscription make it clear that it was inaugurated late in 369 or early in 370. Moreover, those titles correlate neatly with the themes of Symmachus' orations. Just as the panegyrics had extolled Valentinian's successful defence of the frontier, so too the inscription on the new bridge recorded his victories along the Rhine (and, by dint of the activities of Valentinian's brother and fellow-Augustus Valens, those along the Danube too).⁵² Likewise, Symmachus' oration in honour of Gratian gave senatorial approval to what had been, by Ammianus' account, a highly irregular imperial elevation, with the young prince being promoted directly to the rank of Augustus rather than to that customarily held by junior princes, Caesar.⁵³ The bridge at Rome signalled the same approval, not only in according Gratian the same imperial titulature as his father and uncle, but also by being dedicated in his name.

In return, Valentinian honoured the Senate's ambassador with the title *comes tertii ordinis*. The title acknowledged, perhaps, Symmachus' participation in an inspection tour of the Rhine defences in 369.⁵⁴ Symmachus himself was undoubtedly flattered by the title — hence its appearance on the inscription set up by his son. The flattery perhaps suggested to Symmachus that he and his fellow senators still had an important role to play in the emperor's frontier policy. If so, it sat well with one of the hopes expressed in Symmachus' second panegyric on Valentinian. There he told the emperor that, having seen for himself the brilliance of the emperor's commitment to frontier defence, he would ask the senators at Rome to prepare the *insignia* for new governors to be sent to the territories that Valentinian had conquered.⁵⁵ It is clear that Symmachus used his time in

Gaul to good effect, cultivating relationships with influential individuals at Valentinian's court. The most important of these was Ausonius, the Bordeaux poet and tutor to Gratian, with whom Symmachus forged a useful friendship. Several years later, following Valentinian's death and Gratian's succession, Symmachus wrote to Ausonius telling him of the Senate's high expectations of and general goodwill towards the new regime.⁵⁶ This friendship with Ausonius will have served both parties well: for the poet there was the privilege of *amicitia* with one of Rome's most distinguished senators; for Symmachus, Ausonius provided a useful connection at court, through which his aspirations for senatorial involvement in imperial government could find an outlet.

Symmachus' embassy of 369-70 allows us to see how Rome's senators sought to do business their absent emperors. The dedication of the *Pons Gratiani* by the Senate and People of Rome, seen side-by-side with Symmachus' visit to Trier to deliver the *aurum oblativum* and his orations, made an emphatic statement of the close relationship between Rome, its Senate, and its absent emperors. The Senate itself played a central role in articulating that relationship. Trier might be far from Rome, but Valentinian and Gratian, wherever they might be, were still emperors with whom the Roman Senate was keen to do — or be seen to do — business.

(ii) Rome 387-9: Symmachus, Magnus Maximus, and Theodosius I

Just over twenty years after his journey to Trier and the imperial honour that resulted from it, Symmachus again found himself the recipient of an emperor's benefaction. In 391 he shared the ordinary consulship with Flavius Eutolmius Tatianus, the praetorian

prefect of the East.⁵⁷ This was a high honour indeed, but Symmachus' receipt of it was in some respects remarkable. A few years earlier, in the summer of 387, Italy had been taken over by the usurper Magnus Maximus, who became now for the whole of the western Empire what he had been for three years already in Britain, Gaul, and Spain: *de facto* emperor.⁵⁸ His conquest of Italy, and the new political realities it presented, posed a challenge to Rome and other Italian communities which had for years now been accustomed to dealing with the emperor whom Maximus had expelled, Valentinian II. Maximus certainly took an interest in Italian affairs, including those of the city of Rome where he intervened in a dispute about the destruction of a synagogue in the city.⁵⁹ Like other groups that had been under Maximus' sway in the north-western provinces and which now came under his control in Italy, the senators of Rome seem to have chosen to recognise Maximus as their emperor. It was probably in this context that Symmachus delivered his now lost panegyric in Maximus' honour.⁶⁰ What seemed like good politics at the beginning of 388 looked less wise later in the year, however, when the eastern Augustus, Theodosius, invaded Italy, defeated and killed Maximus, who was now condemned as a usurper, and set about restoring Valentinian II. Symmachus' panegyric on Maximus was now a potential political embarrassment to the Senate.⁶¹ When Theodosius' announced his intention to visit Rome in 389, many senators were so keen to distance themselves from Symmachus that, pagan though he was, he fled to a Christian church and claimed sanctuary.⁶²

In the end, and with an ostentatious display of imperial *clementia*, Theodosius forgave Symmachus his transgression, and the senator sealed his restored good fortunes with another panegyric, this time in Theodosius' honour.⁶³ His achievement of the

ordinary consulship for 391 made his rehabilitation complete. Moreover, other members of the Senate found themselves promoted to high office, such as Nicomachus Flavianus who became imperial quaestor and praetorian prefect of Italy in rapid succession.⁶⁴ And yet, in spite of Theodosius' magnanimity, the events of 387-8 seem to have impressed on the senators of Rome the need to make an ostentatious display of their loyalty to the re-established legitimate regime. Outside the senatorial Curia in the Forum Romanum, for example, three statues appeared showing Theodosius himself, his son and fellow Augustus in the East, Arcadius, and the restored western Augustus Valentinian II.⁶⁵ They had been placed there by Caeonius Rufius Albinus, the new urban prefect.⁶⁶ Each statue base carried an almost identical inscription (the only differences were in the names of the emperors) in which Theodosius, Arcadius, and Valentinian were each hailed as "extinctor tyrannorum". For example, that honouring Arcadius reads:

EXTINCTORI TYRANNORVM

AC PVBLICAE SECVRITAT[IS]

AVCTORI DOMINO NOSTRO ARCAD[IO]

PERPETVO AC FELIC[I]

SEMPER AVGVST[O]

CAEONIVS RVFIVS ALBI[NVS V(ir) C(larissimus)]

PRAEF(ectus) VRBI ITE[RVM]

VICE SACRA IVDICANS D(evotus) N(umini) M(aiestati)[Q(ue) EIVS].⁶⁷

In 387-8, then, Symmachus and the Senate had gambled on Magnus Maximus and lost. A year later, their rehabilitation, especially that of Symmachus, had depended much on Theodosius' clemency. It had also demanded a monumental expression honouring the restoration of legitimate imperial rule — a monumental expression, moreover, that was placed right outside the very building where the Senate met.

3. Emperors, senators, and usurpers in the late antique Forum

If the events of 387-8 had been traumatic for the Senate, it was not that first time (and it would not be the last: see pp. 000 below) that Roman senators had gambled wrongly on the outcome of a bid for imperial power. Nor, indeed, had it been the first occasion on which they signalled their reaffirmed loyalty in monumental form. Not far from where the statues of Theodosius and his colleagues now stood there was another statue of an emperor, this time of Constantius II on horseback. It had been set up in front of the arch of Septimius Severus by Naeratius Cerealis, urban prefect in 352-3, and was supported by a plinth on which Constantius was celebrated for his victory over the usurper Magnentius:⁶⁸

RESTITVTORI VRBIS ROMAE ADQVE ORB[IS]

ET EXTINCTORI PESTIFERAE TYRANNIDIS

D(omino) N(ostro) FL(avio) IVL(io) CONSTANTIO VICTORI AC

TRIVMFATORI

SEMPER AVGVSTO

NERATIVS (*sic*) CERE[A]LIS V(ir) C(larissimus) PRAEFECTVS VRBI

VICE SACRA IVDICANS D(evotus) N(umini) M(aiestati)QVE EIVS.

The statue and inscription provided a monumental record of Constantius' victory over the usurper. It was a timely gesture: only two years earlier, another senatorial urban prefect, Fabius Titianus, had set up dedications in honour of Magnentius, as if he were a legitimate emperor, near the baths of Titus on the Esquiline.⁶⁹

Not only do these inscriptions testify to shifts in public professions of loyalty to rival emperors in the course of a civil war, they also show how different senators could pledge their allegiance to opposing sides in the contest.⁷⁰ Fabius Titianus, scion of one of the best connected Roman aristocratic families, seems to have become a dedicated adherent of Magnentius soon after his usurpation in 350. Previously, however, he had served as praetorian prefect in Gaul under the very emperor whom Magnentius ousted, Constans. His appointment to the urban prefecture at Rome would appear to have been a reward for this transfer of allegiances, and Titianus remained a loyal assistant to Magnentius, even travelling on his behalf to the rival court of Constantius in the days before the battle of Mursa in 351.⁷¹ By contrast, Naeratius Cerealis, also from a distinguished family in the Roman aristocracy, threw in his lot with Constantius during the civil war: against this background, for example, we find him serving as an agent in his emperor's interventions in ecclesiastical affairs. His receipt from Constantius of the urban prefecture for 352-3, therefore, seems also to have been a reward for loyal service during a period of political instability.⁷² In both cases, therefore, support for rival emperors

contesting the throne had brought to these senators the highest office to which members of the Roman aristocracy ordinarily aspired.

Constantius' visit to Rome in 357 will have given the Senate another opportunity to make an ostentatious display of its loyalty to the emperor. Such will have been the intention underpinning their ceremonial greeting of Constantius before his entry into the city, together with their no doubt rapt attention to the address he delivered to them shortly afterwards in the Curia. Yet again, however, a monumental expression of their devotion was deemed apposite and, once more, this found its most explicit form in the Forum Romanum, outside the Senate house. Here a new statue of the emperor was erected by Memmius Vitrasius Orfitus, now serving his second term as urban prefect, and its pedestal bore the following inscription:⁷³

PROPOGATORI IMPERII

ROMANI D(omino) N(ostro)

FL(avio) IVL(io) CONSTANTIO MAXIMO

TOTO ORBE VICTORI AC

TRIVMFATORI SEMPER AVG(usto)

MEMMIVS VITRASIVS ORFITVS V(ir) C(larissimus)

ITERVM PRAEF(ectus) VRBI IVD(ex) SAC(rarum) COGN(itionum)

TERTIVM D(evotus) N(umini) M(aiestati) Q(ue) EIVS

It is possible here to detect some pandering to the emperor's vanity, since the formula "toto orbe victor" corresponds closely with the title "totius orbis dominus" which,

according to Ammianus, was one of Constantius' favoured titles.⁷⁴ Again, moreover, we seem to be looking at a monument erected by a senator whose rise to the urban prefecture, like that of Naeratius Cerealis a few years earlier, was a reward for his support of Constantius in the civil war with Magnentius: Orfitus has led the embassy that had offered Constantius the Senate's congratulations on the defeat of the usurper.⁷⁵ But perhaps the most important conclusion to be drawn from these inscriptions is that in 352-3 and 357 the Senate seems to have been keen to give a monumental sign of its reaffirmed loyalty to the legitimate emperor.

What is also significant, I think, is that the monuments erected in 352-3, 357, and 389 should have been raised in such an important location: close to the junction between the Via Sacra and Argiletum and in close proximity to the Curia Senatus. This was the primary topographical focus of the late imperial forum. Following the fire in AD 283 that caused widespread destruction in the western end of the Forum Romanum and the adjoining Forum of Caesar, this whole zone had been remodelled under the tetrarchy. The Curia itself was rebuilt, as indeed were the rostra at the western end of the Forum square. This square was itself enclosed on the southern side by five honorific columns running in front of the Basilica Julia; and also on the eastern side by new rostra erected in front of the Temple of Divus Julius. Finally, with the erection of another honorific column, that later rededicated in honour of Phocas, the main axes of the remodelled Forum square were given monumental expression: this last column was placed directly in front of the Curia, on that axis with which the Argiletum intersected with the Via Sacra.⁷⁶ This zone, and particularly that in front of the Curia, became an important location for the erection of inscriptions honouring the emperors. In addition to the monuments described above,

this zone saw the erection in the early fifth century of large inscription honouring the emperors Arcadius, Honorius, and Theodosius II, and recording the defeat of Goths by Honorius' *magister militum* Stilicho. The potency of the location as a place from which to broadcast political messages was emphasised further in 408 after Stilicho's fall from power: his name was chiselled out of the inscription, but the monument itself was left *in situ*, a powerful statement of Stilicho's *damnatio memoriae*.⁷⁷ Even as late as the seventh century, emperors still used this part of the Forum for grandiose exhibitions of their power. The last imperial intervention in the Forum was the replacement (or remodelling) of the statue that stood atop the column on the axis of intersection between the Via Sacra and the Argiletum. The new statue depicted the Constantinopolitan emperor Phocas. It is significant, I think, that the new inscription placed on the base of the column, recording the new statue and celebrating Phocas' ephemeral restoration of peace in Italy, should have been placed on its northern side, thus directly facing the entrance to the Curia.⁷⁸

The inscriptions of 352-3, 357, and 389 were all erected, then, outside the Curia in a zone filled with dedications in honour of emperors. These dedications celebrated the emperors as maintainers of earthly order not only by their vanquishing of barbarians, but also, as we have seen, in terms of their victories over usurpers. In another context, Symmachus remarked that senators swore oaths of loyalty to the emperor and his enactments in the Curia.⁷⁹ With the profusion of monuments that sprang up around the entrance to the Curia recording the achievements of emperors together with the suppression of usurpers, senators entering the building will have been given a sobering reminder of what such oaths meant.⁸⁰

4. Imperial politics and senatorial aspirations in the fourth and fifth centuries

Discussion of senatorial attitudes to and involvement in the usurpation of Magnentius brings me back to the point where I began, Ammianus Marcellinus' account of Constantius' Roman *adventus* in 357. We have seen that Ammianus took a dim view of Constantius' visit: emperors, he seems to imply, should not come to Rome to celebrate victories in civil war as if they were on a par with wars against Germans or Persians. The testimony of inscriptions would appear to suggest otherwise. Not only the statues of Constantius, Theodosius, Arcadius, and Valentinian II, but also such monuments as the arch of Constantine,⁸¹ gave impressive physical evidence that the emperor's role was not only to preserve the Empire against threats from without, but also those posed by usurpers within its frontiers.⁸² That Ammianus denies this is intriguing, not least because he was almost certainly completing his *Res Gestae* in Rome in the late-380s.⁸³ Did he not see Constantius' equestrian statue? Was he in the city to witness the events of 387-9? If so, his criticisms of Constantius' *adventus* look peculiar, as if he was denying a particularly important aspect of the Roman emperor's jurisdiction.

His contemporaries who wielded imperial power in the Roman world, and their propagandists, took a more circumspect view, it would seem. For them, the role of "extincto tyrannorum" was an integral part of the exercise of imperial power. Indeed, on two of the occasions on which we have already seen the Senate acknowledging and commemorating the role of emperors in defeating usurpers, extant orations celebrated exactly this aspect of imperial rule. While Constantius II was at Rome in 357, the philosopher Themistius came to the city on behalf of the Senate of Constantinople and

delivered an oration in which he praised the emperor for his victories over Magnentius and over the barbarians. Indeed, the two are assimilated, with the usurper described as a barbarian.⁸⁴ Similarly, Theodosius I's visit to Rome in 389 was the occasion for a panegyric by the Gallic rhetor Pacatus, in which the emperor's recent victory over Magnus Maximus was described side-by-side with Theodosius' policy of incorporating recently hostile barbarians into the Roman army, presented by Pacatus as a staggering success.⁸⁵ Against such a background, it is hardly remarkable that the Roman Senate similarly accepted that a major duty of emperors was to maintain the unity of the Empire from threats posed by usurpers. In commemorating this aspect of imperial rule in inscriptions dotted about the Forum, the senators were signalling their participation in the affirmation of legitimate government.

For all Rome's decline in terms of *realpolitik* in the fourth century, its senators still seem to have seen themselves as playing an important role in imperial politics. In his orations before Valentinian I in 369-70, Symmachus had expressed the hope that the Roman Senate might still be involved in the emperor's frontier policy (above p. 000). This was probably an unrealistic aspiration, as exaggerated as Symmachus' assertion in his panegyric that Valentinian had carved out whole new provinces beyond the Rhine.⁸⁶ But there *were* areas where Roman aristocrats could play an important role in imperial politics and policy making. They could do so by serving in high administrative posts, but these were given out at the discretion of the emperor.⁸⁷ The only channel through which senators could exercise political initiative in their own right was by actively seeking out their distant emperors. Trips to court, such as those made by Symmachus to Trier and Milan, provided one outlet for such ambitions. Alternatively, at times when there were

rival candidates for the imperial throne, senators — sometimes collectively, but more usually individually — sought to make themselves politically important by declaring for one side or the other. Thus, in the early 350s, we have seen Naeratius Cerealis and Fabius Titianus declare their support for opposing sides in the contest between Constantius II and Magnentius. A similar gamble was made in 388 by Symmachus when, by means of his panegyric, he advertised his support for Magnus Maximus. He was probably lucky to escape from this political indiscretion. At any rate, he seems to have learned his lesson: when, only a year after the ordinary consulship that had set the seal on his political rehabilitation, Symmachus was confronted by another usurper, Eugenius, he chose to take no active part in the politics of this new potential civil war.⁸⁸

Symmachus' experience, like the monuments outside the Curia in the Forum, shows that some senators periodically found themselves chastened when a supported usurper turned out to be a failure. Yet this did not mean that senators stopped declaring their support for candidates aspiring to seize the imperial throne. While Symmachus remained aloof during the usurpation of Eugenius, others, notably Virius Nicomachus Flavianus the elder, became prominent supporters of this new rival to Theodosius I.⁸⁹ Furthermore, participation in contests over the imperial throne was a role that senators continued to play in the fifth century, as the western Empire fractured and disintegrated. It was one of their number, the urban prefect Priscus Attalus, whom Alaric the Goth raised as emperor in opposition to Honorius in the period leading up to the sack of Rome in 410.⁹⁰ It was another, Libius Severus, whom Ricimer chose to replace Majorian in 461; and yet another, the Anician Olybrius, whom Ricimer appointed in place of Anthemius a decade later.⁹¹ That senators still aspired to influence the fortunes of

emperors and the Empire represents, I think, a continuity into the fifth century of the ambitions we have seen them espouse in the fourth. Moreover, the unstable conditions of the fifth century might have given them reasonable cause for hope. As the western provinces fell away and Italy became the sole remaining territory under imperial control, Rome itself regained something of its former importance as a focus for emperors' activities. Imperial visits to the city were more frequent and extended over longer periods in the fifth century than had been the case in the fourth.⁹² Early in the fifth century, when Honorius visited the city in 404 to celebrate his sixth consulship, the panegyrist Claudian claimed to espouse the dreams of Rome's senators and people when he wrote that:

Acrior interea visendi principis ardor
accendit cum plebe patres et saepe negatum
flagitat adventum.⁹³

At several points in the succeeding decades, it must have seemed that this dream had become reality.

Conclusion

In this paper I have sought to suggest that the late antique Roman senate remained a vibrant institution not only in the context of its activities in the city of Rome, but also in terms of its wider political ambitions. The aspirations of Roman senators to participation

in high imperial politics in late antiquity might seem misplaced given the declining geopolitical significance of Rome after the third century and the inflation of senatorial status in the fourth. It might be argued that the Senate *needed* a close connection with the imperial court as part of its self-definition as the “*pars melior humani generis*”. However that may be, I would suggest that Rome’s senators not only needed but also actively *wanted* close connections with the imperial court. This is the import of the activities of the Roman Senate in the fourth century, and it is made more explicit in the fifth century when senators once again seemed to have established themselves at the very centre of political power. What we can see, then, is that whereas senators might be based in Rome, and their emperors were largely absent, this did not mean that Rome had become a backwater and its aristocracy moribund, with no further part to play in imperial politics. Rather, the relationship between Roman senators and absent emperors was informed by the aspirations of the Senate that they still had a role to play in the affairs of their rulers. In the fourth century, their actions in pursuit of these aspirations had resulted in a mixture of success and spectacular failure. In the more unstable circumstances of the fifth, not only did senators successfully support rivals for the imperial throne, but also, on a number of occasions, and for the first time since the third century, they managed to seat themselves upon it.⁹⁴

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NOTES

¹ *Cons. Constant.* s.a. 357. The best study of the visit is Klein 1979.

² *Amm. Marc.* 16. 10. On Ammianus' account: Matthews 1989, 231-235; emphasizing its literary characteristics: Humphries forthcoming a.

³ *Amm. Marc.* 16. 10. 5, 13.

⁴ On Ammianus' portrait of Constantius see Teitler 1992 and Whitby 1999.

⁵ Constantius' diminutive stature: *Amm. Marc.* 16. 10. 10. Visit to Trajan's Forum: 16. 10. 15-16. Contrast with Cineas: 16. 10. 5.

⁶ *Amm. Marc.* 16. 10. 6; cf. Matthews 1989, 234.

⁷ Cf. Demandt 1989, 376 and n. 7 for a catalogue of imperial visits; I am doubtful of the visit by Gratian in 376 posited by Barnes 1975, 328-330 on the basis of later Byzantine evidence (*Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai*, p. 178 Bonn). Even if emperors themselves were not present, other members of the imperial family sometimes resided at Rome: Lançon 2000, 36.

⁸ Statues: Symm., *Rel.* 9. 4; 43 on the erection of an equestrian statue of Count Theodosius, father of the emperor Theodosius I. For imperial public works in the city generally: Lançon 2000, 17-26; Ward-Perkins 1984, 38-46.

⁹ Constantinian spectacles: Salzman 1990, ch 4. Celebrations of Theodosius' eastern victories: Symm., *Rel.* 9. 3-6; 47. 1-2. On imperial celebrations at Rome in the fourth century generally: Curran 2000, ch. 6.

¹⁰ On *adventus*: MacCormack 1981, 17-61; Frascetti 1999a, 243-269; idem 1999b, 235-244.

¹¹ Harris 1999, 23; cf. Salzman 2002, 36.

¹² For the political ambitions of western aristocracies: Matthews 1975; Salzman 2002.

¹³ Symm., *Ep.* 1. 52.

¹⁴ Purcell 2000, 405-412; cf. Davies 2000, 136-171 for the topographical significance of imperial funerary monuments in Rome.

¹⁵ Talbert 1984, 174-184 noting, however, a notable decline in imperial attendance at Senate meetings after the Julio-Claudian period.

¹⁶ Millar 1977, 40-57.

¹⁷ Split: Wilkes 1986, 46-52. Milan: Krautheimer 1983, 69-70. Thessalonike: Ward-Perkins 1981, 449-454.

¹⁸ Grierson 1962.

¹⁹ *Cons. Constant.* s.a. 376; cf. s.a. 382, for Valentinian's burial; for imperial burials at Constantinople, see Grierson 1962.

²⁰ McCormick 1986, 47-64.

²¹ Rome is described, for example, as the "urbs aeterna" by Ammianus (16. 10. 14) and as "prima urbes inter, divum domus, aurea Roma" by Ausonius (*Ord. Urb. Nob.* 1). The modern bibliography on this subject is immense, but the key study remains Paschoud 1967. See more recently Matthews 1986 and Roberts 2001.

²² E.g. Amm. Marc. 14. 6. 6: "ubique patrum reverenda cum auctoritate canities".

²³ Coarelli 1986, 1-35; cf. Curran 2000, 50-63, emphasising how Maxentius' programme represents continuity with previous imperial building projects in the city.

²⁴ For relationships between Senate and emperor under the principate: Millar 1977, 275-361, esp. 341-355.

²⁵ The extent to which the political upheavals wrought significantly different changes than in earlier periods is debatable: cf. Jacques 1986 arguing for considerable continuity of at least some Roman lineages from the Antonine period through to the early fourth century. In general: Salzman 2002, 29-31.

²⁶ Eusebius, *VC* 4. 1; cf. Heather 1998, 185-186; Salzman 2002, 31-35.

²⁷ Salzman 2002, 69-106.

²⁸ Note the somewhat contemptuous attitude towards “new men” endowed with senatorial status, but without a distinguished Roman ancestry shown by Symm., *Or.* 7. 4. Amm. Marc. 28. 1. 42 reflects similar anxieties. Cf. Salzman 2002, 97-99; Lendon 1997, 189-190. For the impact of the process on the Roman aristocracy’s fortunes, see also T. F. X. Noble in this volume.

²⁹ Chastagnol 1992, 155-168; cf. Jacques 1986.

³⁰ Matthews 1975, 35-39, 43-46.

³¹ Sivan 1993, 131-147.

³² Lançon 2000, 62-64; Matthews 1975, 12-17.

³³ Matthews 1975, 13, 15-16; Niquet 2000, 131-134.

³⁴ *PLRE* 1. 736-740, Probus 5.

³⁵ Matthews 1975, 14 and n. 5.

³⁶ Thus Lançon 2000, 49: “In the late period [the Senate’s] powers were more or less those of the council of a large town”.

³⁷ Matthews 1975, 1-31 provides an excellent sketch.

³⁸ Symm., *Rel.* 3. 1, 20.

³⁹ Symm., *Epp.* 3. 52 and 63.

⁴⁰ Matthews 1975, 16.

⁴¹ *CIL* VI. 1699; cf. Hedrick 2000, 13-15 for the context.

⁴² For the arrangement of the *cursus honorum* on senatorial inscriptions in late antiquity, see esp. Niquet 2000, 134-143; cf. Hedrick 2000, 6-36.

⁴³ *PLRE* 1. 865-870, Symmachus 4.

⁴⁴ For the control exercised by emperors over the selection of ordinary consuls in the fourth century see Bagnall, Cameron, Schwartz, and Worp 1987, 4-6.

⁴⁵ Noted by Barrow 1973, 10. On the rank itself: Jones 1964, 104-106, 544; cf. Salzman 2002, 32.

⁴⁶ For the ‘rhetoric’ of presenting honours and offices in inscriptions, see Hedrick 2000, 7-10.

⁴⁷ For the chronology of the visit: Seeck 1883, xlvi-xlvii; cf. Matthews 1975, 32-33.

⁴⁸ Symm., *Or.* 1. 16 refers to a “*lustrum imperialium*”; for the *aurum oblativum*, cf. *Or.* 3. 1.

⁴⁹ For the orations, cf. Humphries 1999, 118-121.

⁵⁰ *ILS* 769; cf. *Amm. Marc.* 27. 3. 3; Bertinetti 2000.

⁵¹ *ILS* 771 = *CIL* VI. 1175. The bridge also carried another inscription: GRATIANI TRIVMFALIS PRINCIPIS PONTEM AETERNITATI AVGVSTI NOMINIS CONSECRATVM IN VSVM SENATVS POPVLIQVE ROMANI DDD(omini) NNN(ostri) VALENTINIANVS VALENS ET GRATIANVS VICTORES MAXIMI AC PERENNES AVGVSTI INCOHARI PERFICI DEDICARIQV[E IVSSERVNT] (*ILS* 772 = *CIL* VI. 1176).

⁵² Note that, for all the hyperbole of the title “Gothicus Maximus”, Valens’ Gothic campaigns in the 360s were in all likelihood abject failures: Heather 1991, 115-121.

⁵³ Amm. Marc. 27. 6. 16; cf. Humphries 1999, 118-119.

⁵⁴ Symm., *Or.* 2 *passim*; *Epp.* 1. 14, 32; cf. Humphries 1999, 119-120.

⁵⁵ Symm., *Or.* 2. 31.

⁵⁶ Symm., *Ep.* 1. 13, with commentary in Bruggisser 1987.

⁵⁷ References collected in Bagnall, Cameron, Schwartz, and Worp 1987, 316-317.

⁵⁸ For Maximus’ regime, see Harries 1978, suggesting wide-ranging administrative reforms in Gaul between 383 and 387/8. In inscriptions and on coins produced during his reign in those parts of the Empire under his control, of course, Maximus was always designated Augustus; see, e.g., his titles in his letter to Pope Siricius in 385: “perpetuus triumphator semper Augustus” (*Coll. Avell.* 40).

⁵⁹ Ambrose, *Ep.* 74. 23 Zelzer (= 40. 23 Maurist ed.). Indeed, already in *circa* 385 we find Maximus engaged in correspondence with Pope Siricius (*Coll. Avell.* 40. 1: “accepimus litteras sanctitatis tuae”). In the letter Maximus vaunts his orthodox piety, and was probably trying to undermine the authority of the heterodox court of Valentinian II at Milan: cf. *Coll. Avell.* 39; Williams 1996, 215-217.

⁶⁰ References collected in *PLRE* 1. 865-870, Symmachus 4, at p. 868. Cf. Barnes 1992, 162: the speech was intended to honour Maximus’ assumption of the consulship.

⁶¹ Barnes 1992, 162 is probably correct to guess (we cannot know for certain) that Symmachus’ oration “was very flattering to Theodosius”; but in the aftermath of the campaign to oust Maximus, many may have felt that their best interests were served by distancing themselves from the former usurper and his minions.

⁶² Soc., *HE* 5. 14. 6.

⁶³ Symm., *Ep.* 2. 13, 31. For Theodosius' *clementia*: Barnes 1992, 162.

⁶⁴ Matthews 1975, 230-231.

⁶⁵ *CIL* VI. 3791 a-b, 31413-31414, 36959; cf. *ILS* 789 with commentary ad loc. ap. *ILS*; discussion in Bauer 1999. That these inscriptions were on statue bases is clear enough from the top of the *stela* honouring Arcadius, where sockets for the feet of a statue are clearly visible (personal inspection in the Forum, November 2001).

⁶⁶ *PLRE* 1. 37-38, Albinus 15.

⁶⁷ *CIL* VI. 3791 b = *ILS* 789.

⁶⁸ *CIL* VI. 1158 = *ILS* 731. Discussion of the monument and its context in Bauer 1996; cf. McCormick 1986, 40-41.

⁶⁹ *CIL* VI. 1166 (cf. 1167): PROPAGATORI ORBIS | AC ROMANAE REI | [D(omino)
N(ostro) MAGNENTIO M]A[XIMO] | VICTORI AC TRIVMFATORI SEMPER
AVGVSTO | FABIVS [TITIANVS V(ir) C(larissimus)] CONS(ul) ORD(inarius) |
PRAEF(ectus) VRBI ITERVM IVDEX | COGN(itionum) SACR(arum) MAIESTATI
EIVS | DICATISSIMVS.

⁷⁰ See generally Barnes 1993, 101-108.

⁷¹ As envoy: Zos., *HN* 2. 49. 1-2. Full details of career: *PLRE* 1. 918-919, Titianus 6.
Family connections: Arnheim 1972, 119-122.

⁷² Discussion of career in *PLRE* 1. 197-199, Cerealis 2. Family connections: Arnheim
1972, 117-118.

⁷³ *CIL* VI. 31395.

⁷⁴ Amm. Marc. 15. 1. 3.

⁷⁵ Sources and discussion in *PLRE* 1. 651-653, Orfitus 3, esp. at 651-652.

⁷⁶ Coarelli 1999.

⁷⁷ *ILS* 799; for discussion of the *damnatio memoriae* see Hedrick 2000, 110.

⁷⁸ *CIL* VI. 1200 (= *ILS* 837); cf. Verduchi 1993.

⁷⁹ Symm., *Rel*, 3. 5.

⁸⁰ That some senators were aware how such monuments were designed to influence opinion is clear from Symmachus' remarks (esp. *Rel.* 43) that the new equestrian statue of Theodosius the Elder would inspire *devotio*. This is all the more pertinent because in the case of the elder Theodosius, the equestrian statue was designed to advertise the rehabilitation of an individual apparently executed for treason less than ten years earlier.

⁸¹ *CIL* VI. 1139; cf. Curran 2000, 86-90.

⁸² The theme of usurpation in late antiquity, particularly its place in the development of imperial ideology, will be the focus of a book length study that I am preparing (Humphries forthcoming b).

⁸³ Date of completion: Matthews 1989, 22-27 (by 390/1 at the latest); reiterated by Barnes 1998, 54. I say "almost certainly" because the only evidence to place Ammianus securely at Rome is the controversial letter of Libanius, *Ep.* 1063. It is with this that, e.g., Matthews 1989, 8-13, begins his discussion of Ammianus' residence at Rome. If, however, Libanius' letter has nothing to do with the historian Ammianus (cf. Barnes 1998, ch. 6), then the question becomes one more of inference, based on such passages as the bitterness expressed at the expulsion of *peregrini* from Rome in 384 (14. 6. 19): cf. Barnes 1998, 1-2.

⁸⁴ Them., *Or.* 3.41d-42a (wars on the Rhine frontier), 43a-c (the campaign against Magnentius, here described as a barbarian); cf. Heather and Moncur 2001, 114-117 (date and circumstances), 118-20 (Themistius' view of Constantius' wars). Cf. Jones 1964, 326-329; McCormick 1986, 80-83.

⁸⁵ *Pan.Lat.* 12(2). 32. 2-33. 5; cf. Nixon and Rodgers 1994, 444-447 for commentary.

⁸⁶ Symm., *Or.* 2. 31.

⁸⁷ For appointment to office, see Salzman 2002, 114-116.

⁸⁸ Matthews 1975, 243.

⁸⁹ Hedrick 2000, 22-24, 39-46; Matthews 1975, 238-247.

⁹⁰ Bury 1923, 1. 180-181.

⁹¹ Humphries 2000, 527-528.

⁹² Demandt 1989, 376 n. 7; cf. Gillett 2001. Note esp. the sojourns at Rome of Valentinian III from 21 February 450 to 16 March 455 and of Anthemius from 1 January 468 to 11 July 472: these were the longest periods of imperial residence at Rome since the time of Maxentius.

⁹³ Claudian, *VI Cons. Hon.* 331-333; compare 407-25, 523-660. For Honorius and Rome, Lejdegård 2002, esp. chs. 3-4.

⁹⁴ I am grateful above all to Prof. Rasmus Brandt for his kind invitation to participate in the conference and for his generous hospitality in Rome. At the conference in Rome, Prof. Siri Sande and Mr Hans Lejdegård provided stimulating discussion on usurpers. Both in Rome and subsequently, Prof. Tom Noble has been generous with his ideas. Versions of this paper were also presented to audiences in Maynooth and (albeit in rather different form) Birmingham, and I am grateful for input on those occasions. For several

years, Prof. Bertrand Lançon has been a source of inspiration on late antique Roman matters. More recently, I have learned much more than any research supervisor has any reasonable right to expect from the work of my student Ms Ruth O'Hara on Ammianus' portrait of Constantius. Those named above have contributed much to this paper's virtues; its vices are mine alone.