AURELIUS VICTOR AND JULIAN

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THIS ARTICLE deals with three distinct but related questions, two of them chronological and a third that may be termed political. The first is the chronology of Julian's expedition against Constantius, which has recently been revised by J. Szidat;[1] the second, the publication date of Aurelius Victor's *Caesares;* the third, the content and political *Tendenz* of the final chapters of the *Caesares.* I argue that Szidat's "early" chronology for Julian's expedition cannot stand; on the other hand I propose a rather later date for the publication of the *Caesares* than is usually accepted. On the third question, I suggest that the apparently natural partnership between two "pagan" men of letters in the increasingly Christian world of the mid-fourth century appears natural only in retrospect. In particular, the assumption that Victor won promotion from Julian either wholly or partly through the publication of the *Caesares* requires careful examination. In important ways the work was surely an obstacle to such a partnership, at least at first. Freshly published when the two men met, it was highly favorable to Constantius in tone and specifically critical of Julian, who had embarked on a course of action that was in principle abhorrent to Victor. One can only speculate as to what made possible, not simply conciliation, but rather active alliance: both men had something to answer for, and promises of different behavior for the future to make.

Ammianus Marcellinus, in casting a kindly glance at a kindred spirit (if not a personal friend), gives us our first firm date for Aurelius Victor's career. In A.D. 361, in the course of his expedition against Constantius, Julian summoned Victor to Naissus, appointed him governor of Pannonia Secunda, and honored him with a bronze statue (21. 10. 6). He had met him earlier in Sirmium, on his way east, I believe in mid-summer. The date is of some significance, as we shall see, and it is important to try to establish it on a firm footing. Older scholars, relying on a passage in Sozomen (*Hist. Eccl.* 5. 1. 4) and on each other,[2] dated Julian's arrival in

1. "Zur Ankunft Iulians in Sirmium 361 n. Chr. auf seinem Zug gegen Constantius II," *Historia* 24 (1975): 375–78; cf. the "Chronologische Übersicht" in his *Historische Kommentar zu Ammianus Marcellinus Buch XX–XXI,* Teil 1, Historia Einzelschrift 31 (Wiesbaden, 1977), pp. 93–95.

2. See F. Paschoud, *Zosime: Histoire Nouvelle,* vol. 2 (Paris, 1979), p. 92, for references; add P. Allard, *Julien l'Apostat,* vol. 3 (Paris, 1910), p. 402.

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Sirmium to 10 October, and this date continues to be repeated.[3] But 10 October seems very late, given all that happened before he finally arrived in Constantinople on 11 December (Amm. Marc. 22. 2. 4; Cons. Const., *Chron. min.* 1. 240; Socrates *Hist. Eccl.* 3. 1. 2). Moreover, the passage is suspect in itself, as Paschoud justly emphasizes, since it is an omen: green grapes that appear after the setting of the Pleiades portend Julian's premature death. Sozomen himself has doubts about the story, introducing it by λέγεται. Furthermore, it is in conflict with the circumstantial account of Zosimus, who relates that Julian left the Rhine at the height of summer and reached Sirmium on the eleventh day after boarding ship in Raetia, having been helped by "the Etesian winds," which suggests an arrival in late summer.

More recently Szidat has analyzed the evidence anew and concluded that Julian's arrival is to be dated to mid-May. His arguments have been sympathetically received by Paschoud,[4] but I believe that in combining data from different sources Szidat has overlooked a serious problem that renders his conclusions false.

Our understanding of the course of events in 361 is heavily dependent on the detailed narrative of Ammianus Marcellinus. Szidat naturally and rightly turns to it to establish important chronological relationships between events in different regions, and he stoutly defends its reliability in such matters.[5] Therefore it might be useful to tabulate some of the relevant information that it provides:

20. 10. 3	Julian winters in Vienne (360–61).
21. 3. 1	"With spring now approaching" (*propinquante iam vere*), Julian hears of the invasion of the Alamanni under Vadomarius. The invasion is followed shortly by Vadomarius' arrest (21. 4).
21. 7. 6–7	Constantius hears that the Persian army is approaching the Tigris. He hastily leaves his winter quarters at Antioch and advances to Edessa, crossing the Euphrates at Capersana.
21. 8. 1–9. 6	Julian leaves Augst and sets out through the Black Forest and along the upper Danube until he reaches the point where it is navigable, then travels by boat down the Danube "ut fax vel incensus malleolus," arriving at Bononia, the port of Sirmium, "as the moon is waning" (*senescente luna*).
21. 10. 2–7	"With the dawn of the third day" (*ubi lux excanduit tertia*), Julian advances to the pass of Succi, places a guard there, then returns to Naissus. There he summons Victor, promoting him and honoring him with a bronze statue. He remains there for a considerable time, waiting, but engaged in diplomatic and political activity (cf. 21. 12. 21–25).[6]

3. G. Bowersock, *Julian the Apostate* (London, 1978), p. 58; H. W. Bird, *Sextus Aurelius Victor: A Historiographical Study* (Liverpool, 1984), pp. 10–11.

4. *Zosime*, 2:92–94, although "un léger doute subsiste"; Zosimus' words at 3. 10. 1 (ἀκμάζοντος δὲ ἤδη τοῦ θέρους, when Julian set out from the Rhine) could be interpreted loosely and applied to June.

5. See "Ankunft," p. 376, n. 20.

6. "Ankunft," p. 375.

21. 13. 1–6	Meanwhile ("his ac talibus eo [i.e., Julian] inter spem metumque nova negotia commovente"), Constantius waits at Edessa to see whether Sapor should cross the Tigris; "quae dum aguntur ita sollicite," a series of messengers arrives reporting Julian's progress through Italy and Illyricum and his seizure of the pass of Succi.
21. 13. 8–16	When Sapor retires, Constantius withdraws in turn to Hierapolis (Gelenius) or Nicopolis (Pighius), sending an advance force under Arbitio to Succi.
21. 15. 1	Constantius himself hurries to Antioch: "ingressus itaque Antiochiam festinando Constantius, ad motum certaminum civilium (ut solebat), avide surrecturus, paratis omnibus exire properabat immodice; renitentibus plurimis murmure tenus. nec enim dissuadere palam audebat quisquam vel vetare."
21. 15. 2	Constantius sets out when autumn is already far advanced (*autumno iam senescente profectus*), but is *leviore febri contactus,* at Tarsus; nevertheless he continues on to Mobsucrenae, "Ciliciae ultimam hinc pergentibus stationem"; he dies *tertium nonarum Octobrium* (5 October).
22. 2. 1–2	At Naissus, Julian learns of Constantius' death and marches east.
22. 2. 4	He reaches Constantinople *tertium Iduum Decembrium* (11 December).

Szidat first demonstrates convincingly that indeed a date of 10 October for Julian's arrival in Sirmium allows insufficient time for all his journeying to and fro, and for the diplomatic activity described by Ammianus in 21. 9–10, given that Julian must have heard of the death of Constantius and left Naissus by the end of November in order to have reached Constantinople by 11 December.[7] After a two-day sojourn in Sirmium itself, Julian would have taken a week to reach Nish and the best part of a fortnight to journey to Succi and back to Nish. On this reckoning the diplomatic and political activity he engaged in there could only then have commenced around 1 November.

How long would reports have taken to reach Constantius? It is Ammianus again who provides the information necessary for an appraisal. He tells us (21. 13. 6; cf. above) that Constantius was at Edessa when he received a series of messages reporting Julian's progress and the seizure of the pass of Succi. About this Ammianus can scarcely be mistaken, Szidat avers.

At this point, however, we have another datum. *Codex Theodosianus* 8. 5. 7 establishes that Constantius was at Antioch on 3 August 361. Using this key date, Szidat reckons that he must have left Edessa, 170

7. At "Ankunft," p. 375, Szidat silently accepts the date of 3 November for the death of Constantius, which is that given by several sources in contradiction to Ammianus' date of 5 October: Cons. Const., *Chron. min.* 1. 240; Socrates *Hist. Eccl.* 2. 47. 4, 3. 1. 1; Jerome *Chron.* an. 337 (p. 234 Helm).

Roman miles away, around 20 July. Allowing ten days for news to come from Succi to Edessa, a distance of about 1200 miles, he concludes that Julian reached Succi around 10 July at the latest. But since we do not know at what point during Constantius' stay in Edessa this item of news arrived, and since preparations for the march back to Antioch must have taken some time, Szidat pushes Julian's arrival at Succi back to around 1 July, again, at the latest. The waning moon on the night of Julian's arrival at the port of Sirmium must have been that of mid-May, he calculates: if it had been the next month's waning moon, there would scarcely have been sufficient time for Julian to advance to Succi and for report of the advance to reach Constantius in the east.

Szidat applies this early chronology to his detailed analysis of Julian's elevation at Paris and his subsequent negotiations with Constantius.[8] But there seems to me to be a crucial weakness in his argument: though it purports to be based upon the narrative of Ammianus, which is treated as fundamentally sound, it in effect makes nonsense of Ammianus' account. Let me explain why.

Ammianus tells us that Constantius, upon learning at Edessa that Julian had seized the pass of Succi, and despite initial hesitation, acted promptly enough, sending advance troops to block the usurper's path (21. 13. 7–8): "id elegit potissimum, ut vehiculis publicis impositum paulatim praemitteret militem, imminentis casus atrocitati velocius occursurum. omniumque consensu hac probata sententia, pergebant (ut praeceptum est), expediti." Constantius had naturally been in a quandary ever since Julian's proclamation, with the Persians threatening to cross the Euphrates and a usurper in his rear (21. 7. 1). But since he had chosen to meet the foreign enemy, there was only so much he could do against Julian (21. 7. 2–7). Providentially, however, on the very morning after these troops were ordered to set out, Sapor's retreat was announced. Constantius therefore recalled all his troops except those customarily allotted to the defense of Mesopotamia, and "confestim reversus est Hiera(Nico)-polim urbem" (21. 13. 8). There he immediately called a military assembly, made a speech that received an encouragingly belligerent response from the army, and—*contione mox absoluta*—ordered Arbitio to lead an advance force west against Julian (ibid., 9–16). He himself hurried back to Antioch, intending to "nip the revolt in the bud" (21. 15. 1).

As Ammianus makes clear, now that the threat of a Persian invasion was over, the emperor hesitated no longer (ibid., trans. W. Hamilton):

> Constantius made a rapid return to Antioch (*festinando*), eager as always to meet the challenge of civil war head on (*avide surrecturus*). When all was ready he was in excessive haste to march (*exire properabat immodice*), and although many of his officials murmured against his decision, no one dared to dissuade or oppose him openly.

8. See n. 1 above. There appears to have been no cavil from reviewers (e.g., both J. Fontaine, *REL* 56 [1978]: 534, and R. Browning, *CR* 29 [1979]: 238, mention the spring date without comment), but the volume of Szidat's commentary which will be most affected by the heterodoxy has yet to appear.

Constantius got his way, then, made his preparations, and set out, *autumno iam senescente* (21. 15. 2). Halted neither by horrific omen, nor by rising fever, he pressed on past Tarsus, "per vias difficiles," to Mobsucrenae, "the last stage-post you come to from this direction, lying at the very foot of Mt. Taurus. Trying to set out on the following day, he was checked by the increasing seriousness of his illness" (ibid.). Gradually the fever became more intense, and he died, on 5 October, according to Ammianus.

Obviously something is very wrong if Constantius was really at Antioch on his way back to the west as early as 3 August, especially if one believes Ammianus mistaken in dating Constantius' death to 5 October instead of 3 November. It can scarcely be doubted that Constantius was desperately eager to begin the campaign against his rival that he had been forced by the threat of a Persian invasion to postpone until now.

Ammianus' narrative is highly rhetorical, but it is rhetoric in service of the truth. What reason was there now for Constantius to delay? He cannot have stayed long at Antioch. Preparations for the march would not have taken much time. After all, his expeditionary army had just been ready to face the might of Persia, and it was yet fresh, not having seen any action. Constantius, moreover, was apparently simplifying arrangements by leaving the normal garrison or frontier-zone troops at their regular postings (21. 13. 8; cf. above). Is it conceivable that Constantius' army took three months, or even two, to reach the foot of the Taurus range?[9]

But Ammianus' account suggests no such timetable. It is clear and internally consistent. Constantius set out from Antioch, not in high summer, in early August, or even *autumno iam propinquante,* but *autumno iam senescente.* The latter phrase, although imprecise, is in perfect harmony with a date of 3 November for Constantius' death in Cilicia, several-weeks' journey at most from Antioch. (If Ammianus intended to write *tertium nonarum Octobrium,* and it is not a slip for *Novembrium,* the exaggeration *senescente* is pardonable for a soldier thinking of mountain passes in Cilicia or the like.)

No, if one is to place one's trust in Ammianus' narrative, one cannot use the date of 3 August, found in the *Codex Theodosianus,* as a linchpin for one's chronology. Rather, if 3 November is taken to be the date of Constantius' death, he will have left Antioch in early to mid-October. Accordingly, if we accept Szidat's other calculations, which appear to be reasonable, we would need to push back Julian's arrival in Sirmium by two months, to mid-July. *Pace* Szidat,[10] Zosimus' account can be brought into conformity with Ammianus'; and for all its imperfections, as Paschoud points out,[11] it appears to be following "une tradition bien

9. What, too, of the advance party? There is no sign in Ammianus that the troops sent from Hierapolis (or Nicopolis) ever met Julian's forces at Succi. If they left Hierapolis before 3 August, they might have been expected to arrive well before late November, when Julian began to advance on Constantinople.

10. "Ankunft," p. 378.

11. *Zosime,* p. 94.

informée": for example, Zosimus is alone in supplying the number of Julian's troops and the duration of his voyage down the Danube.

In conclusion, Julian reached Sirmium about mid-July, and any "Neubewertung der Politik Iulians im Jahre 361" based on the supposition that he was there by mid-May rests on a fragile foundation.

What, then, of the troublesome datum in *Codex Theodosianus* 8. 5. 7? The rescript has the heading IMP. CONSTANTIUS A. OLYBRIO PROC. AFRICAE, and it deals with the problem of illegitimate demands for supplementary post-horses. The subscript reads DAT. III NON. AUG. ANTIOCHIAE CONSTANTIO A. VII ET CONSTANTIO CAES. CONSS.—i.e., 3 August 354.

In his edition, Mommsen emended the subscript to CONSTANTIO A. X ET IULIANO C. III CONSS (= 360) on the basis of two African inscriptions (*CIL* 8. 1860, 5334)—one dedicated by the proconsul Olybrius to Constantius and Julian Caesar, the other to Julian *invictissimus princeps*—that indicate a distinctly later date for Olybrius' proconsulate. O. Seeck pointed out that Antioch could not be correct for 360, and proposed P. C. CONSTANTII A. ET C. (= 361).[12] But 3 August is very late in the year for a post-consular dating, and surely impossible in a rescript like this.[13]

If 3 August is an impossibly early date for Constantius to have been returning to Antioch in 361, might it relate to his outward journey? No; a succession of rescripts from Gephyra on 3 May 361,[14] and (if Seeck's emendation of the year from 358 to 361 is correct), one from Dolicha on 29 May (*Cod. Theod.* 7. 4. 4), as well as Ammianus' narrative itself, would appear to preclude this. Two other rescripts are addressed to Olybrius in 361 (*Cod. Theod.* 2. 19. 4, 2. 20. 1); they are both dated to 19 May, when Constantius had already set out from Antioch. Their existence might suggest the possibility that the month is incorrectly transmitted in 8. 5. 7, but that would add awkwardly to the presumed errors.

Now the place, the manuscript date, and the subject—instructions to *provinciarum rectores* to allow supplementary post-horses only to "agentes in rebus qui ad movendum militem mitti consuerunt"—would fit Constantius Gallus' Caesarship in 354 perfectly well. But there are equally intractable difficulties with this suggestion. Not only is the rescript attributed to Constantius himself, but the addressee could not then be Olybrius, for in 354 he was a mere *consularis Campaniae*.[15] There is no satisfactory solution; but if the place of issue is considered unlikely to have been garbled, one must assume that both calendar and consular dates have been.

12. *Regesten der Kaiser und Päpste für die Jahre 311 bis 476 n. Chr.* (Stuttgart, 1919), p. 74.

13. Unfortunately, R. S. Bagnall et al., *Consuls of the Later Roman Empire* (Atlanta, 1987), offer no discussion of *Cod. Theod.* 8. 5. 7.

14. See *Cod. Theod.* 6. 4. 12 and 13, and O. Seeck, *Regesten* 208, for references to others not indicating the place of issue.

15. See *PLRE*, 1:640 (Olybrius 3). There is the further possibility that Gallus had no authority to issue such decrees; cf. R. C. Blockley, "Constantius Gallus and Julian as Caesars of Constantius II," *Latomus* 31 (1972): 433–68, esp. pp. 461–68.

Let us return now to Julian and Victor, and the latter's appointment as governor of Pannonia Secunda upon being summoned to Naissus in late summer. On the surface, Julian's offer of the post, and Victor's acceptance of it, might seem only natural. The two men were united in their taste for culture and in their religious convictions.[16] Furthermore, it seems very likely that Victor was well qualified by service on the staff of Anatolius, the praetorian prefect of Illyricum from 357 to early 360.[17] It is an easy assumption that Victor declared his hand at the appropriate moment and was enlisted gratefully by the young usurper. Indeed, to account for the honor of a statue it may even be surmised that Victor had performed some special service for Julian during the latter's two-day sojourn in Sirmium.

On the other hand, Victor's promotion has been explained, wholly or in part, as a result of the publication of the *Caesares*.[18] But that is to complicate matters greatly, for Victor not only treats of events right up to the time of writing but also, in his customary manner, continues to deliver moral judgments, ending with a summary of the reign and character of Constantius II himself.

Now writing "contemporary history" is a delicate business at the best of times, and not conducive to objectivity.[19] If Victor won promotion even partly as a result of his work, what was the nature of its appeal to Julian? This is not clear. Indeed, opinions about the closing sections of the *Caesares* differ sharply. For instance, it has been denied that the *Caesares* could have been published in Constantius' lifetime,[20] yet it contains no obituary of him, and the use of present tenses in the summary of his reign (42. 20 *exercetur, abest*) suggest that it was written before his death.[21]

16. For Victor's "battle . . . to maintain the dignity and autonomy of culture," and what Sir Ronald Syme called "his characteristic obsession with polite studies" (*Emperors and Biography* [Oxford, 1971], p. 227), see C. Starr, "Aurelius Victor: Historian of Empire," *AHR* 61 (1956): 574–86, esp. pp. 581–83 (the quotation is from p. 582), and now Bird, *Sextus Aurelius Victor,* pp. 71–80.

Victor's religious convictions are clear. Though his almost complete silence on the subject of Christianity may be explained in terms of genre (cf. Averil and Alan Cameron, "Christianity and Tradition in the Historiography of the Late Empire," *CQ* 14 [1964]: 316–28), he includes in a catalog of Diocletian's positive achievements "veterrimae religiones castissime curatae" (*Caes.* 39. 45). At 41. 12 he writes of Constantine: "condenda urbe formandis religionibus ingentem animum avocavit," which nicely encapsulates his admiration for Constantine's achievements in general, and his disapproval of Constantine's religious policies and neglect of Rome in favor of a new city (which he never names: 41. 17 *urbem sui nominis* is the closest he comes to doing so).

17. Note *Caes.* 13. 5–6 on Anatolius' reform of the *cursus publicus,* a doubly unusual passage for Victor: he seldom inserts a topical comment and seldom qualifies a generalization, particularly when it is on such a favorite theme as the decline in the standard of administration or the rascality of officials. It is significant that he should even know to whom the credit belonged for this administrative measure. Pointing in the same direction is his outburst against *actuarii* (33. 13), who were often a thorn in the side of the praetorian prefect and his subordinates; cf. now Bird, *Sextus Aurelius Victor,* pp. 8–10.

18. H. Peter, *Die geschichtliche Litteratur über die römische Kaiserzeit bis Theodosius I und ihre Quellen,* vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1897), pp. 131–32; P. Dufraigne, *Aurelius Victor, Livre des Césars* (Paris, 1975), pp. xi–xii; Bowersock, *Julian,* p. 59; Bird, *Sextus Aurelius Victor,* p. 11; cf. J. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 23–24, 457.

19. Cf. Amm. Marc. 26. 1. 1–2; Eutropius 10. 18. 3. Victor's action was unusual.

20. B. T. Moss, "Sextus Aurelius Victor: *Liber de Caesaribus*" (Ph.D. diss., Chapel Hill, 1942), p. xl. Moss even suggests that Victor was already under Julian's protection when he completed his history (p. xli).

21. Cf. the use of "imperatori nostro Constantio" (41. 10) and "nostro principe" (42. 5).

Those who believe that it was written in Constantius' lifetime suggest that Victor subsequently made certain additions to it, to bring it into the form in which we have it today.[22] In the circumstances it is highly desirable to establish exactly when it was written, what it says, and when it saw the light of day.

Internal evidence might seem to settle the matter. At 42. 20 Victor writes: "at Iulius Constantius, annos tres atque viginti augustum imperium regens. . . ." Since Constantius was proclaimed Augustus on 9 September 337,[23] this should mean that Victor penned this chapter between 9 September 359 and 8 September 360,[24] and the author of the preface to the third part of the corpus transmitted to us under Victor's name seems to have drawn this conclusion, for he avers that the work goes down "usque ad consulatum decimum Constantii Augusti et Iuliani Caesaris tertium"—i.e., 1 January–31 December 360.[25] J. Straub, however, suggests that Victor counts from the death of Constantine on 22 May 337, and that no precision can be attached to Victor's words.[26] On the latter point, at least, he is surely right, and most have been content with the year 360.[27]

Nevertheless, it is tempting to believe that the concluding chapter of the *Caesares* was not written until the spring of 361, and that the work was published almost immediately afterwards. At 42. 17 Victor refers to Julian's successes in Gaul: "isque nationes feras brevi subegit captis famosis regibus." Surely this refers to the capture, not only of Chonodomarius in 357 (Amm. Marc. 16. 12. 58–70), but also of Vadomarius in the spring of 361 (Amm. Marc. 21. 4. 1–6). That the capture of these two barbarian kings was later considered a highlight amongst Julian's achievements is shown by the independent summary of the *Epitome de Caesaribus* (42. 14): "captus rex nobilis Nodomarius; fusi omnes optimates; redditus limes Romanae possessionis; ac postmodum cum Alamannis dimicans potentissimum eorum regem Badomarium cepit."

That they were the only prominent barbarian kings captured by Julian is confirmed by Ammianus' detailed account. Chieftains who merited the title *reges* in Ammianus are extremely numerous (cf. 16. 12. 1 and 26), and in the campaign of 357 there was one other than Chonodomarius who might possibly have qualified for Victor's adjective *famosus,* that is, Serapio, Chonodomarius' nephew (Amm. Marc. 16. 12. 58–70 "Chonodomarius et Serapio, potestate excelsiores ante alios reges"). But he was never captured (cf. Amm. Marc. 16. 12. 58–70; Ammianus' silence on the point is decisive). Now Libanius mentions a second chieftain in the

22. Starr, "Aurelius Victor," p. 582, n. 27, maintains that "[Victor's] last sentences, which criticised [Constantius], must certainly have been added after the accession of Julian in 361"; Bird, *Sextus Aurelius Victor,* pp. 56, 119, follows him.

23. Cons. Const., *Chron. min.* 1. 235.

24. See Syme, *Emperors and Biography,* p. 229; Bird, *Sextus Aurelius Victor,* p. 10.

25. Seeck, *Regesten,* p. 207.

26. *Studien zur "Historia Augusta"* (Bern, 1952), p. 147.

27. See, e.g, Schanz-Hosius, 4:72; Peter, *Geschichtliche Litteratur,* 2:131–32. Characteristically, Syme, *Emperors and Biography,* p. 230, toys with a suspicion of "artifice, the *Caesares* being composed a little later." *PLRE,* 1:960 (Victor 13), declares "published in c. 361," without explanation.

campaign of 357 (*Or.* 18. 67, composed in 364/65). This unnamed chieftain, thought by some to be Serapio,[28] had joined Chonodomarius but urged him not to fight; he was allegedly so afraid of Julian that he fled to Constantius and surrendered to him. But this action scarcely fits Victor's word *captis,* and Libanius himself contrasts the fate of the two kings: Constantius ἦν ἀμφοῖν διὰ τοῦτον (i.e., Julian) βασιλέοιν δεσπότης, τοῦ μὲν αὐτὸν δόντος, τοῦ δὲ ἀλόντος. As we shall see, unlike Libanius, Victor is scarcely the panegyrist of Julian here, and the word *captis* should be allowed to bear real meaning. More important, Julian himself, in his summary of the episode in his *Letter to the Athenians* (279C–D), mentions only one king (τὸν βασιλέα). Victor's use of the plural, then, combined with the Epitome's singling out of Nodomarius and Badomarius, suggests that the last chapter of the *Caesares* was written only after the capture of Vadomarius in the spring of 361. In this connection it is interesting to note that immediately after the capture of Vadomarius Julian's soldiers hailed him as "fortunatum domitorem gentium et *regum*" (Amm. Marc. 21. 5. 9).[29]

Even on the usual dating of the *Caesares,* Victor's last chapter is very pointed. Julian's victories in Gaul, he states, "quamquam vi eius, fortuna principis tamen et consilio accidere" (42. 18).[30] This is more than a statement of the official principle that victories won by the emperor's generals are the emperor's victories, for Constantius is explicitly credited with the actual planning of the campaigns and with holding the auspices.[31] Victor goes on to issue a warning to Julian, based on historical examples (42. 19): planning is so vital "that whereas Tiberius and Galerius accomplished very many outstanding achievements when subordinate to others (*subiecti aliis*), they could not match their success when they themselves were in command and operating under their own auspices (*suo autem ductu atque auspicio minus paria experti sint*)."

But if Victor wrote this after the capture of Vadomarius, the warning may have been issued, not merely in the light of Julian's proclamation as Augustus in the winter of 359/60 (Amm. Marc. 20. 4) and his subsequent requests that Constantius recognize this proclamation (Amm. Marc. 20. 8. 3), but in particular upon receipt of information that Julian was

28. E.g., O. Seeck, "Serapio (2)," *RE* 2 A (1923): 1666; *PLRE,* 1:824 (Serapio 3).

29. Taking *Caes.* 42. 17 in isolation one might be tempted to dismiss *nationes feras* and *captis famosis regibus* as loose writing. But unlike some later authors, Victor is not given to generalizing plurals: his generalizations tend to be restricted to his moralizing passages, where he propounds platitudinous universal laws of human behavior (e.g., 5. 10, et saep.). And unlike Suetonius, for example, he never uses the plural when he has one specific person (or incident) in mind, although he may not always name that person (e.g., 4. 13, 5. 5, 42. 6; cf. 10. 3, where he does mean two; see Suet. *Tit.* 9. 1). *Suorum ictu* at 38. 11 (Carinus' death) is no exception, for the *praecipue* of *Epit.* 38. 8 and the version in Eutropius (9. 19. 1, 20. 2) show that there were many involved. *Famosis* at 42. 17 may be no surety against hyperbole, but given the *Tendenz* of the passage and Victor's usual practice I am sure that he had the famous two in mind.

30. I give the text of Pichlmayr (rev. Gruendel), incorporating the emendation *vi eius* (Freinshemius) for the MSS' *in eius,* which gives a less balanced sentence. Dufraigne, however, retains the reading of the MSS, placing the comma after *fortuna.*

31. Cf. Dufraigne, *Aurelius Victor,* p. 203, n. 25.

actually preparing to move against Constantius, in the spring and summer of 361 (Amm. Marc. 21. 4–5 and 6. 1; Julian's preparations were evidently public by winter 360/61, although he was not ready to march until summer 361).[32]

As a historian whose work had traversed the chaos of the third century and cataloged its horrors, Victor was acutely aware of the impact of civil war upon the Empire, and he not surprisingly abhorred it. He constantly inveighs against the power of the army and its abuse of that power.[33] Furthermore in a fashion not unlike that of modern textbooks, he sees the reign of Alexander Severus as a turning-point in Roman history (24. 9):

> After this time, as long as men were more eager to dominate their fellow citizens than to subjugate foreign peoples, and preferred to take up arms against each other, they precipitated the Roman state into a steep decline, so to speak. Good men and bad, nobles and low born, and even many of barbarian origin, were indiscriminately cast into power.

Later he moralizes on men's lust for power and the pretext they offer, that in overthrowing their opponents (to the public loss) they have removed tyranny (33. 24). When he comes to the reign of Constantine's sons, his narrative becomes an almost continuous catalog of civil wars (41. 22–42. 16): Constantine II and Constans; Magnentius and Vetranio (where *vis facundiae* happily saved the day: 42. 1); Nepotianus and Magnentius again; Patricius, Gallus, and Silvanus. It is not surprising that he was sensitive to the threat posed by Julian. Whatever the exact date of the *Caesares,* it is clear that Victor wrote his last chapter after the news of Julian's proclamation reached him, and he reacted very unfavorably.

At the same time, the *Caesares* is highly favorable to Constantius. A comparison of Victor's summary of the reign and his character sketch of Constantius (42. 23–25) with the corresponding passage of Eutropius (10. 15. 2), written after the deaths of both Constantius and Julian, illustrates the point:

> at Iulius Constantius, annos tres atque viginti augustum imperium regens, cum externis motibus, modo civilibus exercetur, aegre ab armis abest. quis tyrannide tantorum depulsa sustentatoque interim Persarum impetu genti Sarmatarum magno decore considens apud eos regem dedit. quod Gnaeum Pompeium in Tigrane restituendo vixque paucos maiorum fecisse comperimus. placidus clemensque pro negotio, litterarum ad elegantiam prudens atque orandi genere leni iocundoque; laboris patiens ac destinandi sagittas mire promptus; cibi omnis libidinis atque omnium cupidinum victor; cultu genitoris satis pius suique nimis custos; gnarus vita bonorum principum reipublicae quietem regi. haec tanta tamque inclita tenue studium probandis provinciarum ac militiae rectoribus, simul ministrorum parte maxima absurdi mores, adhuc neglectus boni cuiusque foedavere. atque uti verum absolvam brevi: ut imperatore ipso praeclarius, ita apparitorum plerisque magis atrox nihil (*Caes.* 42. 20–25).

32. So Zosimus 3. 10, and the argument above.

33. Cf. Bird, *Sextus Aurelius Victor,* pp. 41–52, on "throw-away remarks" (e.g., 34. 1 and 35. 7), and passages such as 37. 5–7, where the senate is criticized for missing opportunities to change things.

meruitque inter divos referri, vir egregiae tranquillitatis, placidus, nimium amicis et familiaribus credens, mox etiam uxoribus deditior, qui tamen primis imperii annis ingenti se modestia egerit, familiarium etiam locupletator neque inhonores sinens, quorum laboriosa expertus fuisset officia, ad severitatem tum propensior, si suspicio imperii moveretur, mitis alias, et cuius in civilibus magis quam in externis bellis sit laudanda fortuna (Eutropius 10. 15. 2).

Eutropius, while certainly treating Constantius favorably (*meruitque inter divos referri*), balances his virtues and faults in an apparently objective way. Praised by Eutropius for the most part, Constantius was too trustful of his friends, his *familiares,* and, in time, his wives. While moderate at first, he later became inclined to severity if he suspected a coup; his fortune in civil wars was more to be praised than that in foreign ones.

On the other hand, with two exceptions, Victor has nothing but praise for Constantius himself; his criticism, admittedly acerbic, is in general reserved for the emperor's officials. Direct criticism of Constantius is limited to the enigmatic phrase *suique nimis custos* (which has defeated some translators),[34] and to his lack of zeal in selecting governors and military officers. But such criticism is outweighed by *haec tanta tamque inclita* that Victor has paraded.

Victor's praise of Constantius' foreign exploits magnifies his successes and glosses over his embarrassing failures in the east. The phrase *sustentatoque interim Persarum impetu* presumably refers to the successful defense of Nisibis in 350 described by Julian (*Or.* 2. 62B–67A), and perhaps to the campaigns of Ursicinus in 353, but there is not a word of later and less happy engagements (contrast Eutropius 10. 10. 1; Epit. 42. 18). Victor does as much as he can. Constantius won great prestige by giving the Sarmatians a king; Pompey accomplished something similar, but very few others did. Presumably this was his most successful recent achievement in foreign affairs (358; cf. Amm. Marc. 17. 12. 19–20). Eutropius, in a longer summary, does not bother to mention it.

According to Victor, Constantius' character was practically faultless. He was *omnium cupidinum victor;* unlike Eutropius' Constantius, he was neither too trustful of those around him nor uxorious. Victor glosses over the massacre of his near relatives by mentioning only Dalmatius, and he suppresses what must have been suspected: Dalmatius was killed *incertum quo suasore* (41. 22).[35] He adopts what looks like an official view of the execution of Gallus: "ob saevitiam atque animum trucem Gallus Augusti iussu interiit" (42. 12). Again, Victor gives a glowing account of Constantius' literary and rhetorical accomplishments (ibid.; cf. 42. 1–5).

34. Dufraigne (ad loc.) ingeniously links it with the next observation, translating "fort soucieux de sa propre personne, conscient que le repos de l'État dépend de la vie des bons princes." But *nimis* cannot, I think, be positive; rather, "he is dutiful enough in (promoting) the cult of his father, and too concerned with that of his own." The enigma lies with Victor's attitude. Why *que* and not *sed?* Is the first phrase grudging? For the somewhat unexpected employment of ruler cult by Constantine and his successors, see G. W. Bowersock, "The Imperial Cult: Perceptions and Persistence," in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition,* ed. B. F. Meyer and E. P. Sanders, vol. 3 (London, 1982), pp. 171–82.

35. Eutropius implicates Constantius: "Dalmatius . . . oppressus est factione militari et Constantio patrueli suo sinente potius quam iubente" (10. 9. 1).

By contrast Ammianus remarks, perhaps tendentiously, that though Constantius strove diligently after learning, he was a failure in rhetoric and versification alike,[36] and Eutropius does not mention the subject at all.

It is clear that Victor, if he is not dealing with officially approved information, is at least offering an orthodox version of recent events from the viewpoint of the reigning emperor, a version that at several points reflects the latter's propaganda.[37] Obviously, I cannot agree with Moss, who finds the last chapter of the *Caesares* so critical of Constantius that she cannot believe it was published in his lifetime, and even postulates that Victor was writing under Julian's protection.[38] She is bothered specifically by the criticism of Constantius' officials. Certainly this is sharp, but it is introduced with the utmost tact ("haec tanta tamque inclita . . ."), and the emperor is extravagantly praised in the climax: "ut imperator ipso praeclarius . . . nihil." If the last sentences of the work were a later addition (cf. n. 22 above), they must have been scrawled as Julian stepped ashore at Bononia, for there has been no attempt to expunge material distasteful to him; and if the *Caesares* was published after Constantius' death, Victor's treatment of Julian becomes even more inexplicable. By late summer in 361 Victor had accepted a provincial governorship from the new ruler whom he had so recently criticized. This is surely enough to prove that the *Caesares* was already well and truly published, for it is inconceivable that Victor would now want the last chapter to stand in the form in which we have it.[39]

Particularly galling to Julian would have been the passage examined above (42. 18) in which Victor goes out of his way to emphasize that though Julian may have won the victories physically, they depended on the princeps' *fortuna* and *consilium*. From Ammianus' detailed account (16. 12. 67–70), we know not only that this was the way in which Constantius generally publicized victories, but also that in particular he claimed all credit for the victory at Strassbourg, without saying a word about Julian! Even more to the point, we have Julian's bitter complaint at Constantius' usurpation of his triumph (*Letter to the Athenians* 279C–D) faithfully echoed by Libanius (*Or.* 18. 67). This contrast both demonstrates Victor's indebtedness to Constantius' propaganda and suggests that Julian's sudden and unexpected arrival at Sirmium would have caused the historian no little embarrassment.

36. 21. 16. 4 "doctrinarum diligens affectator, sed cum a rhetorice per ingenium desereretur obtunsum, ad versificandum transgressus, nihil operae pretium fecit"; but R. C. Blockley, *Ammianus Marcellinus: A Study of His Historiography and Political Thought,* Collection Latomus 141 (Brussels, 1975), demonstrates that Ammianus' necrologies were not simple factual reporting but highly calculated and moralizing set-pieces. Here Constantius may suffer at the hands of an author who equates literary sophistication with moral worth. Yet elsewhere Victor himself does much the same (cf. 40. 12–13).

37. I was pleased to see that Dufraigne came to the same view (*Aurelius Victor,* p. 203 n. 25, and p. 205).

38. *Sextus Aurelius Victor,* pp. xl–xli.

39. Though Victor's praise of Constantius himself, combined with wholesale condemnation of his subordinates, does accord with Julian's own line of propaganda for a while after Constantius' death (cf. his letter to Hermogenes, *Epist.* 33 Bidez [389D–90A], December [?] 361, Constantinople), the assumption that Victor's work dates from this period still does not explain why a more extensive revision was not effected.

We can only speculate about the reasons that led Victor to perform his *volte face* and accept a post from the man he had criticized earlier,[40] and Julian to appoint as governor, and honor with a statue, a man who had apparently been closely associated with the administration of Constantius.[41] It might be argued that Victor had been working under some constraint, and that his praise of Constantius was somewhat less than sincere and his oblique criticism of Julian the natural response of one who abhorred civil war and saw that Julian's demands for recognition posed a threat to internal peace. On the other hand, it could be argued that Victor's actions in 361, whatever they were, were prompted by expediency. Julian's arrival in Sirmium took everyone by surprise, including Lucillianus, the *magister equitum,* the man responsible for the defense of the city (Amm. Marc. 21. 9. 5). Many who would have preferred to join Constantius were caught in Sirmium: for example, the two legions that were sent to the west by Julian and that raised a revolt in Julian's rear at Aquileia (Amm. Marc. 21. 11. 2). We cannot overlook the possibility that Victor, too, was surprised by the turn of events. At any rate, the historian met Julian at Sirmium upon the latter's arrival and evidently made a good impression upon him. The panegyrical tone of his praise of Constantius in the *Caesares* did him no harm. Such flattery of a reigning emperor was only to be expected. It might in future be directed to another quarter. Julian, of all people, was aware that the pen was a useful adjunct to the sword.[42] And he needed all the support he could muster.[43]

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40. It is tempting to suggest that Victor received strong hints of Julian's true religious convictions at Sirmium; if he did, the secret did not leak out. Only with the news that his adversary was dead did Julian feel free to worship the gods openly, at Nish (letter to Maximus, *Epist.* 26 [415C–D], November 361; Amm. Marc. 22. 5. 2 is in error: see Bowersock, *Julian,* pp. 61–62).

41. See at n. 3 above. Though Julian could be magnanimous to Constantius' supporters (on Lucillianus; Amm. Marc. 21. 9. 5–8; on Florentius, Amm. Marc. 20. 8. 21–22, 22. 7. 5), his forgiveness was not automatic: cf. the later trials at Chalcedon, initiated if not orchestrated by the emperor (letter to Hermogenes, *Epist.* 33; Amm. Marc. 22. 3), and conducted *vehementius aequo bonoque.* Victor, moreover, was not simply pardoned but was given office and honors.

42. See Bowersock, *Julian,* pp. 62–64, for Julian's courting of intellectuals in letters written from the Balkans after news of Constantius' death.

43. I would like to thank J. Long, S. Bradbury, and R. Kaster for their numerous suggestions for improving this article.