

ROME IN LATE ANTIQUITY: CLIENTSHIP, URBAN TOPOGRAPHY, AND PROSOPOGRAPHY

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ONE MAY ASK anachronistic questions of history, as the great Witold Kula once observed, as long as the answers are not anachronistic. So my intention here is to examine certain passages from Ammianus Marcellinus, relating them to realities and beliefs of the fourth century—realities and beliefs that, in my opinion, deserve to be better understood through a comparison with those present in some later authors of the fifth and sixth centuries.

Two very well known digressions by Ammianus on the vices of the senate and people of Rome have been frequently analyzed. Each passage has been variously judged: as a precious source of factual information,¹ as a malevolent venting of personal rancor,² or as a purely rhetorical construction of invective purposely designed to overthrow the schemes proposed by Menander (a rhetorician of the third century C.E.) as suitable for the praise of a city.³ One of these digressions is that of Book 14 (chap. 6), which was very probably already in circulation in 392 together with the rest of the first twenty-five books. The other digression is to be found in Book 28 (chap. 4.6–35) and was probably outlined at the same time as the first (which it resembles and complements, especially concerning the eating habits of the Romans, both aristocratic and plebeian), but it was published some years

1. W. Hartke, *Römische Kinderkaiser: Eine Strukturanalyse römischen Denkens und Dasein* (Berlin, 1951), p. 65, n. 65 ("eine Fundgrube von Realien"); more generally, M. Raimondi, "Gli interessi locali nell'opera di Ammiano Marcellino," in *Storiografia locale e storiografia universale: Forme di acquisizione del sapere storico nella cultura antica*, Bologna, 16–18 dic. 1999 (Como, 2001), 497–512.

2. Alan Cameron, "The Roman Friends of Ammianus," *JRS* 54 (1964): 5–28; H. P. Kohns, "Die Zeitkritik in den Romexkursen des Ammianus Marcellinus (Zu Amm. Marc. 14.6.3–26; 28.4.6–35)," *Chiron* 5 (1975): 485–91.

3. R. A. Pack, "The Roman Digressions of Ammianus Marcellinus," *TAPA* 84 (1953): 181–89; J. Fontaine, ed., *Ammien Marcellin: Histoire*, vol. 1, Collection Budé (Paris, 1968), p. 205, n. 42. I should like to thank Gavin Kelly (Peterhouse, Cambridge) for his constructive comments on this paper, which he read in a typewritten version after my seminar in Cambridge on October 30, 2001, concerning the same topic (I should also like to thank all members of the seminar for their advice). G. Kelly has in preparation a book on Ammianus Marcellinus, and his approach is to emphasize how many of the contents of Ammianus' digressions (also 14.6 and 28.4) are *topoi* from Roman comedy or satire (Juvenal in particular). In my opinion, however, the *topos* never excludes the *typos* and often, in fact, supports it, according to the rhetorical rules of ancient writing, to which technical terms were alien and which were very fond of the literary traditions: for example, Synesius (*Ep.* 66, ed. A. Garzya, *Classici greci* UTET [Turin, 1989], 196–97) apologizes to the patriarch of Alexandria, Theophilus, for using the technical and barbarous term βακάντιβοι = *vacantivi*.

later, with the final six books of the *Res gestae*.⁴ I believe that a rereading of these passages and others from Ammianus may enable us to achieve a shift in perspective. This involves an attempt to separate what the historian had set out to represent in a certain way (with his *hows* and his *whys*) from what he has, on the contrary, recorded without perceiving the deep meaning of certain phenomena of urban life, phenomena that nevertheless had struck him with their recurrent and dramatic intensity. Consciously or not, in his two digressions on Rome Ammianus showed the same interest in local history that has been recently considered in connection with cities and countries of the East, their antiquarian traditions and present actualities as well. In particular I will examine the political role performed in fourth-century Rome by the bonds of clientship, which traditionally linked the senatorial class to the plebeians. These bonds were, by Ammianus' time, spreading out to the marginal milieu of "entertainment" within an urban situation that seemed to make no clear-cut distinctions either by citizenship (*cives domo Roma* as opposed to *peregrini*)⁵ or by faith (pagan or Christian).⁶

In 14.6 Ammianus inserts the first of his two digressions, immediately after recalling the first urban prefecture of Memmius Vitrasius Orfitus (353–56), the father-in-law of the celebrated senator Quintus Aurelius Symmachus. A *novus homo* and expert in juridical matters, Orfitus had had a prestigious career favored by Constantius II, but, according to Ammianus (substantially confirmed by Symmachus himself), generally behaved unscrupulously and with insolence,⁷ in contrast to the model of the cultured and moderate aristocrat (*verecundus*) to which senators, both Christian and pagan, then adhered, and which many sources of the period reflect (Symmachus, Ambrose, Macrobius, and others).⁸ I do not believe that the insertion of the *excursus* at this particular point is fortuitous—nor is, similarly, the digression that follows 28.4.1–5, where Q. Clodius Hermogenianus Olybrius and Publius Ampelius, *praefecti urbis* during bloody clashes between the

4. G. Sabbah, "Ammien Marcellin, Libanius, Antioche et la date des derniers livres des *Res gestae*," *Cassiodorus* 3 (1997): 89–116.

5. V. Neri, *I marginali nell'Occidente tardoantico: Poveri, infames e criminali nella nascente società cristiana*, "Munera," Studi storici sulla Tarda Antichità dir. da D. Vera, 12 (Rome, 1998), esp. 135–96 ("I forestieri"), and 121–27 on the survivals of ancient euergetism in the Christian concept of charity.

6. L. Cracco Ruggini, "Spazi urbani clientelari e caritativi," in *La Rome Impériale: Démographie et logistique: Actes de la Table Ronde, Rome, 25 mars 1994*, CÉFR, 230 (Rome, 1997), 157–91; "Ammiano Marcellino: Un intellettuale greco di fronte all'impero e alla sua capitale," in *Atti del Convegno dell'Accademia Naz. Virgiliana: Cultura latina pagana fra terzo e quarto secolo dopo Cristo*, Mantova, 9–11 nov. 1995 (Florence, 1998), 213–35; "Clientele e violenze urbane a Roma tra IV e VI secolo," in *Corruzione, repressione e rivolta morale nella Tarda Antichità: Atti del Convegno Int.*, Catania, 11–13 dic. 1995, ed. R. Soraci (Catania, 1999), 7–52. On Ammianus Marcellinus and his digressions on local or regional history, see M. Raimondi, "Gli interessi locali nell'opera di Ammiano Marcellino," in *Storiografia locale e storiografia universale: Forme di acquisizione del sapere storico nella cultura antica*, Bologna, 16–18 dic. 1999 (Como, 2001), 497–512.

7. Amm. Marc. 14.6.1 (on the second urban prefecture of Orfitus, see 27.7.3); *PLRE*, vol. 1, s.v. "Memmius Vitrasius Orfitus signo Honorius" 3, 651–53.

8. R. A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language: The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1988), from a sociocultural perspective; P. Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York, 1988), from the ethical, psychological, and medical points of view concerning sexual behavior.

supporters of Pope Damasus and of the anti-Pope Ursinus (368–70 C.E.), are censured for their lax private life, gluttony, and fondness for stage and pleasures. At the same time, this first digression begins to draw our attention to the evident and grave necessity for the senators, however reluctant (as we may read in certain epistles by Symmachus himself), to maintain the favor of the Roman mob at all costs.

Ammianus starts, in fact, by mentioning the first prefecture of Orfitus and then affirms that he wishes to explain to the “foreigners” (*peregrini*, i.e., those citizens of the empire who were not familiar with the customs prevailing in contemporary Rome) why any historian, in dealing with the city of Rome, always ends up by talking exclusively of “public disorders and other such vulgarities.”⁹ Nevertheless he begins his reflections, with a demeanor of filial *pietas*, by exalting the venerable and tranquil old age that *Roma aeterna* had reached after a childhood of defensive wars, and an adolescence and adulthood increasingly taken up with conquests and triumphs “on the proud necks of savage nations.” Once the civil wars had ceased, together with the last spasms of Republican liberties, he says, the city had rediscovered the peace of the time of Numa and had once again entrusted itself to the monarchy “like a thrifty parent, wise and wealthy, who would leave to the Caesars, her own children, the task of administering her patrimony”; however, Rome conserved the role of a city *domina* [. . .] *et regina*, where “the white hair of the senators and their authority are revered and the name of the Roman people is respected and honored.”¹⁰

This is a justly famous passage, whose essence¹¹ is also to be found in these same years in the *Relatio* (3.9–10) of Q. Aurelius Symmachus, at the point where the orator causes a personified Rome to say: “may I live according to my custom, since I am free” (*vivam meo more, quia libera sum*). Thus we have the acceptance and even the exaltation of the monarchical regime, seen as a “providential” return, at an advanced age, to the safety of infancy (*Pompiliani securitas temporis*), and it is by no means an accident that this “tranquillity” is associated with a sovereign such as Numa Pompilius, who traditionally had not been credited with any military undertakings, but only with civil and religious institutions.¹² The reconversion into a monarchy is not at all seen, as it was, for example, in Seneca the Elder and Florus, as the cause of an inexorable weakening of the *Urbs* and of its decline into old age.¹³ But another aspect emerges, which has still to receive the attention it deserves: in the words of Ammianus—as in those of Symmachus recalled above—there is an acknowledgment that the Caesars, with their “world” policies and the armed defense of the empire entrusted to them,

9. 14.6.2.

10. 14.6.3–5.

11. Including the “biological” metaphor of Rome, which by now had reached *senectus* according to the successive cycles of the ages of man.

12. 14.6.6; L. Cracco Ruggini, “Simboli di battaglia ideologica nel tardo ellenismo (Roma, Atene, Costantinopoli; Numa, Empedocle, Cristo),” in *Studi storici in onore di Ottorino Bertolini*, vol. 1 (Pisa, 1972), pp. 177–300, esp. 185 and 245–48, with nn. 145, 147–48. See also August. *De civ. D.* 3.9, *CCSL* 47, pp. 70–71.

13. Sources in Cracco Ruggini, “Clientele e violenze” (n. 6 above), pp. 21–22, with n. 30.

constituted a far-off reality. This awareness of the gap between court and senate nevertheless seems to arouse no regret either in Ammianus or in Symmachus (or, for that matter, in Rutilius Namatianus), though one perceives different echoes in the Greek historian (and former *miles*) Ammianus and in the two pagan aristocrats, the first a Roman (Quintus Aurelius Symmachus), the second a Gallo-Roman who became *praefectus urbis Romae* in 414 (Rutilius Namatianus).¹⁴

Indeed we should always bear in mind that Ammianus' vision was that of an intellectual who had been formed in Antioch,¹⁵ the great city of the Greek Orient, where rivalry and contention with regard to Constantinople and to its senate were then very strong—that "senate of the prince" that, as Gilbert Dagron has shown, had been gaining strength both politically and economically, to the detriment of other prestigious municipal senates of the Greek Orient.¹⁶ One need only recall certain letters and speeches of Libanius¹⁷ that describe the overbearing role of the senate of Constantinople, which enjoyed direct relations with the prince. Libanius judges it negatively as an inextricable tangle of favoritisms together with preconceptions. It is also significant that Libanius never fails punctiliously to designate the senate of the new capital of the Orient as *boule* rather than *synedrion*, almost as if to underline its persistent "municipal" character, on the model of other city assemblies (a character, in fact, it no longer possessed). Ammianus, in his turn, shows that he does not recognize any senate other than that of

14. *PLRE* 1, s.v. "Rutilius Claudius Namatianus," 770–71; S. Roda, "Nobiltà burocratica, aristocrazia senatoria, nobiltà provinciali," in *Storia di Roma*, vol. 3, *L'età tardoantica*, pt. 1, *Crisi e trasformazioni*, ed. A. Carandini, L. Cracco Ruggini, and A. Giardina (Turin, 1993), 643–74; L. Cracco Ruggini, "Il Senato fra due crisi (III–VI secolo)," in *Il Senato nella storia*, vol. 1, *Il Senato nell'età romana*, ed. E. Gabba (Rome, 1998), 223–375, esp. 309–41.

15. Ammianus was probably a native and certainly a resident of Antioch. His Antiochene origins have recently been questioned: see esp. C. F. Fornara, "Studies on Ammianus Marcellinus: I. The Letter of Libanius and Ammianus' Connection with Antioch; II. Ammianus' Knowledge and Use of Greek and Latin Literature," *Historia* 41 (1992): 328–44, 420–28; T. D. Barnes, "Ammianus Marcellinus and His World," *CP* 88 (1993): 55–70 (discussion about J. F. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* [London, 1989]); G. W. Bowersock, review of Matthews, *JRS* 80 (1990): 277–84. However, I find convincing the counterarguments of J. F. Matthews, "The Origin of Ammianus," *CQ* 44 (1994): 252–69; P. A. Barceló, "Überlegungen zur Herkunft des Ammianus Marcellinus," in *Charistion C. P. T. Naudé*, ed. U. Vogel-Weidemann and J. Scholtemeijer (Pretoria, 1993), 17–23; Sabbah, "Ammien Marcellin, Libanius, Antioche" (n. 4 above). See also T. D. Barnes, *Ammianus Marcellinus and the Representation of Historical Reality* (Ithaca and London, 1998), esp. 54–64 (chap. 6: "Origin and Social Status"), with the review by F. Paschoud, "A propos du nouveau livre de T. D. Barnes sur Ammian Marcellin," *Antiquité Tardive* 7 (1999): 353–63.

16. G. Dagron, *Naissance d'une capitale: Constantinople et ses institutions de 330 à 451* (Paris, 1974), esp. chap. 10, pp. 297–319; see also A. Chastagnol, "Constantinople en ombres chinoises dans l'*Histoire Auguste*," in *Historiae Augustae Colloquium Bonnense, Maria Laach, 12–15 mai 1994*, Atti dei Convegni sulla *Historia Augusta*, 5, ed. G. Bonamente and K. Rosen (Bari, 1997), 85–95 (where the author explains the total silence of the *Historia Augusta* concerning Constantinople); *Politica, retorica e simbolismo del primato: Roma e Costantinopoli (secoli IV–VII): Omaggio a Rosario Soraci: Atti del Convegno Int., Catania, 4–7 ott. 2001*, vol. 1, ed. F. Elia (Catania, 2002), and esp. G. Dagron, "Constantinople, la primauté après Rome," 23–38; F. Corsaro, "Il mito di 'Roma aeterna' da Claudiano a Rutilio Namaziano," 57–77; G. Rapisarda, "Primato di Pietro in Gaudenzio di Brescia (trattato 16, 9–10)," 107–18; L. Di Paola, "Roma caput mundi e natalis scientiae sedes: Il recupero della centralità di Roma in epoca tardoantica," 119–55; G. Crifò, "Sed fuerat Romae tum misera facies, in squalore, cineribus et favillis," 157–70; B. Saïta, "Gregorio Magno e la primazia della sede romana," 239–61; J. Beaucamp, "Rome et Constantinople dans les chroniques universelles byzantines," 301–21. See also G. Kelly, "The New Rome and the Old: Ammianus Marcellinus' Silences on Constantinople," to be published in *CQ*.

17. P. Petit, "Les Sénateurs de Constantinople dans l'oeuvre de Libanius," *AntCl* 26 (1957): 347–82.

Rome, the heir to a legitimate tradition far older than the empire itself; and in the very passage we are examining he seems to imply a clear distinction between the sole capital, Rome (*caput mundi*), and the numerous imperial centers. As we know (and so probably did Ammianus), these centers tended to assume the role and physiognomy of "capitals" by virtue of the principle first formulated by Herodian more than a century earlier,¹⁸ that "Rome is where the emperor is to be found."¹⁹

Through Julian, Ammianus deplored the dissonance between the exclusively "Roman" physiognomy of the *Urbs* and the reform of the senate effected by Constantine, which had broadened its membership to include the elites of the whole world, "overthrowing ancient laws and traditions handed down from the past."²⁰ This same reform, on the contrary, had been considered as meritorious and a cause of increased prestige by Nazarius in 321, when he addressed his *Panegyric* to Constantine himself. Nazarius' point of view was, in any case, that of a Gallic provincial.²¹ He acknowledged that this reform, for the first time, gave real substance to the senatorial boast of being "the best part of mankind" (*pars melior humani generis*, as Symmachus was to proclaim decades later).²² And Rutilius Namatianus in turn was to extol the opening of the *religiosa curia* to the *peregrina laus*, that is, to the glory of the provinces.²³

Symmachus claims for the Roman senate the inalienable right to formulate its own rules freely and without any external pressures, even from the highest level (*sera tamen et contumeliosa est emendatio senectutis* ["the proposal to correct an aged person arrives late and is offensive"]).²⁴ His claim originates from a reality that recent studies²⁵ tend to confirm. In fact, while the phases of the *adlectio* in the senate were substantially the same in Rome and in Constantinople (imperial authorization of the candidature, vote by the senate, ratification by the court), the emperor devised ways of accentuating the role of the senate of Rome in taking decisions by means of a ceremonial code of procedure that carefully respected the political image of the *curia*. This was accomplished through the exploitation of the rhetoric of an imperial power²⁶ always willing to pay homage to the traditions of the *libertas* both of the state and of the senate that claimed to be its incarnation,

18. 7.6.1.

19. The concept is later taken up again explicitly, in the Tetrarchic age, in the two *Panegyrici* to Maximian Herculius by the Gallic rhetor Mamertinus, with reference respectively to Milan in 289 C.E. (*Pan.* 10 [2].14.3) and to Trier in 291 (*Pan.* 11 [3].11.2). A similar idea seems also to be reflected in the *Gratianum actio* by Ausonius of Bordeaux addressed to Gratianus for the consulate conferred on him in 379, at the point where he states that all the traditional institutions of Rome had degenerated during the Republican age—including *curia* and *senatus*—and that they were now to be identified with the Augustus living in Gaul, who had purified them by governing them directly (3.13–15).

20. 21.10.8.

21. *Pan.* 4 (10).35.2.

22. *Ep.* 1.52.

23. *De reditu* 1.3–18, esp. 13 (417 C.E.).

24. *Relat.* 3.9–10; D. Vera, *Commento storico alle Relationes di Quinto Aurelio Simmaco*, Biblioteca di Studi Antichi, 29 (Pisa, 1981), 352 (text), 390–94 (Italian translation), 12–53, esp. 38–43 (commentary).

25. A. Chastagnol, *Le Sénat romain à l'époque impériale* (Paris, 1992); Cracco Ruggini, "Due crisi" (n. 14 above), esp. 289–326.

26. P. Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire* (Madison, Wisc., 1988); Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley, 1991).

a senate that felt confirmed in its own apparent autonomy by the emperors' absence from Rome. In fact it was the gap between the ruler and the Roman senate that was to ensure not only the latter's survival after the disappearance of the emperors in the West, but even to strengthen its *auctoritas* in the course of the fifth century, and later when it was faced with the Gothic sovereigns between the fifth and sixth centuries.

It was this very idea that Ammianus had of Rome's political role and of its powerful senate that gave rise to his criticisms of the disappointing aspects of an urban reality that he had been able to observe close at hand. Ammianus lists with irony—brilliant but at times biased—the defects that marred the life associated with the *Urbs* (*coetuum magnificus splendor*) because a few nobles lacked a sense of responsibility.²⁷ To the *populus* the historian dedicates only two paragraphs out of twenty, but it is substantially present in the background in the discourse concerning the senate. *Non omnia narratu sunt digna, quae per squalidas transiere personas* ("not everything that has taken place among persons of the lowest class is worth narrating"), Ammianus declared elsewhere,²⁸ in harmony with the aristocratic mentality of his time and milieu; but it is this very insistent presence of the Roman people in his observations on the senate that underlines the real importance of the political role that the *populus* had, even when this is not explicitly acknowledged. Ammianus' criticism is, therefore, a *Zeitkritik*, of course; however, it should not be at all considered "irreconcilable" (*unvereinbar*) with the exaltation of Rome that precedes it, as, for example, Alexander Demandt maintained forty years ago.²⁹

Of certain Roman senators (in 14.6.7 mention is made of *pauci*) Ammianus describes with cutting irony—undoubtedly tending towards caricature and generalization—their avidity for riches; the ostentation of their carriages, of their clothes, of their household furnishings; and the flagrant display of their riches in lands, servants, and clients. And there reemerges the *topos* of the virtuous poverty of the ancient Romans that also appears in Symmachus and is based on Republican *exempla* from Valerius Publicola to Atilius Regulus and to Scipio: personages whom certain senatorial *gentes* of the late fourth century still boasted of having among their ancestors, competing against one another in more or less far-fetched genealogies.³⁰ Ammianus further insists on the careless haughtiness of these senators with regard especially to "foreigners" (*peregrini*), and on the infrequent use made of the splendid family libraries "closed like tombs," to which they preferred hunting and boat trips.³¹ Perhaps it is a question, here, of a particular taunt

27. 14.6.7.

28. 28.1.15.

29. *Zeitkritik und Geschichtsbild im Werk Ammians*, Habelts Dissertationsdrücke, Reihe Alte Geschichte, 5 (Bonn, 1965), 130 ff.

30. Concerning these competitions for supremacy based on the displaying of the respective family trees, cf. esp. S. Mazzarino, *Il pensiero politico classico*, vol. 2, pt. 2 (Rome and Bari, 1966), 220–21; M. Dondin-Payre, "La Stratégie symbolique de la parenté sous la République et l'Empire romains," in *Parenté et stratégies familiales dans l'Antiquité romaine: Actes de la Table Ronde, 2–4 oct. 1986*, ed. J. Andreau and H. Bruhns (Rome, 1990); further bibliography in Cracco Ruggini, "Clientele e violenze," pp. 26–27, n. 46.

31. 14.6.15; see also 14.6.14 (*homines vero eruditos et sobrios ut infestos et inutiles vitant*), 28.4.10 and 17.

addressed to Vitrasius Orfitus, from whom the digression started. According to Ammianus, in fact, the culture of this urban prefect had been undoubtedly below that of an average Roman senator.³² If, on the contrary, one recalls the ample testimony we have of the erudite activity of the Symmachi, of the Nicomachi, of the Probi in emending the manuscripts of classics,³³ we may be led to believe that here Ammianus is really venting a personal grudge against some aristocrat who perhaps refused him access to his library and to the documents it contained. However, what the historian finds most scandalous is the unrestrained passion of the Roman nobility for gambling, for dance shows, for pantomimes, for horse races, and for charioteers—the same *ardor* (enthusiasm) shown by the plebeian fans. These are aspects of the time mentioned by all the historians of late antiquity from Gibbon onwards, frequently cited as proof that “l’empire est mort de maladie interne” (a well-known expression of Ferdinand Lot),³⁴ still in harmony with that taste for the decadent that inspired the poetic homage of Paul-Marie Verlaine to the empire *à la fin de la décadence*—too civilized, too replete and indolent to fight against barbarians.³⁵

At this point I would like to insist only on certain aspects that seem to me to bear deeper historical implications, even though Ammianus appears to have noted them only because of their striking visibility. In the first place, Ammianus derides “the vain pride of certain people” who “believe everything that arises outside the *pomerium* to be contemptible,”³⁶ namely, the restricted, apolitical, and “municipal” vision of the inhabitants of the *Urbs*. Then he remarks on how the noble classes exploited charioteers as a means of accusing of poisoning anyone they regarded as troublesome, dragging them before the court of the urban prefect (with whom they often had ties of kinship and class).³⁷ Lastly, Ammianus refers to the practice these nobles had of roving about the city with blatant arrogance, accompanied by bands of servants (*latera*) and swarms of clients—like Manzoni’s *bravi*—shifting the blame to their clients for any crimes committed.³⁸ Many *clarissimae* (i.e., senatorial ladies), in turn, “rushed here and there in every quarter of the city, with their heads covered and in closed litters,” with servants, weavers,

32. [. . .] *splendore liberalium artium minus quam nobilem decuerat institutum* (see n. 7 above).

33. O. Pecere, “La tradizione dei testi latini tra IV e V secolo attraverso i libri sottoscritti,” in *Società romana e impero tardoantico*, ed. A. Giardina, vol. 4, *Tradizione dei classici, trasformazioni della cultura* (Rome and Bari, 1986), 19–81 (text) and 210–386 (notes); “I meccanismi della tradizione testuale,” in *Lo spazio letterario di Roma antica*, vol. 3, ed. G. Cavallo, P. Fedeli, and A. Giardina (Rome, 1990), 297–386; Alan Cameron, “The Last Pagans of Rome,” in *The Transformations of Urbs Roma in Late Antiquity*, ed. W. V. Harris, JRA Suppl. Ser. 33 (Portsmouth, R.I., 1999), 109–21; L. Cracco Ruggini, “Le trasformazioni dell’ *Urbs Roma* fra IV e VI secolo (a proposito di un volume recente),” *Rivista Storica Italiana* 112 (2000): 1109–20, esp. 1117–18.

34. F. Lot, *La Fin du monde antique et le début du Moyen Âge*³ (Paris, 1968).

35. *Langueurs*, 1883, then *Jadis et naguère* (1884); L. Cracco Ruggini, “La fine dell’impero e le trasmigrazioni dei popoli,” in *La Storia: I grandi problemi dal Medioevo all’età contemporanea*, ed. N. Tranfaglia and M. Firpo, vol. 2, *Il Medioevo*, pt. 2, *Popoli e strutture politiche* (Turin, 1986; reprint 1988; new edition, with an up-to-date bibliography, Milan, 1993), 1–52, esp. 30.

36. 14.6.22.

37. 28.4.2. In *Italia Suburbicaria* senators were judged when necessary within a radius of a hundred miles from Rome by the urban prefect aided by five senators drawn by lot (*iudicium quinquemvirale*): Chastagnol, *Sénat romain* (n. 25 above), 322–24.

38. 14.6.16; 28.4.8–9 and 16. About the meaning of *latera* see below, n. 48.

cooks, the idle of the quarter, and eunuchs trailing behind them—a description that, if linked to other passages both in Ammianus and in Jerome, I believe might allude in particular to the great Christian ladies performing their emancipated charitable activity.³⁹

All the elements mentioned so far perfectly match what Ammianus himself describes elsewhere⁴⁰ with regard to the proud pagan senator Rufius Volusianus Lampadius, urban prefect in 365–66, and the bloody conflict that broke out, after the death of Pope Liberius, between the Christian *factiones* arrayed on the side of Damasus or of Ursinus (thus in those very years in which Ammianus inserts his second invective against the vices of the senate and people of Rome). I have spoken about this recently elsewhere⁴¹ and do not intend to repeat myself here except to underline how, as can be seen from a careful analysis of the sources, the final victory of Damasus—a skillful “flatterer of matrons” (*matronarum auriscalpius*)⁴²—can be interpreted as that of an aristocratic faction, not even necessarily Christian, but in any case concerned to ensure the victory of a candidate to the papal throne whom they judged to be pliable and therefore desirable. It must have been these rich noble clans who provided the “party of Damasus” (*pars Damasi*, in the *Collectio Avellana*) with the finances necessary to obtain the support of the bands recruited in the cemeterial and “entertainment” areas outside the walls, adjacent to the Transtiberine district. Damasus, in fact, seems to have been elected in the *titulus in Lucinis* (XIV *Regio*, or Trastevere), while Ursinus had been ordained in the center of Rome, at the *basilica Iulii iuxta Forum Traiani*, which functioned as a cathedral.⁴³ In 366 the *basilica Iulii* and then the *basilica Liberii* or *Sicinini* (now Santa Maria Maggiore on the Esquiline) were stormed by an *inperita multitudo* of *quadrigarii*, *arenarii*,⁴⁴ and *fossores* (on 1 and 26 October respectively), and finally

39. 14.6.16–17; Jer. *Ep.* 22.32 and 108.16, ed. J. Labourt, Collection Budé (Paris, 1949), vol. 1, 147, and vol. 5 (1955), 178–79; F. E. Consolino, “Sante o patrone? Le aristocratiche tardoantiche e il potere della carità,” *Studi storici* 4 (1989): 969–91; S. Elm, “*Virgins of God*”: *The Making of Ascetism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 1996); M. D. Saavedra Guerriero, “La munificentia feminina y los ‘collegia,’” *Athenaeum* 89 (2001): 575–89.

40. 27.3.5–10 (see also below, text corresponding to n. 53).

41. “Spazi urbani” (n. 6 above).

42. *Gesta inter Liberium et Felicem* 1.9–10, CSEL 35, p. 4; L. Cracco Ruggini, “En marge d’une ‘mé-salliance’: Prétextat, Damase et le *Carmen contra paganos*,” *Comptes Rendus de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres* (1998): 493–516.

43. G. De Spirito, “Ursino e Damaso: Una nota,” in Peregrina curiositas: *Eine Reise durch den orbis antiquus: Zu Ehren von D. Van Damme*, ed. A. Kessler, T. Ricklin, and G. Wurst (Freiburg, 1994), 263–74, with further bibliography; for the long affair opposing Damasus to Ursinus see in particular A. Lippold, “Ursinus und Damasus,” *Historia* 14 (1965): 105–28; C. Pietri, *Roma Christiana: Recherches sur l’Église de Rome, son organisation, sa politique, son idéologie de Miltiade à Sixte III (311–440)*, BÉFAR, 224 (Rome, 1976), 2:237–68, 407–31, “Damase évêque de Rome,” in *Saecularia Damasiana: Atti del Convegno Int. per il XVI centenario della morte di papa Damaso I, 11-12-384–12-12-1984*, Studi di antichità cristiana, 39 (Vatican City, 1986), 29–58, later published in C. Pietri, *Christiana Respublica: Éléments d’une enquête sur le christianisme antique*, CÉFR, 234 (Rome, 1997), vol. 1, 49–76; C. Carletti, s.v. “Damasus, Santo,” *Enciclopedia dei Papi*, vol. 1 (Rome, 2000), 349–71; J. Curran, *Pagan City and Christian Capital: Rome in the Fourth Century* (Oxford, 2000), 140.

44. One could suppose that these *quadrigarii* and *arenarii* had been recruited in the X *Regio*, around the *domus* of Damasus’ father, Antonius (secretary [*exceptor*], then deacon [*levita*], and finally priest [*sacerdos*] in the Roman Church: *Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae*, vol. 2, p. 135, no. 7, and p. 151, no. 23; see also below, n. 46), in the Campus Martius not far from the *theatrum Pompeii*—which was not a circus, in

occupied by the partisans of Damasus after they had slaughtered the *fideles* of Ursinus.⁴⁵ It is worthwhile to underscore that neither Damasus (who was born in Rome from a *petit bourgeois* family)⁴⁶ nor his official supporters were rich enough to hire these armed bands of clients. Also, a few years before, the pro-Constantinian senators supporting Nepotianus—the son of Eutropia, sister of Constantine, proclaimed Augustus in June 350 against Magnentius—made use of *perditi*, gladiators (μονομάχοι), and bodyguards (δορυφόροι) during the disorders that broke out in Rome on this occasion.⁴⁷

Ammianus, in his turn, speaks of this affair, and does not fail to point out the complex intricacies of the interests involved in it.⁴⁸ Jerome, the faithful

any case, and was later transformed by the Pope himself into the *titulus Damasi in Prasino* (a building with parish functions: see Damasus *Epigramma* 57; *Prosopographie chrétienne du Bas-Empire*, vol. 2 [Italie 313–604], dir. C. Pietri and L. Pietri, ed. J. Desmulliez, C. Fraisse-Coué, É. Paoli-Lafaye, C. Pietri, L. Pietri, and C. Sotinel, vol. 1 [A–K] [Rome, 1999], s.v. “Antonius” 1, 160). However, the very fact that the *quadrigarii* and *arenarii* are listed next to the *fossore*s among the *perditi* recruited in support of Damasus seems to suggest rather a provenance from an area *extra moenia* like the *ager Vaticanus*, where pagan and Christian cemeteries mingled with “entertainment” buildings such as the *Circus Gaii et Neronis* and the *Circus Hadriani* (where the horse races of charioteers became more frequent, especially from the time of Elagabalus on): for a thorough examination of sources see L. Cracco Ruggini, “Elagabalo, Costantino e i culti ‘siriaci’ nella *Historia Augusta*,” in *Historiae Augustae Colloquium Parisinum 1990*, ed. G. Bonamente and N. Duval (Macerata, 1991), 123–46, esp. p. 145 with n. 56, and “Spazi urbani,” esp. pp. 172–73 with n. 53.

45. *Gesta* 7, CSEL 35, pp. 2–3.

46. The *Liber pontificalis*: 39: *Damasus* (366–384), ed. L.-M. O. Duchesne (Paris, 1886–92; anastatic reprint, Paris, 1981), 1:212–15, in the sixth century, maintains that the Pope dedicated *nova tecta* to Christ as a votive offering to St. Lawrence; evidently the enterprise had been financed with Damasus family income, which amounted to 250 *solidi* a year assured by estates in the territory of Ferentinum and Cassinum and by a bath close to the paternal house in Rome. We can realize the modest size of such properties by comparing their rent with that of contemporary senatorial estates, which amounted to many thousand *solidi*: for example, Olympiodorus (frag. 42.2, ed. R. C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire: Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus, and Malchus* [Liverpool, 1983], vol. 2 [text, translation, and notes], 204–7) attests that around the end of the fourth century c.e. many senators in Rome enjoyed an annual income of 288,000 *solidi* together with other revenues in kind, while other families had no less than 108,000/72,000 *solidi*; in 443–45 the *patrimonium* of the *praepositus sacri cubiculi* Lauricius, only in Sicily, assured an annual income of 2,175 *solidi*, as revealed by a papyrus of Ravenna (Marini 73 = *Pap.* 1, ed. J.-O. Tjäder, *Die nichtliterarischen Papyri Italiens aus der Zeit 445–700*, vol. 1 [Lund, 1955]), 168–79; L. Ruggini, *Economia e società nell’Italia Annonaria: Rapporti fra agricoltura e commercio dal IV al VI secolo d. C.* (Milan, 1961, reprinted with a new *Introduzione*, *Bibliografia di Lellia Cracco Ruggini*, *Errata-corrige*, *Appendice con rettifiche*, *Appendice bibliografica*, “Munera,” *Studi Storici sulla Tarda Antichità* dir. da D. Vera, 2 [Bari, 1995]), p. 108 with n. 282, p. 558, “La Sicilia fra Roma e Bisanzio,” in *Storia della Sicilia*, dir. R. Romeo, vol. 3 (Naples, 1980), 1–96, esp. pp. 69–70 with nn. 65–68.

47. Zos. 2.43.2, ed. F. Paschoud, vol. 1, *Collection Budé* (Paris, 2000), 114–15 (text), 268–69 (commentary at n. 56); Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 42.6; *Epit. de Caes.* 42.3 (*hortantibus perditi*); Eutr. 10.11.2; Oros. 7.29.11; Socrates *Hist. eccl.* 2.25, *GCS* p. 134; Sozom. *Hist. eccl.* 4.1.2, *GCS* p. 140.

48. 27.3.14: *neque ego abnuo, ostentationem rerum considerans urbanarum, huius rei cupidos ob impetrandum quod appetunt, omni contentione laterum iurgare debere, cum id adepti, futuri sint ita securi, ut duntur oblationibus matronarum procedantque vehiculis insidentes, circumspice vestiti, epulas curantes profusas, adeo ut eorum convivia regales superent mensas. qui esse poterant beati re vera, si magnitudine urbis despecta, quam vitii opponunt, ad imitationem antistitem quorundam provincialium viverent, quos tenuitas edendi potandique parcellissime, vilitas etiam indumentorum, et supercilia humum spectantia, perpetuo numini, verisque eius cultoribus ut puros commendant et verecundos. I do not believe that *omni contentione laterum* must be translated “with the exercise of all their strength,” or “de toute la force de leurs pounoms,” or “con tutte le loro forze,” “con tutte le loro energie” (see editions by J. C. Rolfe, *Loeb Classical Library* [London and Cambridge, Mass., 1939], 3:21; M.-A. Marié, *Collection Budé* [Paris, 1984], 5:111; A. Selem, *Classici latini UTET* [Turin, 1985], 813; M. Caltabiano [Milan, 1989], 659; and also J. Viansino, *Ammiani Marcellini Lexicon* [Hildesheim, 1985], 2:13–14). In my opinion it would be preferable to translate *latera* as “supporters,” that is, slaves: this word used in metonymy not only sounds more*

secretary of Damasus, seems to support him when he refers to Vettius Agorius Praetextatus (the same pagan aristocratic prefect who had succeeded in sedating the bloody tumults of 367–68), and is indignant that Praetextatus later used to talk ironically with the Pope himself about his victory, evidently judging these conflicts among Christians to be mere struggles for power: “elect me bishop of Rome and I will become a Christian at once,” as he enjoyed saying.⁴⁹

From the beginning, the Trastevere area had been the ancient heart of the Christian community in Rome, both among the populace and among the *peregrini* of more or less transient residence in the urban spaces. The *area Callisti* was, in fact, in the neighborhood of the present-day Santa Maria in Trastevere; the house in which Callistus, bishop of Rome (217–22 C.E.), was born and that in which he was martyred were both situated in the area where the sailors of the Ravenna fleet stationed in the *Urbs* were quartered (as the *Acta Callisti* remind us).⁵⁰ Furthermore, in the XIV *Regio* there were the *stabula* of the four *factiones* of the circus (Green, Blue, Red, White).⁵¹ Ammianus himself tells us how the aristocratic pagan Volusianus Lampadius, on the occasion of the praetorship (335–40 approximately),⁵² was “not able to put up with the uproar of the *plebs*, who went on repeating that many largesses were being made to unworthy people [that is to say, to non-*Romani domo Roma*]. So, in order to show his generosity and at the same time his contempt for the mob (*multitudo*), he had summoned some beggars (*egentes*) from the Vatican and had donated great wealth to them.”⁵³ It was a sensational and provocative gesture, which perhaps still in 384–85 formed the indirect and polemical target of the praise addressed by Symmachus to the memory of a great, dignified, and cultured pagan lord, Vettius Agorius

consistent with the general meaning of Ammianus' passage as a whole, but it is also widely attested, in particular by late-Latin sources such as Ambrose, Augustine, and Cassiodorus: see *TLL* and esp. [Plut.], *Institutio Traiani* (fourth century), in S. Desideri, *La Institutio Traiani*, Pubblicazioni dell'Istituto di Filologia Classica, Università di Genova, 12 (Genoa, 1958), 85 (*qui semper adisunt principes, lateribus assimulantur* [...]; see also p. 30); Gregorius Magnus, *Moralia in Iob.* 12.51, *CCSL* 143A, p. 659 ([...] *latera dicere divitum solemus hos quos eis coniunctos cernimus*).

49. *Contra Iohannem Hierosolymitanum* 8, *PL* 23, col. 361: [...] *homo sacrilegus et idolorum cultor* [sc. Praetextatus], *solebat ludens beato papae Damaso dicere: "Facite me Romanae urbis episcopum, et ero protinus christianus"*; L. Cracco Ruggini, *Il paganesimo romano fra religione e politica (384–394 d.C.): Per una reinterpretazione del Carmen contra paganos*, *Memorie dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Classe di Scienze Morali, Storiche e Filologiche*, s. 8, vol. 23, fasc. 1 (Rome, 1979), 1–144, esp. 18–23; more generally, V. Neri, *Ammiano e il cristianesimo: Religione e politica nelle Res gestae di Ammiano Marcellino* (Bologna, 1985), esp. 191–228; “Ammianus' Definition of Christianity As *absoluta et simplex religio*,” in *Cognitio Gestorum: The Historiographic Art of Ammianus Marcellinus, Proceedings of the Colloquium, Amsterdam 26–28 August 1991*, ed. J. Den Boeft, D. Den Hengst, and H. C. Teitler (Amsterdam, 1992), 59–65. The expression *pars Damasi* is used for example not only by the *Gesta*, but also by Jer. *Chron. ad annum* 366, *GCS* (*Eusebius Werke* 7, 1956²), 244–45 (*Damasiana pars*). Jerome had been in Rome as a student in 366, and later as faithful secretary of Pope Damasus (383–85); so, his version of the affair is far from sticking to the facts (like, in any case, all the orthodox tradition: see for example Rufinus *Hist. eccl.* 11 (2).10, *GCS* [*Eusebius Werke*, 2, 2], pp. 1017–18, and later Socrates *Hist. eccl.* 4.29, *GCS*, pp. 265–66).

50. A. Chastagnol, *La Préfecture urbaine à Rome sous le Bas-Empire* (Paris, 1960), 81–83.

51. G. Matthiae, *Le chiese di Roma dal IV al X secolo* (Bologna, 1962), 25–26.

52. *PLRE*, vol. 1, s.v. “C. Ceionius Rufius Volusianus signo Lampadius,” 978–80.

53. 27.3.6; L. Cracco Ruggini, “Dal *civis romano* al *civis cristiano*,” in *Storia vissuta del popolo cristiano*, dir. J. Delumeau, It. ed. F. Bolgiani (Turin, 1985), 123–50.

Praetextatus, "unable"—he writes—"to resort to indecorous manifestations of munificence."⁵⁴

In reality, many families among the world-famous aristocracy both pagan and Christian—the Symmachi,⁵⁵ the Lampadii,⁵⁶ the Anicii,⁵⁷ the *praefectus urbis* of 365–67, Viventius,⁵⁸ and the noble lady friend of the Aurelii whom Ambrose visited, presumably on the occasion of the council of 382⁵⁹—in the fourth century usually lived in dwellings located beyond the Tiber and increasingly formed links of clientship not only with the traditional Roman "populace" (*plebs*)—who often demonstrated against the "foreigners" in the *Urbs*, jealous of their own political privileges—but also with the *peregrini* resident in the public spaces of entertainment and cemeteries outside the walls.

The development and political role of this new type of clientship (not noted by Ammianus, or, for that matter, by scholars today) were to become especially visible later, between the fifth and sixth centuries—for example, during the contested election of Pope Symmachus (498–514 C.E.) and in the bloody tumults that exploded in 509 between the Greens and the Blues, instigated by some of the powerful clans of the Roman aristocracy in the first years of the reign of Theodoric. Cassiodorus, like Ammianus more than a century before him, made it clear that he considered these seditious events irrelevant and almost unworthy of the attention of the sovereign. But we can infer that things stood differently from the very provisions that Theodoric issued on that occasion (as many as six letters have survived) to repress the *contentiones crebrae* and the *seditiones turbulentae*. These troubles were provoked by an excessive passion for sport but, above all, were goaded on by some of the great aristocrats, who had unleashed a veritable war (*bellum*), sending into the fray armed bands of their *servi* and *familiares*, with consequent massacres among the *plebs*.⁶⁰

The *causae leves* (unimportant reasons) for these disturbances had to do with the choice of a new mime for the *Pars Prasina*, which, as custom

54. *Relat.* 12.3.

55. Amm. Marc. 27.3.3–4 (a splendid residence in Trastevere possessed by Avianius Symmachus—*praefectus urbis* in 364–65 and father of the orator—which later, in 374, was set on fire by Roman *cives* during a revolt). For another suburban residence of the Symmachi in the *ager Vaticanus* see Symmachus *Ep.* 6.58 and 7.21 (398 C.E.); A. Marcone, *Commento storico al libro VI dell'epistolario di Q. Aurelio Simmaco*, Biblioteca di Studi Antichi, 37 (Pisa, 1983), 58 (text), 206 (Italian translation), 138–39 (commentary).

56. Amm. Marc. 27.3.7–10 (suburban *domus* close to the Milvian Bridge north of Rome, where the Via Flaminia crossed the Tiber).

57. See Cracco Ruggini, "Spazi urbani," pp. 183–84 with n. 76.

58. *PLRE*, vol. 1, s.v. "Viventius," 972; the collar of a slave possibly possessed by our Viventius has been found in Trastevere, with the following inscription: *revoca me ad dominu(m) Viventium in ar(e)a Callisti*; see G. B. De Rossi, "Dei collari dei servi fuggitivi. . .," *Bullettino di Archeologia Cristiana*, n.s., 5 (1874): 41–67, esp. 49–50; A. Chastagnol, *Les Fastes de la préfecture de Rome au Bas-Empire* (Paris, 1962), no. 68, pp. 170–71.

59. Paulinus, *Vita Ambrosii* 10; L. Cracco Ruggini, "Il 397: L'anno della morte di Ambrogio," in *Nec timeo mori: Atti del Congresso Int. di Studi Ambrosiani nel XVI Centenario della morte di sant'Ambrogio, Milano, 4–11 aprile 1997*, ed. L. F. Pizzolato and M. Rizzi, *Studia Patristica Mediolanensia*, 21 (Milan, 1998), 5–29, esp. 19.

60. Cassiod. *Var.* 1.20; 27; 30; 31; 32; 33, *CCSL* 96, pp. 28–29, 34–40 (507/511 C.E.); see now R. Lim, "The Roman Pantomime Riot of A.D. 509," in *Humana sapit: Études d'Antiquité Tardive offertes à Lellia Cracco Ruggini*, ed. J.-M. Carrié and R. Lizzi Testa, *Bibliothèque de l'Antiquité Tardive*, 3 (Turnhout, 2002), 35–42 (largely in agreement with me on many salient points).

established, would then be subsidized by the court for the entertainment of the *populi* of Rome (namely, the factions).⁶¹ They were not meant—as Theodoric underlines—to foment disturbances (we are in a period when the two sole surviving factions of the Greens and the Blues, both in Rome and in Constantinople, included the supporters of every type of entertainment: theater, amphitheater, circus).⁶² Among the nobles who, as supporters of the Blues, had brought about massacres among the supporters of the Greens, Cassiodorus mentions Flavius Inportunus, consul of that year, and his brother Flavius Theodorus, both members of the proud family of the Decii, hostile to the “almost regal”⁶³ house of the Anicii. Theodoric/Cassiodorus deplores the fact that the behavior of these senators had obscured the splendor of their stock. He emphasizes the obligation never to carry out justice individually, but rather to turn to the urban prefect and then to respect his decisions (we may note, however, that the prefect responsible at that time was the aged nobleman Agapitus, who very probably was a member of the rival *gens Anicia*). Consequently, Theodoric establishes that a senator’s servants who were involved in the murder of free citizens should be tried, and that if their master was discovered to have ordered the violence, he should pay a fine of ten pounds of gold. Meanwhile the sovereign also exhorted the factions (*populi*)—and in particular the Greens, who seem to have come off worse in these encounters and had therefore appealed to the court—to seek moderation and concord. Furthermore, Theodoric entrusted two senators, the *virii illustres* Marcius Caelianus and Agapitus (then urban prefect), with the preparation of the case against the Decii who were responsible for the violence; he further charged another two *virii illustres* and *patricii*, Albinus Iunior and Flavius Avienus—both sons of the patron of the Greens, Flavius Basilius, and brothers of Inportunus and Theodorus—with the choice of the most suitable mime for the *Pars Prasina*.⁶⁴

61. Here I will dissociate myself from C. Pietri (“Le Sénat, le peuple chrétien et les partis du cirque à Rome sous le pape Symmaque [498–514],” *MÉFR* 78 [1966]: 123–39 = Christiana Respublica [n. 43 above], 2:771–87), who consistently takes the word *populi* in these letters of Cassiodorus to mean “éléments populaires”; the insistent use of the plural—*inania verba populorum, querela populorum, imminentes populi, laetitia populorum*, etc.—seems to me, in fact, to lead one to prefer the meaning “groups,” (“sports) factions” (cf. especially Cassiod. *Var.* 1.20.2: [. . .] *quoniam hoc introductum est, ut populi de colore vocitentur*), as, indeed, the *demoi* in the Byzantine world of that period. See Cracco Ruggini, “Clientele e violenze,” 37–47.

62. Alan Cameron, *Circus Factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium* (Oxford, 1976); Cameron, however, gives more space and attention to the Byzantine Orient and, like W. Górdziejew (1934) and J. Carcopino (1939), seems to exclude real political motivations in the violence of the sports factions; G. Dagron, “L’Organisation et le déroulement des courses d’après le ‘Livres des cérémonies,’” in *Travaux et mémoires*, 13 (Paris, 2000), 1–200 (only concerning Constantinople).

63. Cassiod. *Var.* 10.11 and 12, *CCSL* 96, pp. 394–96, in 535 C.E. (*Anicis quidem paene principibus pares aetas prisca progeniuit; familia toto orbe praedicata*); L. Cracco Ruggini, “Nobiltà romana e potere nell’età di Boezio,” in *Atti del Congresso Int. di Studi Boeziani*, Pavia, 5–8 ott. 1980 (Rome, 1981), 73–96, reprinted in “La parte migliore del genere umano”: *Aristocrazie, potere e ideologia nell’Occidente tardoantico*, ed. S. Roda (Turin, 1994), 105–40; “Gli Anicii a Roma e in provincia,” *MÉFRM* 100 (1988: *La Prosopographie: Problèmes et méthodes; Table Ronde, École Française de Rome*, 6–7 déc. 1985): 69–85.

64. *PLRE*, vol. 2, s.vv. “Fl. Agapitus” 3, 30–32; “Marcius Caelianus,” 247–48; “(? Faustus) Albinus iunior” 9, 51–52; “Fl. Caecina Decius Maximus Basilius iunior” 12, 217; “Fl. Inportunus,” 592; “Fl. Theodorus” 62, 1097–98; stemma of the Decii, 26, 1324; see also J. Moorhead, *Theoderic in Italy* (Oxford, 1992), 150–51.

What is striking in these measures is the prosopography. Albinus and Avienus were in fact members of the family of Decii and brothers of Theodorus and Inportunus, the instigators of the violence against the Greens. The *gens Decia*, in the person of Flavius Rufius Festus (consul in 472 and *prior senatus* in 483)⁶⁵ had been among the early supporters of Theodoric and had also guided the delegation that went to Constantinople in 490 seeking to obtain, first from Zeno and then from Anastasius, an official recognition of the regency and the sovereignty of the Ostrogothic king.⁶⁶ But in 498 the Decii had been very hostile to Pope Symmachus (whom in 501 they had accused of adultery), supporting instead the anti-Pope Lawrence, and also on this occasion causing massacres in the city.⁶⁷ The main supporters of the Pope had been the Anicii, in particular Anicius Probus Faustus Niger with his sons Avienus and Messala, as well as their relative Memmius Symmachus (later to fall victim to the suspicions of Theodoric in 525, soon after his son-in-law Severinus Boethius in 524).⁶⁸ An uncle of Albinus and Avienus, the *vir magnificus atque patricius* Caecina Mavortius Basilius Decius, in the very same years (between 507 and 511) asked Theodoric for funding to drain and bring under cultivation the marshlands around *Terracina* (*Decennovium*).⁶⁹ Anicius Faustus Niger was *praefectus praetorio* of Italy in 509–12, at the very time when the conflict between the Blues and Greens in Rome broke out and while another probable Anicius, Agapitus, was urban prefect (as noted above). And it was in those years that Anicius Faustus Niger became disliked by Theodoric, who even threatened him with a fine of fifty pounds of gold when he was accused of usurping property belonging to a certain Castorius. Theodoric openly accused him of being “a well-known intriguer.”⁷⁰ Thus, while in 502 Theodoric had been obliged to discard most of the accusations against Pope Symmachus, the accusers—the powerful Decii so loyal to the sovereign—had not been condemned. A few years later (509), in spite of the severe reprimand by the sovereign concerning the role of the two Decii in the tumult that had burst out among the circus factions in Rome, the fine of ten pounds of gold imposed on the Decii as the presumed instigators of the murders among the Greens seems insignificant when compared with that of fifty pounds of gold with which, at the same time, Anicius Faustus Niger was threatened because he was suspected

65. *PLRE*, vol. 2, s.v. “Fl. Rufius Postumius Festus” 5, 467–69 (the family of Rufius Postumius Festus was related to the Decii); G. Zecchini, “La politica degli Anici nel V secolo,” in *Atti del Congresso Int. di Studi Boeziani* (n. 63 above), 123–38.

66. Cracco Ruggini, “Nobiltà romana” (n. 63 above), p. 86 with n. 53, and p. 83 with n. 43.

67. *Liber pontificalis* 53: *Symmachus*, vol. 1, 260–68 Duchesne, esp. 261–62; G. Arnaldi, “Rinascita, fine, reincarnazione e successive metamorfosi del senato romano (secoli V–XII),” *Archivio della Società Romana di Storia Patria* 105 (1982): 5–56, esp. 26–27; T. Sardella, *Società, Chiesa e Stato nell'età di Teodoric: Papa Simmaco e lo scisma laurenziano* (Soveria Mannelli, Catanzaro 1996); “Simmaco e lo scisma laurenziano: Dalle fonti antiche alla storiografia moderna,” in *Il papato di San Simmaco (498–514): Atti del Convegno Int. di Studi, Oristano, 19–21 nov. 1998*, ed. G. Mele and N. Spaccapelo (Cagliari, 2000), 11–37; s.v. “Simmaco, santo,” *Enciclopedia dei Papi*, vol. 1 (Rome, 2000), 464–73; see also F. P. Rizzo, “Il papato di S. Simmaco (498–514),” in *Atti del Convegno Int. di Studi, Oristano, 19–21 nov. 1998*, 371–80.

68. *PLRE*, vol. 1, s.vv. “Fl. Anicius Probus Faustus iunior Niger” 9, 197–201; “Rufius Magnus Faustus Avienus iunior” 2, 192–93; “Fl. Ennodius Messala” 2, 759–60; “Q. Aurelius Memmius Symmachus iunior” 9, 1044–46.

69. Cassiod. *Var.* 2.32 and 33, *CCSL* 96, pp. 79–81; *CIL* 10.6850 = *ILS* 827, 6851–53.

70. Cassiod. *Var.* 3.20, *CCSL* 96, pp. 111–12 (*notus ille artifex*).

of embezzlement. Again at this time the role of the Decii as patrons of the Greens was reconfirmed in the persons of two brothers of the accused men themselves, and some years later, Flavius Inportunus and Flavius Theodorus took part in the delegation of Pope John I that Theodoric sent to the court of Constantinople in 525 C.E.

Behind all this it is possible to discern the complex intricacies of a clash of interest even within a single family, as well as rivalries among the Roman *gentes* that formed part of the senate (which had become smaller and smaller, especially since the time of Odoacer: nine families, with around thirty representatives at the most).⁷¹ In any case, on the basis of the material at our disposal, it seems to me an oversimplification merely to identify the *populus* and the *populares* of Rome, between the fifth and sixth centuries, with the Greens on the one hand, and the *clarissimi* (supported by their troops of servants and clients) with the Blues on the other, as Charles Pietri maintained in a contribution of 1966.⁷² The Blues are never openly mentioned by Cassiodorus with regard to the disturbances of 509, and in my opinion the motive was to alleviate the embarrassment of the favored Decii, who split into opposing groups for and against the Blues. In *Variae* 3.51, however, Cassiodorus explicitly names the Greens and the Blues in Rome as opposing groups of supporters of the circus: *transit Prasinus, pars populi maeret: praecedit Venetus, et potius turba civitatis affligitur* ("the Green chariot wins: a section of the people laments; the Blue leads, and, in their place, a part of the city is struck with grief").⁷³ It seems to me that the two expressions *pars populi* and *turba civitatis* represent here a simple expressive variation of the same concept, that of "faction" or "grouping of people," since one can hardly identify the Greens exclusively with "the citizen populace" (*turba civitatis*) and, even less, the Blues with the "popular faction" (*pars populi*). In fact, we have seen how nobles of importance such as the Decii remained linked to the *factio Prasina* through generations of patronage, while still at times sustaining what the *Veneti* desired, and, in the struggles during the papal elections, granting their support to the less "popular" of the two candidates. One gets the impression that in this age Blues and Greens in Rome presented a more or less similar social physiognomy, and that what really counted was the subtle and variable play of the aristocratic interests of their respective patrons.

Pietri, in his contribution of 1966, appears more convincing when—intent on tracing the deep reasons for the futile and oft-repeated outbreaks of hooliganism (or of "male bonding," to use an expression coined by social anthropologists)—he points out the link between the conflicts among the

71. A. Chastagnol, *Le Sénat romain sous le règne d'Odoacre: Recherches sur l'épigraphie du Colisée au V^e siècle* (Bonn, 1966). Now, however, a young epigraphist of the University of Rome "La Sapienza"—Silvia Orlandi, a pupil of Prof. Silvio Panciera—is carrying out a systematic revision of all the inscriptions already examined by Chastagnol, and has reached a number of new readings and partially diverging conclusions; her book is likely to be published soon.

72. "Sénat, peuple, et partis" (n. 61 above). Pietri examines the social composition of the two *partes*, confirming the deeply rooted opinion concerning the crystallization of the circus factions in Rome during the preceding centuries, as later in Constantinople.

73. The English translation of Cassiod. *Var.* 3.51 (CCSL 96, pp. 133–36, esp. 135 [507/511]) is that of S. J. B. Barnish (*Cassiodorus Variae* [Liverpool, 1991], 70).

“sports factions” and the “religious factions.” The latter had begun to clash a few years before, on the occasion of the schism of the anti-Pope Lawrence, whose consequences were to stretch down to the death of Pope Symmachus in 514. Pietri rightly emphasises how the priest Lawrence (a pious ascetic linked to the circles of the Christian aristocracy of the *Urbs*, among them the Decii)⁷⁴ seems almost to have played a secondary part as antagonist for the throne of Peter, which was occupied by the undoubtedly less refined Sardinian deacon Symmachus, who had support among the pagans, and finally emerged victorious thanks to massive support among the people (thus rather like Damasus with respect to Ursinus almost a century and a half earlier).⁷⁵

Barricaded at first in St. Peter's (in that Vatican area *extra moenia* that had also provided Damasus with his most active supporters), in 502 Pope Symmachus had organized a popular demonstration—followed by episodes of urban guerilla warfare—around the *basilica Sessoriana* (within the walls), in which the synod of the bishops of Italy met. However, it is not without significance that the hostility of certain senatorial nobles towards Pope Symmachus—who was supported, in his turn, by parts of the city *plebs*, as well as by those high-ranking nobles, the Anicii—was deplored not only by Ennodius (a provincial relative of the Anicii) in his *Libellus pro synodo* (503), but also by a series of apocryphal propaganda writings, prepared with an apologetic function, perhaps within the milieu of the Anicii themselves. Among these was the *Constitutum Silvestri*, in which the very name of the senate—*curia*—was etymologically linked with *cruor*, with an evident allusion to the urban violence fomented by the Decii against Pope Symmachus.⁷⁶

A clear thread thus joins the behavior of certain senatorial families described by Ammianus Marcellinus in the fourth century with that deplored by Ennodius between the fifth and sixth centuries. And the exploitation for political purposes of the circus factions by the great Roman families, who were entangled through the generations in feuds and conflict, seems evident. It lasted as long as the political importance and vitality of the senate of the *Urbs* lasted, that is, roughly, down to the age of Justinian. In this sense the political function of the “entertainment” factions in Rome between the fourth and sixth centuries appears the equivalent—though *in nuce*—of a historical phenomenon of great importance, namely, the role of the Blues and the Greens in Constantinople. In Constantinople, however, Blues and Greens were not in the service of the nobility, but rather in the service of the emperor and of his court of bureaucrats. Thus the Blues and Greens acquired an official dimension of a far greater and more enduring importance.

74. Even in this case with exceptions: Faustus Albinus Iunior, brother of Inportunus and Theodorus (see n. 64 above), was a supporter of Symmachus and not of Lawrence: as a matter of fact, he and his wife Glaphyra built a *basilica* in their *fundus Pacinianus*, asking Pope Symmachus to dedicate it to St. Peter.

75. See bibliography at n. 67.

76. Ennodius, *Libellus pro synodo*, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi, 7, 66–67 (503 C.E.); G. Zecchini, “I Gesta de Xysti purgatione e le fazioni aristocratiche a Roma alla metà del V secolo,” *Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia* 34 (1980): 60–74; Moorhead, *Theoderic* (n. 64 above), 236–40; Cracco Ruggini, “Due crisi,” 356.

In the *Libellus pro synodo* by Ennodius there thus appears a new personification of Rome, this time Christian. In it, the faults of certain of the *nobilitas*—already noted by Ammianus and here specifically referring to the Decii—are explicitly denounced as the downfall of ancient virtues: the *splendor sanguinis* can only reveal a degenerated nobility when it is accompanied by sin and foments discord. But, in contrast to that of Ammianus, Ennodius' denunciation intentionally reopens the question of the republican past of Rome itself. Ennodius claims that the Curii, the Torquati, the Camilli, the Fabii, the Decii (of course!) and the Scipiones had been useless for Rome. The glory of Rome is identified by him with its Christianization, with a transfiguration of the senate into an image of paradise, where those who hitherto had boasted of togas, of purple garments, of *curulia insignia*, and of euergetism, answered the call of God.

Thus we arrive at Pope Gregory the Great, perhaps an Anicius (in any case, the last known to us), and at his condemnation of those means that had been the traditional instruments of oppression used by the senatorial *ordo* (he follows here in St. Augustine's steps). In the *Homiliae in Hiezechihelēm*⁷⁷ the Pope, an ex-urban prefect, gave literary expression to sermons pronounced before the people years before (593), with the humility of a Christian but with the residual pride of the senator who had become *Dei consul*.⁷⁸ In the last chapters he invited the monks of St. Andrew Ad clivum Scauri to reflect on the *flagella caelestis iustitiae* that had fallen on the Roman senate and people, bearing them towards annihilation: "Where is the senate? Where are the people? [. . .] Were not its generals and chiefs like lions who run throughout the provinces and seize their prey, pitiless and deadly?" Rome seems to him to have become like a bald eagle, which has lost its plume (namely, the *populus*) and whose wing feathers have dropped since the *potentes* disappeared, these *potentes saeculi* "with which Rome ransacked the property of others," but which had long enabled it to fly at such a height.

The funeral lament of Pope Gregory thus saw in apocalyptic terms the ineluctable weakening of the Roman senate and of the people of the *Urbs* who relied on it. The senate had survived the disappearance of the Western emperors (which Gregory ostentatiously ignores) thanks to its power and arrogance; now the senators appeared decimated by the wars of "reconquest," set aside and oppressed first by the policies of the Gothic sovereigns and then by those of the Byzantine rulers. Gregory's lamentation and condemnation become the sublimation of the senate into a celestial *curia*, eternal through the eternity of the church.

Thus there disappeared the symbiosis between Roman senate and people (*senatus populusque Romanus*), a symbiosis that had grown between the

77. 2.6.22–24, *CCSL* 142, pp. 310–13 (sermons preached in 593 and published in 601); see esp. August. *De civ. D.* 4.4 and 15.4, *CCSL* 47, pp. 101–2, and 48, pp. 456–57.

78. The expression is to be found in the epitaph of the Pope in St. Peter's: cf. *Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres* I 990 = *Carm. Ep.* 761. On the essentially sacral interpretation of the Roman consular tradition in Gregory himself, cf. Gregorius Magnus, *Moralia in Iob.* 4.59, *CCSL* 143, pp. 203–4. More generally see P. Meyvaert, "Gregory the Great and the Theme of Authority," *Spode House Review* 3 (Dec. 1966): 3–12, later published in *Benedict, Gregory, Bede and Others*, by P. Meyvaert (London, 1977), essay 5.

fourth and fifth centuries by including the residents of the city and the suburbs, and that Ammianus Marcellinus had succeeded so well in “photographing” with an attentive lens. He failed, however, to perceive the intrinsic necessity, force, and function of such a symbiosis. But Ammianus was an intelligent historian, and not a prophet.

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