

Michael Hanaghan/David Woods (eds.): *Ammianus Marcellinus from Soldier to Author*. Leiden/Boston: Brill 2022 (Historiography of Rome and Its Empire 16). XII, 420 p. € 145.52/\$ 163.00. ISBN: 978-90-04-52529-0.

It has been fifteen years since the last publication of an edited volume devoted solely to Ammianus Marcellinus.¹ In that time, the great philological and historical commentary project by the team of Dutch scholars has reached a triumphant conclusion, and a series of monographs have expanded our appreciation of Ammianus' Latinity and literary qualities.² Among the latter, one should single out Gavin Kelly's ground-breaking book of 2008 on Ammianus' allusive practice, which exposes just how sophisticated and pervasive Ammianus' engagement with earlier Latin authors (of all genres) was. Against the backdrop of these recent trends in Ammianean scholarship, Michael Hanaghan and David Woods have produced a volume that returns focus to Ammianus' famous self-definition at the close of his work as a *quondam miles* ("a former soldier"), with particular emphasis on how Ammianus' career as a *protector domesticus* in the middle years of the fourth century may have affected the composition of his *Res Gestae* towards that century's end. The volume gathers twelve chapters, ten of which are revised versions of papers delivered at a conference at University College, Cork in 2018.

The editors, as they point out in their Preface (pp. VIII), have approached Ammianus from different perspectives – Woods as source for military history, and Hanaghan as an author of Latin prose. Both approaches are represented in the volume, and formally so. Part II and Part III are devoted re-

- 1 J. den Boeft/J. W. Drijvers/D. den Hengst/H. C. Teitler (eds.): *Ammianus after Julian. The Reign of Valentinian and Valens in Books 26–31 of the Res Gestae*. Leiden/Boston 2007 (Mnemosyne 289). Cf. also the volume jointly dedicated to Ammianus and Eusebius: Á. Sánchez-Ostiz (ed.): *Beginning and End. From Ammianus Marcellinus to Eusebius of Caesarea*. Huelva 2016 (Anejos de Exemplaria Classica. 7).
- 2 Commentary: J. den Boeft/J. W. Drijvers/D. den Hengst/H. C. Teitler: *Philological and Historical Commentary on Ammianus Marcellinus XXXI*. Leiden/Boston 2018, for which see U. Lambrecht in Plekos 20, 2018, pp. 467–475, URL: http://www.plekos.uni-muenchen.de/2018/r-ammianus_XXXI.pdf. Monographs: G. Kelly: *Ammianus Marcellinus. The Allusive Historian*. Cambridge 2008 (Cambridge Classical Studies); W. Vergin: *Das Imperium Romanum und seine Gegenwelten. Die geographisch-ethnographischen Exkurse in den Res Gestae des Ammianus Marcellinus*. Berlin/Boston 2013 (Millennium Studies 41); A. J. Ross: *Ammianus' Julian. Narrative and Genre in the Res Gestae*. New York 2016.

spectively to military history and literary analysis, though the two approaches often intertwine. In their brief Introduction (pp. 1–16), Michael Hagan and David Woods rehearse the familiar details of Ammianus' military career as they can be gleaned from the text itself – a *protector domesticus* in the service of Constantius II and then Julian, who, *inter alia* took part in the suppression of Silvanus' usurpation in 355 and Julian's disastrous Persian expedition in 363. They sketch out some examples of how both his military career and his choice to write in a tradition of Latin historiographical prose affect various aspects of the *Res Gestae*. Their aim is to explore “the tension between Ammianus the former Roman soldier and Ammianus the highly educated author” (p. 4). In the case of military history, this tension could have negative results of ‘distortion’ or even falsification of facts (pp. 11–12). The editors, then, establish a strong dichotomy between competing identities for their Ammianus. The contributions that follow sometimes reinforce that division, other times call such a rigid separation into question.

Part I (“Ammianus' Text”) contains a single chapter by Gavin Kelly (“Why We Need a New Edition of Ammianus Marcellinus”, pp. 19–58), who is currently producing a new text of Ammianus for the Oxford Classical Texts series. His chapter offers a powerful demonstration of why a new critical edition is needed and an exposition of a major tool that he will use in its production. Ammianus' prose comprises a regular system of accentual clausulation (essentially an even number of unstressed syllables between the two final stressed syllables in each clause). This phenomenon has long been recognized, but the now-standard edition of Wolfgang Seyfarth³ failed to utilize its regularity in what is also a highly conservative text. Kelly intends to produce a traditional companion to accompany his edition and explain his editorial choices, but this chapter, with its concise and lucid overview of the manuscript tradition and the history of editing, together with a series of compelling case studies where the accentual system is deployed to solve a number of *crucis* and support new conjectures, essentially offers a *prolegomena* to that planned companion. Its accessibility to those not well-versed in textual editing is to be commended.

Part II (“Ammianus' Military Experience”, pp. 59–227) comprises five chapters, most of which use Ammianus' text as a source for aspects of military

3 W. Seyfarth (ed.): *Ammiani Marcellini Rerum gestarum libri qui supersunt*. 2 vols. Leipzig 1978 (Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana).

history. Four follow a similar approach in investigating how Ammianus' military service had made him attuned to various aspects of military culture – the status of protectors (Maxime Emion); the use of military slang (Philip Rance); the terminology for legions and other units (Conor Whately); the use of military oaths (Michael Wuk). All proceed on the assumption that this experience directly conditioned Ammianus' narrative, albeit with different degrees of intentionality.

Maxime Emion (“Ammianus and the *dignitas protectoris*”, pp. 61–82) takes a new approach to vexed questions of the status and organization of the *protectores domestici* (the staff officers whom Ammianus was enrolled under Constantius II in the 350s). He argues that they were not defined or identified merely by what they did, or how they were organised (into *scholae*); the *protector* was also a rank, a *dignitas*, carrying with it social prestige derived from its symbolic proximity to the emperor. Ammianus' cognizance – even defensiveness – of this prestige, according to Emion, explains his criticisms of those who challenged or undermined it, including his attacks on the traitor protector Antoninus in Books 18 and 19.

Philip Rance (“*Simplicitas militaris*: Ammianus Marcellinus and *sermo castrensis*”, pp. 83–139) offers a fascinating discussion of Ammianus' use of *sermo castrensis* – slang terms that originated in the military. Rance treats Ammianus' text akin to testimonia that preserve fragments of otherwise lost literary works – and as in the case of literary fragments, Ammianus' preservation of *sermo castrensis* can be both explicitly marked and implicitly deployed. In many cases, Ammianus does not make it difficult to identify such terminology, often drawing explicit attention to the fact that phrases such as *caput porci* (“pig's head” – slang for a wedge-shaped infantry formation) belong to *simplicitas militaris* (“the soldier's simple parlance”). But Rance argues for the identification of other terms as *sermo castrensis* that are not so heavily flagged, including Germanic loan words, and some military slang that Ammianus does not gloss at all (*lixa* “victualer”). After an introductory discussion of the history of scholarship on *sermo castrensis*, Rance takes a rather catalogue-like approach to each term, discussing its appearance in other texts (often Vegetius is the sole other late antique author to use them). His list is not long, Rance identifies ten terms in total, but he concludes that cumulatively, Ammianus uses such terminology more than other classicising historians, and that the phenomenon was not simply a reflex of his earlier career: Ammianus wanted his prose to be peppered with such terms, yet also distanced

himself from them (and aligned himself with a non-military readership) by way of those somewhat derogatory attributions to military *simplicitas* and crude soldierly language. Some further discussion of the significance to patterns of glossing would have been welcome: why did Ammianus draw attention to some terms and use others as if they were already familiar to his narratees?

Conor Whately (“Ammianus’ Identification of Named Legions and Its Literary Significance”, pp. 140–169) likewise investigates military terminology. Whately’s concern is largely the accuracy of Ammianus’ identification of and terminology for legions, as well as their disposition during military campaigns. The absence of external information makes this a challenging task, as Whately admits, but where corroborating evidence exists, Ammianus is deemed largely correct, even if he is often vague about the precise numbers or names of legions deployed in locations or campaigns that feature in the narrative. Whately notes that Ammianus probably had the information at hand to be more precise even if he chose not to use it; his general vagueness (in *not* saying how many or which legions were involved in a particular campaign) is attributed by Whately to Ammianus’ need to follow a historiographical tradition which eschewed such level of military detail.

Michael Wuk (“*Religionibus firmis iuramenta constricta?* Ammianus and the *sacramentum militiae*”, pp. 170–203) argues that Ammianus is distinct from other late Roman authors in depicting military oaths not just as means of communicating loyalty to the emperor, but also of fostering corporate identity among the troops. Ammianus then draws attention to the swearing of oaths at important junctures in the narrative, especially the usurpations of Julian and Procopius to pass judgement on the (il)legitimacy of imperial claimants.

In a rather different model to the preceding chapters in this Part, Jeroen Wijnendaele (“Ammianus on Mallobaudes and Magnus Maximus: A Response to Theodosian Discourse?”, pp. 204–227) provides a demonstration of how to use Ammianus as a source for prosopographical military history. He highlights the challenges and limitations of trying to tell a story that Ammianus himself was only partially interested in: Wijnendaele charts the career of Mallobaudes, for whom Ammianus is our only source, and who appears fleetingly in Ammianus’ narrative. He is defined as both a *comes domesticorum* (a senior commander in charge of the Roman household troops) and *rex Francorum* (a local ruler of the Franks). In Wijnendaele’s reconstruction of his career, Mallobaudes resorted to a Frankish tribal position during a period

when he lost his Roman command, and is the earliest example of a phenomenon of coming and going from the Roman army that is better documented in the fifth century. Ammianus' interest in Mallobaudes' later fate is used by Ammianus to pass comment allusively on contemporary politics at his time of writing, and the usurpation of Magnus Maximus in particular.

For a scholar who has railed against the literary turn in ancient historiography, it may have come as a surprise to Ted Lendon to find his chapter ("The Face of Convention: Battle and Siege Description in Ammianus Marcellinus", pp. 231–261) placed at the head of Part III ("Ammianus' Literary Aims and Models", pp. 229–402).⁴ Lendon offers a corrective to scholars such as Kimberly Kagan and Noel E. Lenski who argued that Ammianus' narratives of battle and sieges are unique among ancient authors in offering an early example of the 'face-of-battle' style (a type of modern historiographical style that foregrounds the experience of ordinary soldiers over a command-centred narrative). For Kagan especially, Ammianus' earlier career and sympathy for fellow soldiers influenced his choice of style. Lendon instead argues that features such as focus on the sights and sounds of conflict, and the emotions of the combatants can be found in earlier historians and in other genres such as epic. Ammianus' narrative of set-piece battles and sieges is thus more traditional than usually thought. In counterpoint, Ammianus stands out for his campaign narrative. Lendon draws attention to an often-overlooked aspect of Ammianus' military narrative (set-pieces such as Amida, Strasbourg and Hadrianople have tended to attract modern scholars). But he does not acknowledge the equation between Ammianus' military career and his supposed proto-'face-of-battle' style for which earlier scholars had argued. Having broken that equation, and as the first contributor after Part II, in which most chapters argued Ammianus' experience directly affected his narrative, it would have been useful to learn Lendon's view on what role, if any, Ammianus' experience of Amida or the Persian campaign of 363 played in shaping narrative choices.

Álvaro Sánchez-Ostiz ("The Literary Function of Ammianus' Criticisms of Military *luxuria*", pp. 262–286) likewise argues for the effects of literary tradition upon Ammianus' narrative, in this case moralizing historiography,

4 J. E. Lendon: *Historians without History: Against Roman Historiography*. In: A. Feldherr (ed.): *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Historians*. Cambridge/New York 2009 (Cambridge Companions to Literature), pp. 41–62. Lendon is one of the two contributors who did not participate in the Cork conference.

in which condemnation of *luxuria* in military contexts (ill-discipline and distaste for hard work) is a common reframe. Ultimately Sánchez-Ostiz argues that Ammianus may have imitated criticism of *luxuria* found in his historiographical predecessors, but he puts it to discreet use in his narrative, reinforcing wider negative depictions of certain individuals (especially Constantius II). For Sánchez-Ostiz, there is a tension between “literary aims and military realism” (p. 282).

Sigrid Mratschek [“*Coturni terribilis fabula* (Amm. Marc. 28.6.29): The Goddess of Justice and the Death of Theodosius the Elder”, pp. 287–324] offers a revised, English version of her German article published in Den Boeft et al.’s edited volume of 2007.⁵ She argues for a tragic metanarrative in Book 28 and the final books of the *Res Gestae* in which Count Theodosius (father of Theodosius I, emperor at the time of Ammianus’ composition) is presented as a heroic figure, whose downfall (albeit not directly narrated by Ammianus) after the successful suppression of a north African rebellion is presented as a tragic anagnorisis. The personified figure of Justice, who is invoked at various points throughout this narrative, reinforces the tragic colouring of the narrative. Mratschek draws attention to a broad generic intertext in the very fabric of Ammianus’ prose.

Moysés Marcos (“*Ille ut fax uel incensus malleolus*: Ammianus and His Swift Narration of Julian’s Balkan Itinerary in 361 CE”, pp. 325–356) likewise explores Ammianus’ manipulation of military narrative, albeit through omission as much as carefully crafted metanarrative. Ammianus’ account of Julian’s campaign through the Balkans in 361 is presented as swift and triumphant, following traditional panegyric tropes. Marcos argues that by concentrating on Julian’s positive reception in certain cities en route (especially Sirmium), Ammianus avoided narrating awkward encounters with hostile populations and defenders in places such as Serdica and Heraclea. Marcos’ Ammianus is a highly distorting narrator of military campaigns (in counterpoint to Lendon’s more detail-orientated guide).

The two final chapters deal with intertextuality at what might be described as a ‘macro’ level – not the close lexical allusion that have been the typical

5 S. Mratschek: *Et ne quid coturni terribilis fabulae relinquerent intemptatum ...* (Amm. Marc. 28.6.29). Die Göttin der Gerechtigkeit und der comes Romanus. In: J. den Boeft/J. W. Drijvers/D. den Hengst/H. C. Teitler (eds.): *Ammianus after Julian* (note 1), pp. 245–270.

fodder of intertextual studies of earlier Latin literature (by the likes of Richard F. Thomas or Stephen Hinds) and applied to Ammianus by Kelly,⁶ but broader thematic or structural allusions. And unlike Mratschek, who argues for broad generic allusions to tragedy, both final chapters argue for more precise allusions to single authors of historiography. Agnese Bargagna and Guy Williams are to be commended for their conscious attempts to find new ways of analyzing Ammianus' engagement with literary predecessors, but in each case, the argument required more development than could be granted it in a short chapter. Agnese Bargagna ["The Depiction of the Common Soldier (*miles*) in Ammianus and Tacitus and the Intertextual Background of the *Res gestae*", pp. 357–376] argues that Ammianus' depiction of the common soldier (*miles*) is broadly modelled on that of Tacitus, especially in both authors' focus on details such as soldierly psychology, and their proclivity for *seditio*. Bargagna is right to look for broad parallels between these two authors, as Ammianus' choice to begin his narrative at the point at which Tacitus ends (the year 96 CE) was itself an intentional macro-intertext. But the discussion of *miles* would have benefitted from further comparisons with other historians to show that these parallels are unique to Ammianus and Tacitus, especially in light of Lendon's argument in an earlier chapter that focus on psychology (one of Bargagna's points of contact) was in fact a topos of military narrative more generally.

Guy Williams ("Xenophon and Ammianus: Two Soldier-Historians and Their Persian Expeditions", pp. 377–402) examines parallels between Xenophon's *Anabasis* and Ammianus' narrative of Julian's Persian campaign in books 22–25. The two episodes are naturally comparable – both comprised marches into and out of Persia, the death of principal commanders, and the participation of each respective historian. At the heart of this chapter are some striking correspondences – in the content of commanders' speeches, for example (pp. 386–387) – but Williams could have been clearer about the status of these allusions or parallels. In his text, he backs away from claiming Ammianus directly knew Xenophon or modelled his narrative on the *Anabasis*, suggesting any parallels may be coincidental. Yet section titles such as "How Ammianus Recasts Julian's Persian Expedition as a Xenophontic March" (p. 380) imply a greater degree of intentionality. Concluding remarks

6 Cf. G. Kelly: The Sphragis and Closure of the *Res Gestae*. In: J. den Boeft/J. W. Drijvers/D. den Hengst/H. C. Teitler (eds.): Ammianus after Julian (note 1), pp. 219–241.

about how Ammianus uses his narrative as discourse on Julian's dual Roman-Greek identity are thought-provoking, but first required the establishment of a more secure intertextual foundation.

Almost half a century has passed since monographs devoted to Ammianus as a military historian were in vogue.⁷ This volume represents a significant change in approaches to military history and military texts since then. Here the study of the social and psychological aspects of warfare takes precedence over analysis of commanders, equipment, or set-piece conflicts. Above all, the effects of the literary turn are felt throughout, even in Part II all the chapters are aware of Ammianus' abilities to shape his representation of reality. The editors have assembled an impressive set of essays that showcase the complexity of Ammianus' military material, and the multiple influences that shape his presentation of military life, campaigns, and culture. All that is missing are some concluding remarks from the editors themselves about how they see the 'tension' of their introduction playing out. As many of their contributors show, these Ammianus military experience and his skills as an author of Latin prose combine in creative fusion as much as they are in conflict with one another.

- 7 G. A. Crump: *Ammianus as a Military Historian*. Wiesbaden 1975 (*Historia-Einzelschriften* 27); N. Bitter: *Kampfschilderungen bei Ammianus Marcellinus*. Bonn 1976 (*Habelts Dissertationsdrucke. Reihe Klassische Philologie* 23); N. J. E. Austin: *Ammianus on Warfare. An Investigation into Ammianus' Military Knowledge*. Brussels 1979 (*Collection Latomus* 165).

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