

*Dicta et Visa: Rhetorical Strategies
in Ammianus's Res Gestae*

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It has long been argued by scholars of Late Antiquity that rhetoric was a powerful and multi-functional tool with which authors forged the cultural, political and religious identity of their characters.¹ Furthermore, contemporary trends in the study of late antique historiography are helping us to re-assess the real importance of rhetoric in the composition of historiographical works.² This tendency has strengthened the existing bonds between these two literary genres and at the same time has opened new avenues of research. In this regard, Ammianus Marcellinus has gained a reputation as an author notable for his ability to compose a monumental historiographical work in a non-native language (i.e., Latin), a fact duly emphasized in countless scholarly works.³ In fact, his work evidences that he managed to create his own language, a sort of meta-vocabulary rich in metaphors and with an imagery embedded with literary motifs readapted from the Classical legacy whose use in the late antique literary milieu was abundant.⁴ In this sense, his frequent comparisons between animals and men, his ability to link supernatural events with political situations, or his tendency to use paradoxographical passages when discussing important issues show an awareness of how to utilise various literary mechanisms depending on the circumstances.⁵

¹ Part of this work was delivered at the International Conference “Beginning and End: from Ammianus Marcellinus to Eusebius of Caesarea” (Pamplona, 12-13 December 2013). I would like to thank everyone who attended the conference – especially Prof. Sánchez-Ostiz – for their valuable suggestions. Research for this paper received financial support from the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (Research Group FFI2012-32012 “La teatralización de la retórica y el establecimiento de un canon en la literatura griega y latina en la Antigüedad tardía”).

² See especially M. S. Kempshall, *Rhetoric and the Writing of History, 400-1500*, Manchester 2011 and P. van Nuffelen, *Orosius and the Rhetoric of History*, Oxford 2012.

³ See for instance, G. Kelly, “Ammianus’s Greek Accent”, *Ταλάντα: Proceedings of the Dutch Archaeological and Historical Society* 45, 2014, 69-72.

⁴ P. M. Camus, *Ammien Marcellin: témoin des courants culturels et religieux à la fin du IVe siècle*, Paris 1967, 35-50.

⁵ G. Sabbah, *La méthode d’Ammien Marcellin : Recherches sur la construction du discours historique dans les Res Gestae*, Paris 1978, 552-6.

Likewise, Ammianus paid particular attention to other types of rhetorical devices that are illustrative of his literary skills to bring different episodes of his narration to life, and which provide us with information regarding the *ethos* of some of the characters of his work.⁶ Although some authors have considered his stylistic preferences to be excessively flamboyant,⁷ references to characters' clothing, their gaze or way of walking should be revisited as elements that the historian scrutinized and used to reveal the personality of some of the actors of his work.

Therefore, the aim of my contribution will be to analyse how the historian resorted to and integrated different rhetorical strategies that contributed to shaping the historiographical programme of his *Res Gestae*, and to describing the *Zeitgeist* of the fourth century AD. First, I will focus on Ammianus's emphasis on presentational aspects of characters and places, which reveals a literary plan intended to cover all angles of the communication process, especially those related to the rhetorical concepts *ekphrasis* and *enargeia*. Second, I will examine accounts of rhetorical deliveries, which are highly revealing of Ammianus's strategies to characterize the actors of his work. In this sense, *actio* – rhetorical delivery – will be broadly understood in Ammianus's narrative, including not only rhetorical aspects *stricto sensu* but also techniques that fall into the category of communication and presentational strategies. This understanding of *actio* requires that my approach to rhetorical deliveries will not confine its boundaries only to speech acts, but will also comprise other aspects that caught Ammianus's attention, such as physiognomy, emotions, clothing or walking.

1. BRINGING EVENTS VIVIDLY BEFORE YOUR EYES

Ekphrasis and *enargeia* are two rhetorical devices that have attracted much scholarly attention in recent decades due to their frequent usage in compositions of several different literary genres.⁸ The concepts were often treated as synonymous⁹ and refer to the ability to describe people, objects

⁶ Id., *La méthode*, 375–411.

⁷ M. Martínez Pastor, “Amiano Marcelino, escritor romano del siglo IV. Perfil literario”, *EClas* 102, 1992, 102–3: “La retórica, por otra parte, aparece en las *Res Gestae* en primer plano de forma casi hiriente para nosotros (...) El resultado de tal recargamiento de elementos retóricos es a veces la afectación o hinchazón”.

⁸ See especially A. Manieri, *L'immagine poetica nella teoria degli antichi. Phantasia ed enargeia*, Pisa-Roma 1988; N. Otto, *Enargeia: Untersuchung zur Charakteristik alexandrinischer Dichtung*, Stuttgart 2009; R. Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice*, Farnham 2009, 87–106; P. Zanker, “Enargeia in the Ancient Criticism of Poetry”, *RhM* 124, 1981, 297–311.

⁹ On the specific differences of *ekphrasis* and *enargeia*, see Manieri, *L'immagine poetica nella teoria degli antichi. Phantasia ed enargeia*, 123–4, 49–54; Zanker, “Enargeia”, 298. For a brief list of definitions of *ekphrasis*, see F. J. D'Angelo, “The Rhetoric of Ekphrasis”, *JAC* 18, 1998, 439–47; Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 1.

or situations in a very lively fashion and with great detail so the audience or the reader feel as though they are actually contemplating the situation.¹⁰ Although the appearance and treatment of *ekphrasis* as a literary device in rhetorical treatises was not customary until the first century AD,¹¹ the works of Theon, Hermogenes or Aphthonius provide us with an almost identical definition in which the term *ekphrasis* is predominant over *enargeia*,¹² with the latter an integral element of the former.¹³ From a rhetorical and stylistic point of view, the classical sources define both concepts as methods of placing a scene or a description before the audience's eyes,¹⁴ yet what interests us for the purposes of this paper is the aim of these literary devices when deployed in a historiographical work. In her punctilious work, Manieri argues that “mediante l'ένόργεια, infatti, la ‘mediazione’ dello storico deve ridursi al minimo, in modo tale che i fatti stessi sembrino presentati alla vista di chi ascolta o legge”.¹⁵ The following examples of the use of *ekphrasis* and *enargeia* in Ammianus's *Res Gestae* will establish to what extent Manieri's judgment can be applied to the historian's work.

MacMullen's multidisciplinary and rigorous study of Ammianus's literary technique in portraying and describing scenes emphasizes that the historian was skilful enough to transform his work into the perfect setting for his opinion about the *Zeitgeist* of the fourth century AD to take form.¹⁶ Among the plethora of literary features to which the historian resorted, two stand out: first, Ammianus brought into play numerous physical descriptions that acted as identity markers that contributed to complement his opinion of the main characters of his work. In this sense, Ammianus was highly indebted to physiognomy, turning to it often when characterizing both physically

¹⁰ On the subjects of *ekphrasis*, see J. Elsner, “The Genres of *ekphrasis*”, *Ramus* 31, 2002, 1-18, 1-2.

¹¹ Zanker, “Enargeia”, 305.

¹² As Manieri, *L'immagine poetica nella teoria degli antichi. Phantasia ed enargeia*, 150 points out, in the imperial period *enargeia* “appare anzi come qualità discriminante tra la διήγησις e l' έκφρασις”. Otto, *Enargeia: Untersuchung zur Charakteristik alexandrinischer Dichtung*, 131 places a stronger emphasis on ένόργεια: “Denn einer Wahrnehmung, die das Konkret-Eigentümliche, Partikulare hinreichend berücksichtigt, kommt ένόργεια zu. Genauso verhält es sich in bezug auf die Literatur: Ein in Detail gehender Text ist έναργές. Sowohl die philosophische als auch die rhetorische ένόργεια verlangt die Konzentration auf das Partikulare”.

¹³ Theon 2.118.7-8: “Έκφρασις έστι λόγος περιηγηματικός έναργώς ύπ' όψιν άγων τó δηλούμενον; Hermog. 2.16.10.1: “Έκφρασις έστι λόγος περιηγηματικός, ώς φασιν, έναργής και ύπ' όψιν άγων τó δηλούμενον; Aphth. 10.36.22: “Έκφρασις έστι λόγος περιηγηματικός ύπ' όψιν άγων έναργώς τó δηλούμενον.

¹⁴ See especially D.H., *Lys.* 7; *Thuc.* 22-23; Ad Heren. 4.39.51; Cic. *Ac.* 2.17; *Part. Or.* 6.20; Quint. 6.2.32, 8.3.61ff, 9.2.40.

¹⁵ Manieri, *L'immagine poetica nella teoria degli antichi. Phantasia ed enargeia*, 158.

¹⁶ R. MacMullen, “Some Pictures in Ammianus Marcellinus”, *Art Bulletin* 46, 1964, 435-57.

and morally the characters of his *Res Gestae*.¹⁷ Note, for instance, how the description of Julian's and Jovian's physique and mannerisms supplements the historian's analysis of these emperors.¹⁸ Attention to the characters' clothing is also remarkable for its constant presence and its skilful insertion into the narration of events. For instance, when Gallus was deprived of his royal robes and was dressed in a tunic and a soldier's cloak (14.11.20), this change of clothing emphasized the dramatic tone of this most unpleasant journey for Gallus, which ended with his beheading. Ammianus's technique of portrayal, based on the depiction of clothing or physical descriptions,¹⁹ is related to the use of *ekphrasis* and *enargeia* in his work, which reveals his preoccupation with detail and vividness.

Second, *ekphrasis* and *enargeia* should be considered to be the rhetorical devices that offered Ammianus the most appropriate means to chronicle contemporary *mores* and contrast them with moralizing intentions. Thus, the representation of the trivial and superficial character of Roman society relies on a long ekphrastic passage that aims to contrast the reverential and almost lost "white hair of the senators and their authority" (14.6.6: *patrum reverenda cum auctoritate canities populique Romani*) with the whimsical and luxurious life-style of fourth century AD Rome, a place where cultural and political elites were more concerned with their appearance than with the affairs of State.²⁰ Ammianus's two long digressions on Rome present us with the debasement of the capital when compared to her glorious origins. Rome was no longer the city that had formed a pact with Virtus and Fortune (14.6.3: *foedere pacis aeternae Virtus convenit atque Fortuna*), nor the charming and inviting place that the historian likened to the land of the Lotus-eaters (14.6.21: *ut Homerici bacarum suavitate Lotophagi*). Rather, it had become a real bonfire of vanities (14.6.9):

¹⁷ See E. C. Evans, "Roman Descriptions of Personal Appearance in History and Biography", *HSCP* 46, 1935, 43-84; D. S. Rohrbacher, *The Historians of Late Antiquity*, London 2002, 103-9; S. Swain (ed.), *Seeing the Face, Seeing the Soul: Polemon's Physiognomy from Classical Antiquity to Medieval Islam*, Oxford 2007, and Castillo's contribution in this volume.

¹⁸ On Julian, 15.8.16: *cuius oculos cum venustate terribiles vultumque excitatius gratum diu multumque contuentes, qui futurus sit colligebant velut scrutatis veteribus libris, quorum lectio per corporum signa pandit animorum interna*; 22.14.3: *ridebatur enim ut Cercops, homo brevis, humeros extentans angustos et barbam prae se ferens hircinam, grandiaque incedens tamquam Oti frater et Ephialtis, quorum proceritatem Homerus in inmensum tollit*. On Jovian, 25.10.14: *Incedebat autem motu corporis gravi, vultu laetissimo, oculis caesiis, vasta proceritate et ardua, adeo ut diu nullum indumentum regium ad mensuram eius aptum inveniretur*. See also Sabbah, *La méthode*, 421-5.

¹⁹ R. F. Newbold, "Attire in Ammianus and Gregory of Tours", *Studia Humaniora Tartuensia* 6.4, 2005, 1-14.

²⁰ For an analysis of these digressions from a rhetorical point of view, see R. Pack, "The Roman Digressions of Ammianus Marcellinus", *TAPhA* 84, 1953, 181-9, who considers that Ammianus's criticism is based on the subversion of Menander the Rhetor's topics and on their conversion into *psogoi*.

Alii summum decus in carruchis solito altioribus et ambitioso vestium cultu ponentes sudant sub ponderibus lacernarum, quas in collis insertas iugulis ipsis annectunt, nimia subtegminum tenuitate perflabiles, expectantes crebris agitationibus maximeque sinistra, ut longiores fimbriae tunicaeque perspicue luceant varietate liciorum effigiatæ in species animalium multiformes.

Other men, taking great pride in the coaches higher than common and in ostentatious finery of apparel, sweat under heavy cloaks, which they fasten about their necks and bind around their very throats, while the air blows through them because of the excessive lightness of the material; and they lift them up with both hands and wave them with many gestures, especially with their left hands, in order that the overlong fringes and the tunics embroidered with party-coloured threads in multiform figures of animals may be conspicuous.

These ekphrastic lines are full of *enargeia* as their stylistic nature serves to accurately describe and realistically represent a common scene of late antique Rome.²¹

To Ammianus's eyes, therefore, Rome was then a city where luxury and superficiality were paraded,²² and where the vices and tendencies to vain spectacularity (and, sometimes, to a superficiality redolent of the Ciceronian *o tempora o mores*) were staged. In fact, his criticism of the Romans' fondness for the theatre, costume or architectural displays is itself based on references to the theatre in order to appeal to his audience's imagination. It should be noted that Ammianus knew how to satisfy his audience's thirst for theatricality since he narrated some events as if they happened in a theatre (18.5.6; 19.12.8; 26.6.15; 28.6.29; 29.1.38). The narration of the battle of Strasbourg, for example, is compared to the aquatic spectacles that were so frequent in Late Antiquity²³ (16.12.57):

Et velut in quodam theatriali spectaculo aulaeis miranda monstrantibus multa licebat iam sine metu videre nandi strenuis quosdam nescios adhaerentes, fluitantes alios, cum expeditioribus linquerentur ut stipites et velut luctante amnis violentia vorari quosdam fluctibus involutos, nonnullos clipeis vectos praeuptas undarum occursantium

²¹ On the qualities of *enargeia* for these purposes, see *Ad Heren.* 4.51; *Quint.* 4.2.63-64; 9.2.40-41.

²² See especially 14.6.17; 28.4.18, 19.

²³ On aquatic spectacles in the theatre, see A. Berland-Bajard, *Les spectacles aquatiques Romains*, Rome 2006; L. Miguélez-Cavero, "Espectáculos acuáticos en las *Dionisiacas* de Nono de Panópolis: ¿Reflejo de una realidad, ficción literaria o necesidad retórica?", in A. J. Quiroga Puertas (ed.), *Ἱερά και λόγος. Estudios de literatura y de religión en la Antigüedad Tardía*, Zaragoza 2001, 193-9.

moles obliquatis meatibus declinantes ad ripas ultiores post multa discrimina pervenire. spumans denique cruore barbarico decolor alveus insueta stupebat augmenta.

And just as in some theatrical scene, when the curtain displays many wonderful sights, so now one could without apprehension see how some who did not know how to swim clung fast to good swimmers; how others floated like logs when they were left behind by those who swam faster; and some were swept into the currents and swallowed up, so to speak, by the struggling violence of the stream; some were carried along on their shields, and by frequently changing their direction avoided the steep masses of the onrushing waves, and so after many a risk reached the further shores. And at last the reddened river's bed, foaming with the savages' blood, was itself amazed at these strange additions to its waters.

The realistic portrait of the casualties suffered by the German army is constructed with the detail and rhetorical prowess that an *ekphrasis* empowered by *enargeia* could offer. On this occasion, the precise description helps to stress the importance and dimension of the victory of the Caesar Julian over the Germans.²⁴

Another important event was related by Ammianus using an illustrative *ekphrasis*. The synesthetic description of Constantius's *adventus* to Rome is a passage replete with colours and sounds that prove that Ammianus knew how to do justice – in literary terms – to pompous scenes such as an emperor's arrival to the capital (16.10.6-7):

... insidebat aureo solus ipse carpento fulgenti claritudine lapidum variorum, quo micante lux quaedam misceri videbatur alterna. eumque post antegressos multiplices alios purpureis subtegminibus texti circumdedere dracones hastarum aureis gemmatisque summitatibus illigati hiatu vasto perflabiles et ideo velut ira perciti sibilantes caudarumque volumina relinquentes in ventum.

[Constantius] sat alone upon a golden car in the resplendent blaze of shimmering precious stones, whose mingled glitter seemed to form a sort of shifting light (...) he was surrounded by dragons, woven out of purple thread and bound to the golden and jewelled tops of spears, with wide mouths open to the breeze and hence hissing as if roused by anger.

²⁴ See also Sabbah, *La méthode*, 572-9.

In these lines, Ammianus seems to follow the rhetorical precepts that encouraged composing an *ekphrasis*²⁵ as a description of a scene by emphasising the sensorial elements of Constantius's *adventus*.²⁶

Together with his attention to sensorial innuendos (sounds, colours and odours are omnipresent in the *Res Gestae*) when presenting his characters and situations, the specific mention of real events as staged in the theatre contributed to highlighting the historian's rhetorical strategy, one which was supported by the usage of *ekphrasis* and *enargeia*, two rhetorical tropes central to the internal architecture of Ammianus's work that allowed him to narrate historical events, to paint "tableaux vivant", as MacMullen labelled them,²⁷ following deuterosophistic trends on the composition of ekphraseis.²⁸ These scenes owe a great deal to his intention to have an emotional impact on the audience, a key feature that Ammianus wanted his work to have. As Matthews put it,²⁹ Ammianus was "the eloquent witness of almost every aspect of the life and society of his times",³⁰ which reminds us that the lust for pomp and ceremony among late antique authors and audiences can hardly be overestimated.³¹

Ekphrasis and *enargeia* were supplemented by Ammianus's lexical choices, as the historian tried to be accurate and attentive when selecting verbs, prefixes and prepositions that could add further nuance that would provide a hint of what he wanted his words to depict.³² By blending an evocative use of these

²⁵ See especially Lucian of Samosata's instructions in his *Hist. Conscr.* 51: Τοιοῦτο δὴ τι καὶ τὸ τοῦ συγγραφέως ἔργον εἰς καλὸν διαθέσθαι τὰ πεπραγμένα καὶ εἰς δύναμιν ἐναργέστατα ἐπιδείξει αὐτά. καὶ ὅταν τις ἀκροώμενος οἴηται μετὰ ταῦτα ὄραν τὰ λεγόμενα καὶ μετὰ τοῦτο ἐπαινῆ, τότε δὴ τότε ἀπηκριβώται καὶ τὸν οἰκεῖον ἐπαινον ἀπέλιψε τὸ ἔργον τῷ τῆς ἱστορίας Φειδία.

²⁶ See E. Fournier, "The Adventus of Julian at Sirmium: The Literary Construction of Historical Reality", in R. M. Frakes, E. DePalma Digeser, J. Stephens (eds.), *The Rhetoric of Power in Late Antiquity: Religion and Politics in Byzantium, Europe, and the Early Islamic World*, London 2010, 13-45.

²⁷ MacMullen, "Some Pictures", 436-8.

²⁸ For the different traditions and types of *ekphrasis*, see D'Angelo, "The Rhetoric of Ekphrasis", 441-4.

²⁹ J. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus*, London 1989, 228.

³⁰ For a discussion of the implications of the concept of theatricality in the *Res Gestae*, see T. D. Barnes, *Ammianus Marcellinus and the Representation of Historical Reality*, Ithaca 1998, 14-5; MacMullen, "Some Pictures", 441-5. On theatricality in Ammianus's sources, A. J. Pomeroy, "Theatricality in Tacitus' Histories", *Arethusa* 39.2, 2006, 171-91.

³¹ Manieri, *L'immagine poetica nella teoria degli antichi. Phantasia ed enargeia*, 148-9: "Contemporaneamente, dunque, garantisce la bellezza e l' eleganza del discorso, rende più efficace la narrazione, partecipa alla persuasione e alla mozione degli affetti. Ogni classificazione che voglia limitarla ad un ambito ristretto, risulta dunque parziale e in contraddizione con le altre".

³² A. Chauvot, "Détail et representation de la réalité dans les Res Gestae d'Ammien Marcellin", *Ktèma* 37, 2012, 227-37; I. Moreno Ferrero, "La escenografía del mal en Amiano Marcelino", (forthcoming).

rhetorical tropes with a careful selection of words, Ammianus constructed vivid scenes capable of showing us the grandeur (and miseries) of the fourth century Roman Empire. If our main concern is to follow the representation of the historical reality of Ammianus's work, then we must decolour the jewelled style that he employed and which was firmly rooted in late antique compositions.³³ However, if we regard Ammianus as a historian with his own views and tenets, we should follow the path of his glittering prose. It may be a slippery path, but it was Ammianus's choice in the composition of his work, and it reflects the literary taste of a society in which "all emotions appropriate to a scene must be fully expressed, violently, assertively, publicly."³⁴

2. RHETORIC AND PERFORMANCE

It is widely recognized that Ammianus Marcellinus's *Res Gestae* is full of anecdotes and *exempla* that have a profound and significant meaning, and which helped him to develop his historiographical programme. One of these anecdotes can be found in 27.3.1-2:³⁵

In oppido enim Pistoriensi, prope horam diei tertiam, spectantibus multis, asinus tribunali escenso audiebatur destinatus rugiens, et stupefactis omnibus, qui aderant quique didicerant referentibus aliis, nulloque coniectante ventura postea quod portendebatur evenit. Terentius enim, humili genere in urbe natus et pistor, ad vicem praemii, quia peculatus reum detulerat Orfitum ex praefecto, hanc eandem provinciam correctoris administraverat potestate.

In the town of Pistoria, at about the third hour of the day, in the sight of many persons, an ass mounted the tribunal and was heard to bray persistently, to the amazement both of all who were present and of those who heard of it from the reports of others; and no one could guess what was to come, until later the portended event came to pass. For one Terentius, born in that city, a fellow of low origin and a baker by trade, by way of reward because he had brought Orfitus, an ex-prefect, into court on the charge of embezzlement, held the position of governor in that province.

In another example of what we can call a "rhetoric of incompetence", the figure of the usurper Procopius is portrayed as suffering from stage fright (26.6.18) when he attempted to address the Roman senators:

³³ M. Roberts, *The Jewelled Style: Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity*, Ithaca 1989.

³⁴ MacMullen, "Some Pictures", 452.

³⁵ Text and translation taken from J. C. Rolfe, *Ammianus Marcellinus with an English Translation*, London 2006 (=1939). For a historical interpretation of this passage, see J. den Boeft, J. W. Drijvers, D. den Hengst, H. C. Teitler, *Philological and Historical Commentary on Ammianus Marcellinus XXVII*, Leiden 2009, 33, 37.

Cum itaque tribunal idem escendisset Procopius, et cunctis stupore defixis, timeret silentium triste, procliviores vias ad mortem (ut sperabat), existimans advenisse, per artus tremore diffuso, implicatior ad loquendum, diu tacitus stetit; pauca tamen interrupta et moribunda...

Accordingly, when the said Procopius had mounted the tribunal, and all were filled with amazement, fearing the gloomy silence, and believing (as indeed he had expected) that he had merely come to a steeper road to death, since a trembling which pervaded all his limbs hindered his speaking, he stood for a long time without a word...

I find these passages particularly fitting for the purposes of this contribution as these instances of occasions of public speaking exemplify how Ammianus used not only rhetoric in a broad sense but also communication strategies based on non-verbal elements to express his opinion on society, politics and religion.

Thus, the following set of examples I want to explore is concerned with the extra-linguistic means indicated by Ammianus in his accounts of rhetorical performances delivered by the actors of his *Res Gestae*. I will not circumscribe my study to the twelve formal speeches that Pauw counted in the historian's work,³⁶ but will focus on references to the gaze, to the tone of voice or to the general disposition of an important figure when speaking in front of an audience (mostly, the Roman army) to be found in the *Res Gestae*, since they are telling of the character and internal disposition of emperors and Caesars. In this, I depart from Pauw when he states "Ammianus does not intentionally or primarily use the speech as a medium of character portrayal."³⁷ In my opinion, the speeches and the extra-linguistic elements that accompany them in Ammianus's accounts of his characters are indicative of the evolution of their emotions and representative of their personality. This communication strategy (the allusion to speeches and the extra-linguistic elements) should not be read as isolated indicators but as extra-verbal links that relate and cohere actions, speeches and the development of Ammianus's own historiographical programme.³⁸

Note, for instance, how Ammianus narrates the reaction of Gallus when he is summoned to the imperial court by Domitianus, a prefect sent to Antioch, where Gallus was tyrannously carrying out his duties as Caesar, and realizes that the emperor Constantius has already had enough of his misdeeds as Caesar (14.7.13):

³⁶ For a specific list of those speeches, see D. A. Pauw, "Methods of Character Portrayal in the *Res gestae* of Ammianus Marcellinus", *AClass* 20, 1977, 190.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 191.

³⁸ See, for instance, a catalogue of non-verbal activities and their significance in Ammianus's literary models, in R. F. Newbold, "Nonverbal Communication in Tacitus and Ammianus", *Ancient Society* 21, 1990, 191-2.

His cognitis Gallus ut serpens adpetitus telo vel saxo iamque spes extremas opperiens et succurrens saluti suae quavis ratione colligi omnes iussit armatos et cum starent attoniti, districta dentium acie stridens adeste inquit viri fortes mihi periclitanti vobiscum.

On learning this, Gallus, like a serpent attacked by darts or stones, waiting now for a last expedient and trying to save his life by any possible means, ordered all his troops to be assembled under arms, and while they stood in amazement, he said, baring and gnashing his teeth.

Barnes considers that Ammianus's attitude towards Gallus was ambiguous due to the latter's kinship with Julian, while Pauw thinks that the historian held Gallus in low esteem.³⁹ In this context, the alliteration *ut serpens appetitus telo vel saxo, iamque spes extremas opperiens, et succurrens saluti suae quavis ratione* suggests that Ammianus wanted to highlight the baseness of Gallus's character by likening his elocutio to a serpent's hiss through an explicit comparison supported by alliteration. Consequently, I believe that we can arrive at a better understanding of Ammianus's work if we analyse the implications of such extra-linguistic signs, which derive from the rhetorical interventions of the more relevant characters of the *Res Gestae*.

This is the case of the oratorical interventions of the emperors Constantius and Julian, two pivotal actors in the historian's work. In my opinion, a careful review of the extra-linguistic dimension of some of their speeches not only enriches the literary analysis of Ammianus's work but also helps us to understand the historiographical purposes that the historian pursued when he narrated such extra-linguistic features in those rhetorical performances. In the case of Constantius, for instance, the information we are provided with regarding the extra-verbal elements on occasions when he delivered an oration serves to reinforce two weaknesses of the emperor's character consistently present in Ammianus's derogatory representation of Constantius, viz. his inability successfully to fight barbarian peoples and his highly impressionable and mutable character.⁴⁰ In this manner, when the *Alamanni*

³⁹ Barnes, *Ammianus*, 129-30: "Ammianus' treatment of Gallus is inevitably ambiguous (...) He [Ammianus] presents Gallus as a tyrant, as different from his younger brother Julian (...) On the other hand, as a victim of Constantius, the executed Caesar merited pity and sympathy". A different opinion in D. A. Pauw, "Methods of Character Portrayal in the *Res gestae* of Ammianus Marcellinus", *AClass* 20, 1977, 184: "Within the compass of a few pages the reader gets to know Gallus as violent, arrogant, irascible, cruel, unrighteous, ruthless, ambitious, fickle, and yet a man of authority, but uncontrolled – an overall picture of depravity".

⁴⁰ See Barnes, *Ammianus*, 134-6. For Constantius's moral weaknesses, see Amm. 21.16.15-16: *Vt autem in externis bellis hic princeps fuit saucius et adflictus, ita prospere succedentibus pugnis civilibus tumidus et intestinis ulceribus rei publicae sanie perfusus horrenda: quo pravo proposito magis quam recto vel usitato triumphalis arcus ex clade provinciarum sumptibus magnis erexit in Galliis et Pannoniis titulis gestorum adfixis, quoad stare poterunt, monumenta lecturis. uxoribus et spadonum gracilentis vocibus et*

obtained the armistice they sought (14.10.11-15), Constantius delivered a short address to his soldiers, a *contio*⁴¹ whose rhetorical disposition was based on a long *captatio benevolentiae* (at least half of his intervention is constructed on an “*excusatio non petita*” argument) in order to present the peace treaty as a Roman victory. Constantius needed to appease his army’s spirit after a hard and weary campaign, shown to have been unnecessary by the armistice, and to remind his soldiers that they were serving the greater good of the Empire (14.10.11-12):

Nemo, quaeso, miretur, si post exsudatos labores itinerum longos congestosque affatim commeatus fiducia vestri ductante barbaricos pagos adventans velut mutato repente consilio ad placidiora deverti ... quisque vestrum reputans id inveniet verum, quod miles ubique licet membris vigentibus firmior se solum vitamque propriam circumspicit et defendit, imperator vero officiorum dum aequis omnibus alienae custos salutis nihil non ad sui spectare tutelam ratio.

Let no one, I pray, be surprised, if after going through the toil of long marches and getting together great quantities of supplies, I now, when approaching the abode of the savages, with my confidence in you leading the way, as if by a sudden change of plan have turned to milder designs. For each one of you (...) will find it to be true that the soldier in all instances, however strong and vigorous of body, regards and defends only himself and his own life. The commander, on the other hand, has manifold duties... and being the guardian of others’ safety.

According to Ammianus, this short address, based on a well-crafted *captatio benevolentiae*, was positively received by Constantius’s soldiers not because of its ability to persuade but because the emperor had a bad reputation when fighting foreign peoples (14.10.16):

palatinis quibusdam nimium quantum addictus ad singula eius verba plaudentibus et quid ille aiat aut neget, ut adsentiri possint, observantibus. See also N. Henck, “Constantius’ Paideia, Intellectual Milieu and Promotion of the Liberal Arts”, *PCPhS* 47, 2001, 172-87, 186: “Ammianus is clearly presenting us with only some of the facts –namely those which place the emperor in a bad light. By suppressing much pertinent information that redounds to Constantius’s credit, Ammianus promotes a totally misleading image of the emperor, and ultimately fails to give him his due for his promotion of the liberal arts”. S. Elm, *Sons of Hellenism, Fathers of the Church: Emperor Julian, Gregory of Nazianzus, and the Vision of Rome*, Berkeley 2012, 31 has underlined the difficulties involved in reaching a consensus: “To do justice to Constantius II, the man and his rule, is, however, no easy undertaking: our chief narrative sources present sharply divergent pictures”.

⁴¹ On the nature and purposes of *contio*, see F. Pina Polo, “*Contio*, *auctoritas* and Freedom of Speech in Republican Rome”, in S. Benoist (ed.), *Rome, a City and its Empire in Perspective. The Impact of the Roman World through Fergus Millar’s Research*, Leiden 2012, 45-58.

... ea ratione maxime percita quod norat expeditionibus crebris fortunam eius in malis tantum civilibus vigilasse; cum autem bella moverentur externa, accidisse plerumque luctuosa.

They [i.e., his soldiers] were influenced especially by the conviction, which they had formed from frequent campaigns, that his fortune watched over him only in civil troubles, but that when foreign wars were undertaken, they had often ended disastrously.

This passage, therefore, presents Constantius as an orator unable to deliver a psychagogic speech capable of convincing his audience by the strength of its argumentation. Instead, the emperor appears as a weak orator forced to strengthen the *captatio benevolentiae* in order to persuade an army that was neither influenced nor convinced by this weak oration but rather by Constantius's inability to overcome barbarian peoples.

The content and form of this episode should be compared with the speech delivered by Constantius himself after a number of victories in the Sarmatian campaign (17.13.25-33). On this occasion, Ammianus does not include any allusion or reference that could point to the emperor's alleged inability to defeat barbarian peoples. Contrary to the previous example, this is a well-structured speech in which Constantius does not need to resort to a long *captatio benevolentiae* to appease or please his soldiers. The emperor regards the campaign as (17.13.31-33):

“quadruplex igitur praemium (...) nos quaesivimus et res publica, primo ultione parta de grassatoribus noxiis; deinde quod vobis abunde sufficient ex hostibus captivi, his enim virtutem oportet esse contentam, quae sudore quaesivit et dexteris. nobis amplae facultates opumque sunt magni thesauri (...) postremo ego quoque hostilis vocabuli spoliū prae me fero, secundo Sarmatici cognomentum, quod vos unum idemque sentientes mihi – ne sit arrogans dicere – merito tribuistis.”

“A fourfold prize (...) [which] was won by us and by our country; first, by taking vengeance on wicked robbers; then, in that you will have abundant booty taken from the enemy; for valour ought to be content with what it has won by toil and a strong arm. We ourselves have ample wealth and great store of riches (...) Lastly, I also display the spoil of an enemy's name, surnamed as I am Sarmaticus for the second time, a title not undeserved (without arrogance be it said), which you have with one accord bestowed upon me.”

According to Ammianus, this speech was received by the soldiers (17.13.32) “with more enthusiasm than common”. Modern scholarship appears to be puzzled by the tone of this passage, which seems to contradict Ammianus's

previous statements on Constantius's inability to fight against barbarians.⁴² Two arguments could explain this apparent contradiction: first, the narrative nature of these paragraphs abounds in ekphrastic images and diegetic lines,⁴³ so the passage would contribute to the narratological⁴⁴ development of the content of Ammianus's historiographical work by reporting the strategy and movements against the Sarmatians. Second, the account of this *contio* shows that oratorical pieces in the *Res Gestae* are not unconnected rhetorical adornments but signal an evolution in the development of the intertwining plots and main characters of Ammianus's work, for Constantius is portrayed very differently if compared to 14.10.11-15 and, as we will immediately see, to 15.8.4-15. With this in mind, we might question and reconsider the degree of animosity towards Constantius that, according to modern scholars, the historian showed in his work.⁴⁵

The use of accounts of rhetorical deliveries as literary devices intended to describe the changeable psychology of the *Res Gestae*'s characters is revealed again in other passages where Constantius and Julian are paired and contrasted. Thus, regarding Constantius's unstable character, the scene (15.8.4-15) where the emperor appoints Julian Caesar is telling of his flimsy ethos. In a pompous setting, Constantius addresses the army *placido sermone* "in a quiet tone" and *immobilis dum silerent* "motionless until the soldiers became silent", a controlled disposition in front of his soldiers that changes once he has clothed Julian, Ammianus telling us that at that point he became "melancholy in aspect... and with careworn countenance" (15.8.11: *his alloquitur contractiore vultu submaestum*). This change in Constantius's disposition is repeated in his speech before his confrontation with Julian (21.13.9-16) as Constantius's self-assurance was not supported by natural confidence but had to be artificially assumed (21.13.9: *ad serenitatis speciem et fiducia vultu formato*). The successful acceptance of his speech soothed him (21.13.16: *qua gratia in laetitiam imperator versus ex metu*), thus emphasizing his lack of real confidence in himself and his weak personality, two flaws that did not suit the ethos of an emperor.

In this manner, the historian draws our attention to the performative arena when he wants to detail Constantius's psyche and behaviour. In this milieu, the psychological effects caused by Constantius's inconstant personality

⁴² Barnes, *Ammianus*, 137-8.

⁴³ G. Kelly, "The New Rome and the Old: Ammianus Marcellinus's Silences on Constantinople", *CQ* 53, 2003, 598-600.

⁴⁴ For an example of the narratological and historiographical implications of the reproduction of speeches in Ammianus's works, see Matthews, *The Roman Empire*, 130-2.

⁴⁵ Elm, *Sons of Hellenism, Fathers of the Church*, 48.

become evident.⁴⁶ The “dramatic immobility,”⁴⁷ a virtue that an emperor has to embody, crumbles as Constantius’s internal doubts surface. If his image in his *adventus* to Rome (16.10) capitalizes on a majestic hieratism (16.10.9: *Augustus itaque faustis vocibus appellatus, non montium litorumque intonante fragore cohorrui, talem se tamque immobilem*),⁴⁸ the insight into Constantius’s difficulty in controlling and stabilizing his emotions in the previous examples contribute to the creation of an image of an emotionally fragile and changeable emperor.

As one would expect from a biased historian such as Ammianus, the accounts of Julian’s rhetorical displays (the main character and hero of the *Res Gestae*) are narrated in order to produce a very different impression. According to the historian, Julian not only mastered the composition and delivery of speeches but was also an expert when it came to using the *kairos*: he could adopt a calm and solemn tone (16.12.8: *indictaque solitis vocibus quiete... genuine placiditate sermonis*) in order to appear as a self-confident leader when he wanted to lift the spirits of his troops before a battle, but he did not shy away from confronting his soldiers when they were not happy with the reward he had promised them (24.3.3: *ad indignationem plenam gravitatis erectus*), rebuking them with the address “of an emperor self-contained amid prosperity and adversity” (24.3.8: *hac modesta imperatoris oratio, inter secunda et aspera medii*), which was positively received by his soldiers. His rhetorical prowess allowed him to address simultaneously different types of audiences during the battle of Strasbourg: strangers and acquaintances, those behind the standards, experienced and inexperienced soldiers, all of whom received words of support specifically suited to their position and rank (16.12.28-34). Whenever he felt that his interventions in a *contio* required a firm demonstration of the imperial *dignitas*, he exaggerated – Ammianus tells us – his demeanour (20.5.1: *progressus principes ambitiosius solito*) and voice (21.5.1: *fidencior haec clarius solito disserebat*).⁴⁹ Other contemporary sources also praised the emperor for his skill in commanding the rhetorical *variatio*.⁵⁰ However, Julian’s ability to adapt his

⁴⁶ Julian’s laudatory and insincere panegyric to Constantius praised his oratorical dexterity, see *Jul. Or.* 1.31c-d.

⁴⁷ MacMullen, “Some Pictures”, 440.

⁴⁸ Kelly, “The New Rome and the Old”, 11-2; J. R. Stenger, “Ammian und die Ewige Stadt: Das spätantike Rom als Heterotopie”, in T. Fuhrer (ed.), *Rom und Mailand in der Spätantike. Repräsentationen städtischer Räume in Literatur, Architektur und Kunst*, Berlin 2012, 189-216.

⁴⁹ Even the narration of his death (25.3.15-21) contains rhetorical elements strongly reminiscent of a Socratic tone, for he spoke *placide dicta* on his deathbed (25.3.22).

⁵⁰ See especially *Lib. Or.* 18.154: “Julian, however, as Homer says of the able speaker, ‘with unerring discourse’ attended such debates, allowing any who so desired to speak his mind freely before him and delivering speeches himself, sometimes ‘with words brief and clear’, sometime ‘with words like snowflakes in winter’, now imitating those speakers in Homer, now

oratorical style to different circumstances should not be considered an empty compliment.⁵¹ As Penella has pointed out,⁵² there is a long tradition in rhetorical treatises of relating the oratorical plain and grand style to two Homeric figures, Menelaus and Odysseus. In this sense, in addition to Barnes's approach to Julian as the "new Achilles" in Ammianus's work,⁵³ it is also tempting to think that Ammianus may have implicitly compared Julian's rhetorical prowess and varied style to that of Odysseus. If rhetorical strategies – both verbal and non-verbal – presented Constantius as a fickle and insecure orator, Ammianus's emphasis on Julian's rhetorical adaptability to different scenarios helps to highlight his virtues as a resourceful ruler and a true Homeric hero.⁵⁴

3. CONCLUSION

Ammianus's descriptions of rhetorical deliveries and oratorical interventions should be understood as presentational elements⁵⁵ intimately related to communication strategies in that they attempted to send a signal that would influence someone's decision through the use of non-verbal elements that helped to characterize the main actors of the *Res Gestae*. Consequently, the extra-linguistic elements involved in oratorical interventions acted as literary devices concerning presentational aspects of characters and events that were brought into play by Ammianus in order to supplement the ethical implications of peoples and actions that an artless description may have overlooked.

Regarding *ekphrasis* and *enargeia*, I would like to counterpoise the aforementioned Manieri's statement ("mediante l' *ἐνάργεια*, infatti, la "mediazione" dello storico deve ridursi al minimo") to Jas Elsner's consideration of the function of *ekphrasis* and the qualities prescribed (*sapheneia* and *enargeia*) to compose it: "its aim is all about creating an emotional effect in the audience's imagination and literally bringing the object described before the eyes of the listener or reader."⁵⁶ In my opinion, the use of *ekphrasis* and

excelling each of them in his own particular technique". Translation from A. F. Norman, *Libanius. Selected Works*, Cambridge 1977.

⁵¹ On Julian's interventions in Latin, see Á. Sánchez-Ostiz, "Iulianus Latinus: la lengua cambiada de los personajes de Amiano Marcelino", in Á. Sánchez-Ostiz, J. B. Torres (eds.), *De Grecia a Roma y de Roma a Grecia: un camino de ida y vuelta*, Pamplona 2007, 300-4.

⁵² R. Penella, "Menelaus, Odysseus, and the Limits of Eloquence in Libanius, Declamations 3 and 4", in O. Lagacherie, P.-L. Malosse (eds.), *Libanios, le premier humaniste : Études en hommage à Bernard Schouler*, Alessandria 2011, 98-9.

⁵³ Barnes, *Ammianus*, 143-65.

⁵⁴ On the oratorical dimension of Homeric heroes, see J. B. Torres, "El héroe como orador", in A. L. Eire, J. M. Labiano, A. M. Seoane (eds.), *Retórica, política e ideología: desde la Antigüedad hasta nuestros días. Actas del II Congreso Internacional*, Salamanca 1998, 39-43.

⁵⁵ Pauw, "Ammianus Marcellinus and Ancient Historiography, Biography, and Character Portrayal", 126 defines them as "the technique of indirect portrayal of characters". See also Sánchez-Ostiz, "Iulianus Latinus", 306-7.

⁵⁶ Elsner, "The Genres of *ekphrasis*", 1.

enargeia in the *Res Gestae* does not minimize the status of Ammianus as a historian nor silence his voice. On the contrary, as Elsner suggests, a firm intention of *movere* and *delectare* was behind Ammianus's recurrent use of these rhetorical tropes.