

**University of Dayton**

---

**From the Selected Works of Fred W Jenkins**

---

January 1, 1987

# Theatrical Metaphors in Ammianus Marcellinus

Fred W Jenkins, *University of Dayton*

## Theatrical Metaphors in Ammianus Marcellinus

By Fred W. Jenkins

*Library of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia*

Ammianus in his history tends to describe events in a very graphic and theatrical style. He emphasizes the visual and the gestural, leaving the clear impression that he is presenting to us characters performing on stage.<sup>1</sup> Not only does he present many episodes in this highly dramatic fashion, but he also makes considerable use of metaphors drawn from the theater, as if to compare actual events directly with those of the stage. While these metaphors have occasionally been noted in discussions of individual passages, they have never been the object of systematic study.<sup>2</sup> In this paper I will examine in detail the various occurrences of such metaphors and show how and why Ammianus chose to use them.

Before we look at the metaphors themselves, it is necessary to ascertain Ammianus' attitude toward the theater, which surely influenced his use of such language. In the time of Ammianus tragedy and comedy in their classical forms had almost vanished from the stage. They had been replaced by the mime and the pantomime, tremendously popular forms of stage entertainment whose immorality and triviality were often condemned in our literary sources from the period.<sup>3</sup> These then must have been uppermost in

<sup>1</sup> E. Auerbach, *Mimesis* (Princeton 1953) 50-60 and R. MacMullen, "Some Pictures in Ammianus Marcellinus", *Art Bulletin* 46 (1964) 452-454.

<sup>2</sup> I. Ulmann, *Metaphern in den Res Gestae des Ammianus Marcellinus* (diss. Berlin 1975) 247-248 provides only a brief and summary discussion of metaphors from the theater. R. C. Blockley, *Ammianus Marcellinus: A Study of his Historiography and Political Thought*, *Coll. Lat.* 141 (Brussels 1975) 25 has a brief but useful comment. The use of theatrical imagery for characterization has received relatively little attention in the special studies of Ammianus' methods of characterization. R. N. Mooney, *Character Portrayal and Distortion in Ammianus Marcellinus* (diss. Michigan 1955) 124-135 discusses "exaggerated or disparaging language" and mentions one or two metaphors from the stage under more general rubrics. D. A. Pauw, "Methods of Character Portrayal in the *Res Gestae* of Ammianus Marcellinus" *Acta Classica* 20 (1977) 181-197 does not discuss use of metaphorical language at all.

<sup>3</sup> On theatrical performances under the empire see L. Friedländer, *Darstellung aus der Sittengeschichte Roms in der Zeit bis zum Ausgang der Antonine*<sup>9</sup> (Leipzig 1920) 2.112-144; H. Jürgens, *Pompa Diaboli: Die lateinischen Kirchenväter und das antike Theater*, Tübinger

his mind when he thought of the stage. As a native of Antioch and a long-time resident of Rome, Ammianus almost certainly had first-hand experience of these productions. He expresses his opinion of them in the course of his two Roman digressions. In the first he castigates the Romans for preferring the mime to the liberal arts (14.6.18): *denique pro philosopho cantor et in locum oratoris doctor artium ludicrarum accitur et bibliothecis sepulchrorum ritu in perpetuum clausis organa fabricantur hydraulica et lyrae ad speciem carpentorum ingentes tibiaeque et histrionici gestus instrumenta non levia.*

After this he goes on to describe, in exaggerated detail, how foreigners and practitioners of the liberal arts were driven from the city during the famine of A.D. 383 while thousands of *mimae* and chorus girls were allowed to remain (14.6.19–20). The extreme bitterness of his tone here has often been thought to suggest that Ammianus himself was one of those who were expelled.<sup>4</sup> A bit further on he returns to the theater, this time as the lurking place of every sort of undesirable (14.6.25): *Ex turba vero imae sortis et paupertinae in tabernis, aliqui pernoctant vinariis, nonnulli sub velabris umbraculorum theatralium latent, quae Campanam imitatus lasciviam Catulus in aedilitate sua suspendit omnium primus.*

In the second Roman digression he criticizes the theater and its patrons as being base and degenerate (28.4.32): *Unde si ad theatralem ventum fuerit vilitatem, artifices scaenarii per sibilos exploduntur, si qui sibi aere humiliorem non conciliaverit plebem. qui si defuerit strepitus, ad imitationem Tauricae gentis peregrinos vociferantur pelli debere, quorum subsidii semper nisi sunt ac steterunt, et taetris vocibus et absurdis; quae longe abhorrent a studiis et voluntate veteris illius plebis, cuius multa facete dicta memoria loquitur et venusta.*

It is clear, I think, from these passages that Ammianus strongly disapproved of the theater and anyone who might be connected with it.<sup>5</sup> They also suggest that Ammianus is very likely to be expressing a negative moral judgement whenever he associates anyone with it metaphorically. With this in mind, let us now turn to the metaphors.

The first instance occurs in an account of a palace conspiracy against the *magister equitum* Arbitio (16.6). Ammianus expresses his distaste for pal-

*Beiträge* 46 (1972) 213–246; H. A. Kelly, "Tragedy and the Performance of Tragedy in Late Roman Antiquity", *Traditio* 35 (1979) 21–44. Condemnations of the immorality of late antique theater are common in both Christian and pagan authors; for references and discussion see Friedländer 115, 131–132; Jürgens 230–233, 241; S. Dill, *Roman Society in the Last Century of the Western Empire*<sup>2</sup> (London 1921) 55–58, 119, 122.

<sup>4</sup> E. A. Thompson, "Ammianus Marcellinus and the Romans", *G&R* 11 (1941–42) 132–133.

<sup>5</sup> It is worth noting that Ammianus' opinions coincide with those of Julian, his hero; cf. *Frag. Epist.* 304 c ἀξιῶ δὲ τοὺς ἱερέας ὑποχωρῆσαι καὶ ἀποστῆναι τῷ δήμῳ τῆς ἐν τοῖς θεάτροις ἀσελγείας. μηδεὶς οὖν ἱερεὺς εἰς θέατρον εἰσὶτω μηδὲ ἐχέτω φίλον θυμελικὸν μηδὲ ἄρματα ἡλάντην, μηδὲ ὄρχηστὴς μηδὲ μῖμος αὐτοῦ τῇ θύρᾳ προσίτω.



ace intrigue frequently in the *Res Gestae* (e.g. 14.9.1–2; 15.5.28, 32), and here he describes the actions of the conspirators with such unflattering terms as *circumlatrabat* and *strepens immania*. The whole account is then closed with a stage metaphor: *Cumque res in inquisitionem veniret necessariisque negotio tentis obiectorum probatio speraretur, tamquam per satyram subito cubiculariis suffragantibus, ut loquebatur pertinax rumor, et vinculis sunt exutae personae, quae stringebantur ut consciae, et Dorus evanuit et Verissimus ilico tacuit velut aulaeo deposito scaenae*. The characters (*personae*) are sent off and the curtain drops.<sup>6</sup> Ammianus leaves his reader with the impression that the efforts to ruin Arbitio with trumped-up charges were little more than a rather gruesome farce or mime. A somewhat similar use of stage imagery is found at 18.5.5. Ursicinus, the *magister equitum* in the East, had just been removed from his command and replaced by the incompetent Sabinianus. This was, according to Ammianus, the result of the machinations of the *cohors palatina*, aided and abetted by the court eunuchs. Ammianus sums up these events in a transitional phrase as he passes on to another topic. It is here we find reference to the stage: *dum haec in castris Constantii quasi per lustra aguntur et scaenam*. Ammianus has already expressed his strong disapproval of court intrigue against Ursicinus; he now ridicules the courtiers as acting in a manner more befitting brothels and the stage than the imperial court.<sup>7</sup>

Ammianus often makes use of theatrical terminology in discussing the conduct of various imperial officials. He characterizes Lupicinus, a *magister armorum* in Gaul, in the following manner (20.1.2): *bellicosum sane et castrensis rei peritum, sed supercilia erigentem ut cornua et de tragico, quod aiunt, coturno strepentem, super quo diu ambigebatur, avarus esset potius an crudelis*. Here *de tragico ... coturno strepentem* is obviously intended in a derogatory way and like *supercilia erigentem ut cornua* refers to the arrogance of Lupicinus.<sup>8</sup> We find quite similar metaphorical language in Ammianus' description of the character of Petronius Probus, praetorian

<sup>6</sup> *Persona*, in late Latin, is often used merely in the sense of person, but here, as at 29.2.23, may well retain its theatrical associations. The *personae* are alleged accomplices of Arbitio and are expected to incriminate him when they are questioned under torture. Thus they are important characters in the farce.

<sup>7</sup> G. Sabbah, *Ammien Marcellin: Histoire* (Budé ed. 1970) 2.196 n. 175 and P. de Jonge, *Philological and Historical Commentary on Ammianus Marcellinus XVIII* (Groningen 1980) 135 have useful notes on *per lustra aguntur et scaenam*. On the whole, I prefer Sabbah's interpretation of *lustra* "bordel" to that of de Jonge, "feasts". One should also note in connection with this passage that Ammianus is strongly biased in favor of his own field commander Ursicinus; for a discussion of their relationship see E. A. Thompson, *The Historical Work of Ammianus Marcellinus* (Cambridge 1947) 42–55.

<sup>8</sup> Note that the *coturnus* was sometimes used in the mime as well as in tragedy; cf. H. Reich, *Der Mimus* (Berlin 1903) 744 n. 1 and Friedländer (above note 3) 123. Hence, even in the use of this rhetorical commonplace Ammianus may envision the *pantomimus* strutting about the stage; cf. especially his use of *coturnus* at 28.6.29 (discussed below).

prefect and head of the powerful Anician house. Probus, who seems to have been a *bête-noir* of Ammianus, is portrayed in the worst possible light. Among other things Ammianus calls him *insidiatorem dirum et per cruentas noxium simultates* (27.11.2) and makes him the object of a bit of moral indignation quoted from Cicero's *Second Philippic* (29) at 27.11.4.<sup>9</sup> His insecure disposition is pointed out by means of theatrical terms (27.11.2): *et licet potuit, quoad vixit, ingentia largiendo et intervallando potestates assiduas, erat tamen interdum timidus ad audaces, contra timidos celsior, ut videretur, cum sibi fideret, de coturno strepere tragico et, ubi paveret, omni humilior socco*. The same phrase, *de coturno strepere tragico*, is again used to denote arrogance and is here balanced by *omni humilior socco* (cowardice). Ammianus almost portrays Probus as a *miles gloriosus*.

The same metaphor is used in the second Roman digression to describe and condemn the conduct of the senatorial class (28.4.27): *cumque mutuum illi quid petunt, soccos ut Micionas videbis et Lachetas, cum adiguntur, ut reddant, ita coturnatos et turgidos, ut Heraclidas illos Cresphontem et Temenum putes. hactenus de senatu*. Once more we find alternating servility and arrogance expressed through the garb of the stage. Here however Ammianus expands on the comparison, illustrating *soccos* with names commonly given to *senes* in New Comedy and *coturnatos* with mythic figures from tragedy (or possibly the pantomime). The insulting nature of the terms is heightened by the fact that one of his passages criticizing the theater comes just a few sentences later (28.4.32).

Another official whose activities Ammianus puts on stage, so to speak, is Romanus, the *comes Africae*. Romanus appears several times in the last six books of the *Res Gestae*, always as a malefactor.<sup>10</sup> In 28.6 Ammianus tells how the Tripolitani suffered because of the corruption and greed of Romanus. The opening lines set an almost tragic tone (28.6.1): *hinc, tamquam in orbem migrantes alium, ad Tripoleos Africanæ provinciae veniamus aerumnas, quas, ut arbitror, Iustitia quoque ipsa deflevit. quae unde instar exarsere flammæ, textus aperiet absolutus*.

The same highly dramatic tone is maintained throughout the passage as Ammianus rouses our pity for the Tripolitani. Although these unfortunate people send envoys to the imperial court seeking relief, Romanus is able to

<sup>9</sup> On Ammianus' treatment of Probus see Thompson (above note 5) 122–125; W. Seyfarth, "Sextus Petronius Probus: Legende und Wirklichkeit", *Klio* 52 (1970) 411–426; H. Drexler, *Ammianstudien*, *Spudasmata* 31 (1974) 65–78.

<sup>10</sup> In addition to 28.6, Ammianus also refers to Romanus at 27.9.1; 29.5.1–2, 50; 30.2.10–11. For a modern discussion of the activities of Romanus see B. H. Warmington, "The Career of Romanus, Comes Africae" *BZ* 49 (1956) 55–64. It is possible, as Warmington suggests, that Ammianus' account of Romanus is affected by his bias in favor of the curial class, a group which suffered heavily at the hands of Romanus. On Ammianus and the *curiales* in general see R. Pack, "Ammianus and the Curia of Antioch" *CP* 48 (1953) 80–85.



forestall imperial agents sent to investigate the situation. Finally one of his creatures, a man named Caecilius, is questioned under torture and breaks. It is at this point that Ammianus introduces his metaphor from the stage (28.6.29): *et nequid coturni terribilis fabulae relinquerent intemptatum, hoc quoque post depositum accessit aulaeum. Romanus ad comitatum profectus secum Caecilium duxit cognitores accusaturum ut inclinatos in provinciae partem; isque Merobaudis favore susceptus necessarios sibi plures petierat exhiberi.*

Ammianus has finished the tragedy of the Tripolitani, but there is still an afterpiece (*exodium*) to describe. Romanus goes to the imperial court where, through the intrigues of his friend Merobaudes, he manages to clear both himself and Caecilius of all charges (28.6.29–30). Since the *exodium* at a theater was normally a mime or some similar production, we may safely assume that Ammianus is once again portraying the court intrigues of corrupt officials as being a stage farce.

The last imperial official to whom Ammianus applies theatrical metaphors is Festinus of Tridentum. Festinus was a governor of Asia who, on account of ambition, changed from earlier moderation and fairness to cruelty (29.2.23): *sed cum impie peremptorum exsequiis suffragantibus ad praefecturam venisse hominem comperisset immeritum, exarsit ad agenda sperandaque similia et histrionis ritu mutata repente persona studio nocendi concepto incedebat oculis intentis ac diris praefecturam autumans affore prope diem, si ipse quoque se contaminasset insontium poenis.* So Festinus becomes a cruel and murderous judge. The sudden change in character is compared to an actor changing his mask, thus not only associating Festinus with the stage but also suggesting that his earlier goodness may have been hypocritical.

Ammianus, as we have seen at 28.4.27, uses theatrical imagery to characterize groups as well as individuals. He does so repeatedly in his invective against the legal profession (30.4). Ammianus begins this digression with some famous definitions of forensic oratory (30.4.3–4) and then refers favorably to many famous orators of the past (4.5–6). Upon turning to contemporary lawyers, however, he adopts a bitter, satiric tone and attacks them relentlessly. He describes lawyers as *subsidentium divites domos* (4.8), a phrase which almost suggests to the reader the parasites of comedy. This idea is reinforced at 4.14: *Quantum atque postremum est genus impudens, pervicax et indoctum eorum, qui, cum immature a litterariis eruperint ludis, per angulos civitatum discurrunt mimiambos non causarum remediis congrua commentantes fores divitum deterendo cenarum ciborumque aucupantes delicias exquisitas.* Not only do they besiege the homes of the wealthy in search of free meals, but they also speak as if they were performing in a comedy. Still later (4.19) he shows the same advocates in court: *corrugatis hinc inde frontibus bracchiisque histrionico gestu formati, ut contionaria Gracchi fistula post occipitium desit, consistitur altrinse-*

*cus diu*. The main thrust of this, despite the learned allusion to Tiberius Gracchus, is to compare the lawyer to a comedian yet a third time, as the words *histrionico gestu* make clear.<sup>11</sup>

There are two remaining passages containing theatrical imagery.<sup>12</sup> The first is Ammianus' account of the coronation of the usurper Procopius. Procopius, a kinsman of Julian, had gone into hiding after Julian's death in 363. Finally in 365 he emerged and raised a revolt against Valens. Ammianus, who always shows a strong regard for the legitimacy of the emperor and hostility toward a usurper,<sup>13</sup> ridicules the crowning of Procopius as if it were a mime (26.6.15): *Stetit itaque subtabidus – excitum putares ab inferis – nusquam reperto paludamento tunica auro distincta ut regius minister indutus a calce in pubem in paedagogiani pueri speciem purpureis opertus tegminibus pedum hastatusque purpureum itidem pannulum laeva manu gestabat, ut in theatriali scaena simulacrum quoddam insigne per aulaeum vel mimicam cavillationem subito putares emersum*. Ammianus emphasizes the bizarre and unnatural in his description. He first suggests that the emaciated Procopius resembles a ghost from the underworld; the idea of some evil spirit which has come from hell to stir up civil strife may also be present in the image.<sup>14</sup> Ammianus then dwells at great length on the outlandish purple and gold outfit of Procopius which makes him look a palace page boy. Lastly, to close the description (note the ring composition: *excitum putares – putares emersum*) there is the simile of the mime performance. This simile gives the reader the impression that the whole episode is a farce, a bit of music hall fluff, which one need scarcely take seriously, although the revolt was indeed a very dangerous one for Valens. Ammianus continues in this mocking vein when he is recounting the first acts of

<sup>11</sup> For the anecdote about Gracchus cf. Cic. *de orat.* 3.225; Plut. *Tib. Gracch.* 2.4–5; Val. Max. 8.10.1; Gellius 1.11.10. As to the expression *histrionico gestu*, in the second century A.D. and afterward *histrion* normally refers to a *pantomimus* rather than an actor in general; cf. *TLL* 6.2844–2845 and Friedländer (above note 3) 135. Ammianus makes further reference to the mime at 30.4.21, where he describes judges as *doctos ex Philistionis aut Aesopi cavillationibus*. Philistion is the well known writer of mimes who lived in the age of Augustus; cf. M. Bonaria, *Mimorum Romanorum Fragmenta* (Genoa 1956) 2.55–57 (nos. 516–540). The word *cavillatio* also seems to be closely associated with the mime; cf. Amm. 26.6.15 and Solinus 5.13.

<sup>12</sup> I omit from consideration one other stage metaphor, 16.12.57 *et velut in quodam theatriali spectaculo aulaeis miranda monstrantibus multa*, which introduces a *tableau vivant* in which the Germans who have been defeated at the Battle of Strasbourg attempt to swim across the Rhine to safety.

<sup>13</sup> R. C. Blockley (above note 2) 57.

<sup>14</sup> Ammianus' description of Procopius here calls to mind Claudian, *In Rufinum* 1.74–115, where Rufinus is described as being the protégé of the powers of Hell; cf. A. Cameron, *Claudian: Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius* (Oxford 1970) 69. Ammianus himself uses a similar image in a somewhat different way at 28.4.5: *si fabularum* (here meaning "myths") *ritu ab inferis excitatus*.



Procopius after his investiture, beginning (26.6.16): *ad hoc igitur dehonestamentum honorum omnium ludibriose sublatus*.<sup>15</sup>

The last example of theatrical metaphor is found in the obituary of Constantius II. At the very beginning of the list of the late emperor's good qualities we encounter the following (21.16.1): *imperatoriae auctoritatis coturnum ubique custodiens popularitatem elato animo contemnebat et magno erga tribuendas celsiores dignitates impendio parvus nihil circa administrationum augmenta praeter pauca novari perpessus numquam erigens cornua militarium*. Ammianus certainly approves of the maintenance of imperial dignity and contempt for popularity (cf. 25.4.18; 27.9.10), yet the choice of words suggests that Ammianus is also hinting at the arrogance of Constantius as well. This is a topic which he has harped upon constantly.<sup>16</sup> *Coturnus/coturnatus*, as we have seen, indicate arrogance in the majority of their occurrences in Ammianus.<sup>17</sup> It may be that Ammianus thought Constantius just a bit overzealous in keeping up his dignity. Or perhaps the choice of *coturnus* in what is supposed to be a positive context is just a subconscious manifestation of his deep-seated hostility toward Constantius. The mere fact that the metaphor is used among the *bona* rather than the *vitia* should not influence us overmuch. Another of the "virtues" of Constantius is his somewhat false pretensions of learning at 21.16.4, hardly a complimentary remark.

Certain conclusions readily emerge from our survey of theatrical imagery

<sup>15</sup> On the revolt of Procopius see R. Till, "Die Kaiserproklamation des Usurpators Procopius" *Jahrbuch für fränkische Landesforschung* 34/35 (1974/75) 75–83 and Blockley (above note 2) 55–61. Blockley suggests that Ammianus may have been following imperial propaganda in his portrayal of Procopius. He cites Zosimus 4.5.5 on the same event: ὥσπερ ἀπὸ σκηνῆς βασιλεία σχεδιασθέντα. This, he claims, probably reflects the same tradition. While this may have been the imperial line on the matter, I think that we have already established that such imagery is entirely in character for Ammianus. It is also probable that such theatrical metaphors were already commonplace in this context; cf. Josephus' account of the irregular appointment of Phanni as high priest: λαγχάνει δ' ἀπὸ τύχης ὁ μάλιστα διαδείξας αὐτῶν τὴν παρανομίαν, Φαννί τις ὄνομα, υἱὸς Σαμουήλου κόμης Ἀφθίας, ἀνὴρ οὐ μόνον οὐκ ἐξ ἀρχιερέων, ἀλλ' οὐδ' ἐπιστάμενος σαφῶς τί ποτ' ἦν ἀρχιερωσύνη δι' ἀγροικίαν. ἀπὸ γοῦν τῆς χώρας αὐτὸν ἄκοντα σύραντες ὥσπερ ἐπὶ σκηνῆς ἀλλοτρίῳ κατεκόσμου προσωπεῖω τὴν τ' ἐσθῆτα περιτιθέντες τὴν ἱερὰν καὶ τό τι δεῖ ἐπὶ καιροῦ διδάσκοντες (BJ 4.155–156). Note also Julian's description of Silvanus' investiture: καὶ τέλος ἐκ τῆς γυναικωνίτιδος ἀνελόμενος ἀλουργὲς ἱμάτιον γελοῖος ἀληθῶς τύραννος καὶ τραγικὸς ὄντως ἀνεφάνη (Or. 2.98d). Ammianus himself gives a much more sympathetic account of Silvanus' revolt and suppression (15.5) events in which he was personally involved. While there are some scornful remarks showing his disapproval of the usurpation (15.5.16, 25), Ammianus actually seems to feel sorry for Silvanus (15.5.32) and even puts what appears to be his own opinion in the mouth of Silvanus (15.5.28).

<sup>16</sup> Blockley (above note 2) 39–40.

<sup>17</sup> Amm. 20.1.2; 27.11.2; 28.4.27 (all discussed above) denote arrogance. At 28.1.4 *coturnatus* is used to describe the style of Phrynichus' *Capture of Miletus*.



in Ammianus. The range of application is small: corrupt imperial officials and palace intriguers, lawyers, and the senate. Indeed, apart from the viciously satiric description of the coronation of the usurper Procopius and the single metaphor applied to Constantius, we find the target is in every instance an upper echelon imperial bureaucrat or one of his hangers-on.<sup>18</sup> And in each case Ammianus' purpose seems to be a negative characterization or moral criticism. It is clear to any reader of the *Res Gestae* that Ammianus tends to display a smug sense of moral superiority. Also he often criticizes public officials as lacking the very literary qualities which he so ostentatiously displays.<sup>19</sup> One suspects a certain feeling of resentment in Ammianus: he is excluded from the charmed circle of the imperial aristocracy, although he feels himself to be better than they are.<sup>20</sup>

The distribution of theatrical imagery in the *Res Gestae* is also of interest. Passages containing metaphors drawn from the stage occur regularly in all parts of the work except the books covering Julian's reign as Augustus. Not one occurs in books 22–25. Obviously Ammianus feels the whole era was morally superior.<sup>21</sup>

Why did Ammianus choose to make use of theatrical imagery in this way? Certainly it is in keeping with the general spirit of the age, with its artificiality and tendencies toward dramatic posing and viewing men as types rather than individuals.<sup>22</sup> Yet Ammianus is well known for his imitation of earlier authors, and there are literary antecedents. Suetonius provides us with a few examples such as *Tiberius* 24.1: *principatum, quamvis neque occupare confestim neque agere dubitasset, et statione militum, hoc est vi et specie dominationis adsumpta, diu tamen recusavit, impudentissimo mimo nunc adhortantis amicos increpans ut ignaros, quanta belua est imperium . . .* The comparison to the mime here is much like what we find in Ammianus.<sup>23</sup> The most likely source, however, is Cicero, the favorite author of Ammianus.<sup>24</sup> Cicero was fond of the theater and often used

<sup>18</sup> It is possible that the theatrical nature of court ceremony itself has something to do with the application of such metaphors to the courtiers. On court ceremonial in general, see S. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley 1981).

<sup>19</sup> Orfitus, an urban prefect, is criticized for lack of learning (14.6.1), as is the praetorian prefect Modestus (30.4.2).

<sup>20</sup> See for example 14.6.12–15, which sounds as if it might be based on personal experience.

<sup>21</sup> A similar phenomenon is found in the case of animal images, which are used for the same purpose; cf. Blockley (above note 2) 25–26, 183–184.

<sup>22</sup> See Auerbach and MacMullen (above note 1), also H. P. L'Orange, *Art Forms and Civic Life in the Late Roman Empire* (Princeton 1965) 24–26.

<sup>23</sup> See also *Caligula* 45.2 and *Otho* 3.2; Blockley (above note 17) 31–54 discusses the influence of Suetonius and biography on Ammianus.

<sup>24</sup> See H. Michael, *De Ammiani Marcellini studiis Ciceronianis* (diss. Breslau 1874) and P.-M. Camus, *Ammien Marcellin: Témoin des courants culturels et religieux à la fin du IV<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris 1967) 61–68.

metaphorical language drawn from the stage.<sup>25</sup> He frequently uses it in his speeches to ridicule opponents. An example is the delightful scene in the *Pro Caelio* (65) where Cicero reduces the charges against Caelius to the absurdity of the mime: *mimi ergo iam exitus, non fabulae, in quo cum clausula non invenitur, fugit aliquis e manibus, dein scabilla concrepant, aulaeum tollitur*. Thus Cicero ends a vignette in much the same way as does Ammianus at 16.6.3.<sup>26</sup> In the *Verrines* Cicero employs theatrical terminology to characterize the career of Gaius Verres:

*itaque primum illum actum istius vitae turpissimum et flagitiosissimum praetermittam.* (2.1.32)

*qualis iste in quarto actu improbitatis futurus esset?* (2.2.18)

*dubitate etiam, si potestis, quin eum iste potissimum ex omni numero delegerit cui hanc cognitoris falsi improbam personam imponeret quem et huic inimicissimum ei sibi amicissimum esse arbitraretur.* (2.2.109)

Cicero divides Verres' life into acts as if it were a play. He describes Verres himself as assigning roles (*personae*) to supporting characters. This type of stage metaphor is paralleled in Ammianus. He presents the corrupt and wicked governors Romanus (28.6.29) and Festinus (29.2.23) in a similar way. These parallels are rather general in nature. Still, as I pointed out above, Ammianus had a tremendous admiration for Cicero and often borrowed phrases from him.<sup>27</sup> It is quite possible that the orations of Cicero influenced Ammianus in his use of theatrical metaphor.

725 Elberon Ave.  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45205  
USA

<sup>25</sup> See F. A. Wright, *Cicero and the Theater* (Northampton 1931), especially 94–106 which list Cicero's metaphorical uses of stage terms. D. F. Sutton, "Cicero on the Minor Dramatic Forms" *SO* 59 (1984) 29–36 discusses briefly the use of references to the stage in characterization.

<sup>26</sup> Theatrical imagery and comic allusion abound in the *Pro Caelio*. See K. Geffcken, *Comedy in the Pro Caelio*, *Mnem. Supp.* 30 (Leiden 1973), especially 24–27 on Cael. 61–69 as a mime.

<sup>27</sup> It is fairly certain that Ammianus had read most of Cicero's speeches, including the *Verrines*. On the *Verrines* in particular see Michael (above 29) 22–23 and E. E. L. Owens, *Phraseological Parallels and Borrowings in Ammianus Marcellinus from Earlier Latin Authors* (diss. London 1958) 96–100. Some additional parallels from Cicero for the use of theatrical metaphor in invective passages are *Sest.* 166; *Phil.* 2.34; 65; *Prov. Cons.* 14.