

**The Portrayal and Role of Anger in the *Res Gestae* of Ammianus
Marcellinus**

Barbara Sidwell

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE PORTRAYAL AND ROLE OF ANGER IN THE <i>RES GESTAE</i> OF AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS	I
TABLE OF CONTENTS	III
ABSTRACT	VI
DECLARATION	VII
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS/PREFACE	VIII
INTRODUCTION	1
THESIS SUMMARY	1
AMMIANUS AND HIS HISTORY	1
ANGER WORDS USED BY AMMIANUS	5
RESEARCH QUESTIONS/HYPOTHESIS	7
AIMS/OBJECTIVES OF THE THESIS	8
SIGNIFICANCE/CONTRIBUTION TO THE DISCIPLINE	8
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODS	9
CONTENT ANALYSIS	9
A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF ANCIENT AND MODERN VIEWS ON ANGER	10
ANGER IN ANTIQUITY	11
ANGER IN PSYCHOLOGY TODAY	16
ANGER IN AMMIANUS AND PREVIOUS SCHOLARSHIP	20
SOME MODERN APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF AMMIANUS	22
CHAPTER SUMMARIES	26
THE APPENDICES	28
1. ANGER AND THE MILITARY IN THE <i>RES GESTAE</i>	30
INTRODUCTION	30
THE CAUSES OF ANGER IN THE ROMAN MILITARY	36
PRIMARY RESPONSES TO ANGER IN THE MILITARY	43
SECONDARY RESPONSES TO ANGER IN THE ROMAN MILITARY	48
CONSEQUENCES OF ANGER IN THE ROMAN MILITARY	52
COMMENTS BY AMMIANUS	57
CONCLUSION	60
2. ANGER AND PERSIANS AND BARBARIANS	64
INTRODUCTION	64
THE CAUSES OF ANGER IN BARBARIANS	70
PRIMARY RESPONSES TO ANGER IN BARBARIANS	78
SECONDARY RESPONSES TO ANGER IN BARBARIANS	83
CONSEQUENCES OF ANGER AND BARBARIANS	87
COMMENTS BY AMMIANUS	91
PERSIANS	94
SAPOR II	98
CONCLUSION	103
3. ANGER AND EMPERORS AND CAESARS IN THE <i>RES GESTAE</i>	106
INTRODUCTION	106
THE CAUSES OF ANGER FOR THE EMPERORS AND CAESARS	111
PRIMARY RESPONSES TO ANGER FOR THE EMPERORS AND CAESARS	123
SECONDARY RESPONSES TO ANGER FOR THE EMPERORS AND CAESARS	128
CONSEQUENCES OF ANGER FOR THE EMPERORS AND CAESARS	134
COMMENTS BY AMMIANUS	140

CONCLUSION	143
4. ANGER AND THE URBAN POPULACE IN THE <i>RES GESTAE</i>	146
INTRODUCTION	146
THE CAUSES OF ANGER AND THE URBAN POPULACE	151
PRIMARY RESPONSES TO ANGER IN THE ROMAN POPULACE	155
SECONDARY RESPONSES TO ANGER IN THE ROMAN POPULACE	159
CONSEQUENCES OF ANGER AND THE ROMAN POPULACE	163
COMMENTS BY AMMIANUS	166
CONCLUSION	167
5. MAGNATES AND ANGER IN THE <i>RES GESTAE</i>	169
INTRODUCTION	169
THE CAUSES OF ANGER AND MAGNATES	173
PRIMARY RESPONSES TO ANGER IN MAGNATES	178
SECONDARY RESPONSES TO ANGER IN MAGNATES	180
CONSEQUENCES OF ANGER AND MAGNATES	185
COMMENTS BY AMMIANUS	188
CONCLUSION	189
6. TACITUS AND AMMIANUS ON ANGER	191
INTRODUCTION	191
TACITUS AND THE ANGER OF THE ROMAN MILITARY	195
TACITUS AND THE ANGER OF BARBARIANS AND OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS	203
TACITUS AND THE ANGER OF EMPERORS	209
TACITUS AND THE ANGER OF MAGNATES, INCLUDING EQUESTRIANS	218
TACITUS AND THE ANGER OF THE POPULACE	223
CONCLUSION	227
CONCLUSION	230
AMMIANUS AND ANCIENT AUTHORS	231
CHAPTER 1	233
CHAPTER 2	235
CHAPTER 3	236
CHAPTER 4	238
CHAPTER 5	239
CHAPTER 6	240
FINDINGS	241
APPENDIX A. TABLATURE OF ANGER IN THE <i>RES GESTAE</i>	248
APPENDIX B. CATEGORIES OF ANGER IN THE <i>RES GESTAE</i>	257
APPENDIX C. TABLATURE OF ANGER WORDS IN AMMIANUS AND TACITUS	259
APPENDIX D. ANGER EPISODES IN TACITUS	273
HYPOTHETICAL EXAMPLES OF ANGER OF ANGER NOT INCLUDED IN THE ABOVE TABLE	290
APPENDIX E. THE CAUSES OF ANGER IN TACITUS	292
APPENDIX F. ANGER SUBJECTS IN AMMIANUS AND TACITUS	296
APPENDIX G: SUMMARY OF ANGER WORDS PER BOOK IN THE <i>RES GESTAE</i>	297
APPENDIX H. OVERVIEW OF ANGER IN THE <i>RES GESTAE</i>	298
APPENDIX I. HYPOTHETICAL, GENERALISED & DENIED ANGER	344
APPENDIX J. SUCCESS AND FAILURE OF ANGER	347

ABBREVIATIONS	353
BIBLIOGRAPHY	355
PRIMARY TEXTS	355
DICTIONARIES, CONCORDANCES AND COMMENTARIES	361
SECONDARY SOURCES	362
INDEX	379

ABSTRACT

The hypothesis for this research project is: Ammianus' treatment of the emotion of anger reveals as much, if not more, about his education, values, beliefs, personality, than it does about the people he writes about and that he sees in emotion a major causative factor. This research contained within aims to contribute to a greater depth of understanding of the role of the key emotion of anger within the individual and collective lives of the characters as portrayed by Ammianus Marcellinus and how he uses them to influence the reader and colour his narrative. Scholars now tend to examine Ammianus to discern or evaluate the historical reliability of his authorship. Thus there is scope for examining how Ammianus shapes his narrative and tries to influence the reader by his portraits of individuals and collective characters. Although this approach seems an obvious one, the particular value of this thesis and of its contribution to late Roman historiography is that no one has hitherto done this in an extended and thorough way. While we welcome the importance Ammianus gives to emotions as historical agents, his treatment and representations of them have idiosyncratic features that crucially affect any assessment of him as a subjective observer and reporter of Rome and its past. Making the study keyword based reduces the need to make (possibly erroneous) inferences about whether it is really anger or some related emotion that we are dealing with. This has then lead to the compilation of lists of relevant anger words in Latin that relate to the individuals and groups who are the basis for my study.¹ Following this analysis of the use of anger by Ammianus Marcellinus through a careful study of his *Res Gestae* and the characterisations he incorporated within it is hoped that we can better understand the discourse of Ammianus, by unearthing the bias, the propagandist elements and the general trends of his portrayals, through keywords that refer directly to anger. In this way it is anticipated that we can better understand the purpose behind many of these representations.

¹ I.e. emperors, magnates, soldiers, general populace, non-Romans.

DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text of the thesis.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS/PREFACE

This thesis discusses and analyses the use of anger in the *Res Gestae* of Ammianus Marcellinus. The time frame covered is from AD 354-378, and includes a diverse area covering most of the Roman Empire from Gaul to Germania, to Illyricum, Spain, Africa, Thrace, Syria and Italy. There are even major books that cover the wars in Persia that occupied so much of the Eastern emperors' reigns. The period is contained in the extant volumes of Ammianus' works, from Books 14-31, but my thesis encapsulates also the first century of the Empire, when Tacitus explored the intricacies of the Roman world from his own perspective, observations and indeed pure guesswork in regards to anger in Roman and barbarian societies.

Although one can hardly make the claim that Ammianus has been under-studied, there still is scope for bringing new light into the emotional framework that surprisingly builds up much of the narrative. Though detailed discussions of anger in antiquity are currently being produced, no one has as yet produced such a comprehensive guide to anger in both Ammianus and to a lesser extent, Tacitus. This is therefore an attempt to fill that void in our knowledge, and provides a comprehensive framework from which inferences can be accumulated and built upon. In fact this sets the groundwork for further studies that could deal with the emotions that I was forced through natural constraints to leave out, such as fear and grief. In regards to anger, this thesis is exhaustive, but hopefully not overly burdensome, and I have attempted to provide all the scholarship in English and other European languages that is relevant, although I am sure I have made unfortunate omissions. The result is an almost complete guide to the *Res Gestae*, its various subject matters and human beings through the way in which anger affected all these individuals and events.

The approach I have taken may resemble a sort of content analysis that one would find in areas outside of Classics. I have used this approach deliberately as it seemed the logical choice to provide a type of formulaic approach to the application of cohesion to such a large pool of data. With a concrete methodology I have tried not to remain static in my findings, but to provide some depth to my discussion to add a sense of what Ammianus himself must have thought and felt in this period, or at least what he wishes his readers to believe he felt.

'How did Ammianus perceive that anger affected this group, or individual, or event?' is the underlying question throughout this thesis, and to an extent it determines its shape. Such a question, which examines the very psyche of the author, is extremely complex and difficult to answer, even in our modern times when biographies and autobiographies of authors are common. For Ammianus Marcellinus this is almost impossible. However, unless a judgement is made in regards to the personality of the historian, it is difficult to write anything meaningful in regards to unearthing the complexities behind the writing of the *Res Gestae* and the approach to its processes. This is an attempt to provide an answer to the question of a late antique historian's understanding of emotional cause and effect and how this shaped and formed his narrative. Although, as only one aspect of his writing is being looked at (with others coming in only now and again), this cannot entirely provide a complete answer. Many topics, such as the influence of rhetoric, Greek and Roman literary predecessors, religion and politics, deserve far more attention than I could possibly have paid here. I have touched on all these issues, but briefly and am aware that more could be written and indeed has been by authors worthier than I. It is hoped that my arguments put forth in the thesis are not adversely affected by these oversights. I do not deal with the wide range of other emotions that Ammianus incorporates within his text to any significant extent, and am aware that this may provide some limitations, as there was of course more reason than simply anger that prompted an emperor into action. This was not a deliberate choice, but simply a much-needed measure to restrict myself to the

required word limit that is imposed on all theses of the current day. Though this limits my thesis to being very specific in its choice of subject matters, the inclusion of more emotions or subject matter would have resulted in too much diversification. This thesis was the result of developing an obsession with Late Antiquity whilst studying Early Byzantine history as an undergraduate student, with my lecturer and tutor being Dr Paul Tuffin. Whilst other aspects of Byzantine history attracted me, I always returned to that enigmatic historian of the fourth century, Ammianus Marcellinus and the marvellous way in which he portrayed himself within his own work as a sort of alternative hero. In the footnotes, references to historians, mostly Roman, reflect the ties Ammianus had to previous literary geniuses, and this is something I found fascinating in his work. Translation of the Latin is a complex matter, and I am indebted to Hamilton's work as I make reference to in Chapter 1, but where necessary the translations are my own, and I apologise for any mistakes therein.

Throughout the two years I have worked on this thesis, not including the extra year I had simply doing research, I have received enormous assistance from several people. First and foremost is my supervisor. Dr Ron Newbold guided my initial steps into research and helped to mould my writing style, although he is not responsible for my deficiencies. Ron has been a continual and permanent feature of my undergraduate and postgraduate years. He was my tutor in first year Classics. My teacher in Latin and Roman Imperial History. My lecturer for Classical Mythology and my supervisor for Honours, where I looked at the emperors Caligula, Nero and Commodus and how, by coming to power at a young age, they were variously corrupted. Now his breadth of toleration has been stretched as he guided me through the complex processes of writing a PhD thesis and I owe him a huge debt of gratitude for that. Next the support of my best and dearest friend, Dr Danijel Dzino, whose knowledge of all things ancient has proved invaluable to me. Also his guidance was exceptional, as I pushed boundaries and explored new angles of sociology and ethnography, previously unknown to me. Danijel deserves particular mention for his support, friendship and criticism. For chats, coffees and the odd glass of wine, I am very much grateful. Also I would like to thank the rest of the Classics staff at the University of Adelaide who are always willing to answer questions and provide feedback on aspects of my work. These include my secondary supervisor, Dr Margaret O'Hea, who has a vast knowledge of late antiquity.

B.S.

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