NEWS *and* FRONTIER CONSCIOUSNESS *in the* LATE ROMAN EMPIRE

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For Don and Kim Graham,
parentes carissimi et fideles

τοιαῦτα πολλάκις ἐγίνετο καὶ γίνεται,
καὶ πῶς ταῦτα συντελείας σημεῖα;

Julian, *Fragmenta* 1

Preface and Acknowledgments

This book investigates the place of imperial frontiers in a late Roman worldview. The volume argues that as the Roman Empire declined in terms of relative power, consciousness of the physical boundaries of the Empire increased. While this might seem obvious from a modern perspective in which clearly defined boundaries, traced on maps, define nations, it constituted a profound and unprecedented shift in thought. The ancients were not accustomed to thinking about frontiers as physical or static boundaries. Accompanying and motivating this mental shift was the proliferation of news from and about the frontiers.

This is not a study of foreign relations, military strategy, or propaganda, although recent works in these fields are indispensable to my book. The focus, then, is not limited to policymakers, political figures, and military leaders, although such persons shared assumptions about the world with Romans of all types. This study looks beyond official functionaries and explores the perceptions of people of various backgrounds. Unlike most Roman frontier studies, this book examines religion and belief, pagan and Christian, in the late Roman Empire. Too often, recent historians have projected their own modern beliefs onto the Roman past. The assumption that clear-thinking people—army leaders, for example—did not let religious beliefs or cosmological assumptions influence their defense of the Empire is evident in nearly all studies of imperial frontiers. While most self-professed studies of Late Antiquity see spiritual aspects at its core, most late Roman frontier/military studies

completely ignore religious and cosmological elements. Why this occurs is a central question that prompted this study. A variety of very recent works helped in formulating answers.

Originally, I employed a comparative approach to show that perceptions of the frontiers varied in different regions of the Empire. Ultimately, however, this proved inadequate. The study of news proliferation demonstrated instead that the Empire possessed a significant amount of intellectual and cultural unity—a sense of Roman identity that trumped specific local identities, real as they were. A comparative approach, though, did reveal that focusing on other locales instead of Western Europe (which most frontier studies have examined) suggests an alternate picture of the Roman Empire. Barbarian studies of the late western Empire, significant in their own right, are not the same as frontier studies. Focusing on the North African and the eastern frontier suggests that there was a general late Roman frontier consciousness.

One's first book, of course, is a place to acknowledge a large number of debts, some rather long-standing, accumulated along the way.

One of my oldest debts is to a community to which I no longer belong. Like those people living in Late Antiquity, I grew up in a world full of prophetic speculation. As a child who was raised and nurtured in fundamentalist churches both on the American West Coast and in the Deep South, I was entranced by the frequent sermons on how the violation of one crucial frontier—that between the United States and the "Evil Empire"—was a tangible indicator of the coming of the Antichrist, the Rapture, the Battle of Armageddon, even the Apocalypse itself. Preachers claimed that ancient prophecies involving Israel, the armies of Gog and Magog, and the "Great Bear from the North" were literally being fulfilled before our eyes. I knew what it meant to live with a frontier consciousness in that Cold War world. Sunday after Sunday, I heard that scriptural prophecies were crucial for interpreting current and future events. I would later learn that Romans of the third, fourth, and fifth centuries used Hebrew prophecies in much the same way. Many of the questions that produced this book were, I suspect, gestating in my young mind before I ever encountered a historical source.

Three teachers laid the groundwork for this book well before the research began. My undergraduate mentor, John Matzko, taught me by word and example what it means to be a historian. Ralph Mathisen, my master's adviser, introduced me to the exciting period of Late Antiquity. My research and teaching interest in cultural and intellectual history was sparked by Kenneth Gouwens.

More recently, several institutions have been crucial for this book. The College of Arts and Letters at Michigan State provided two dissertation

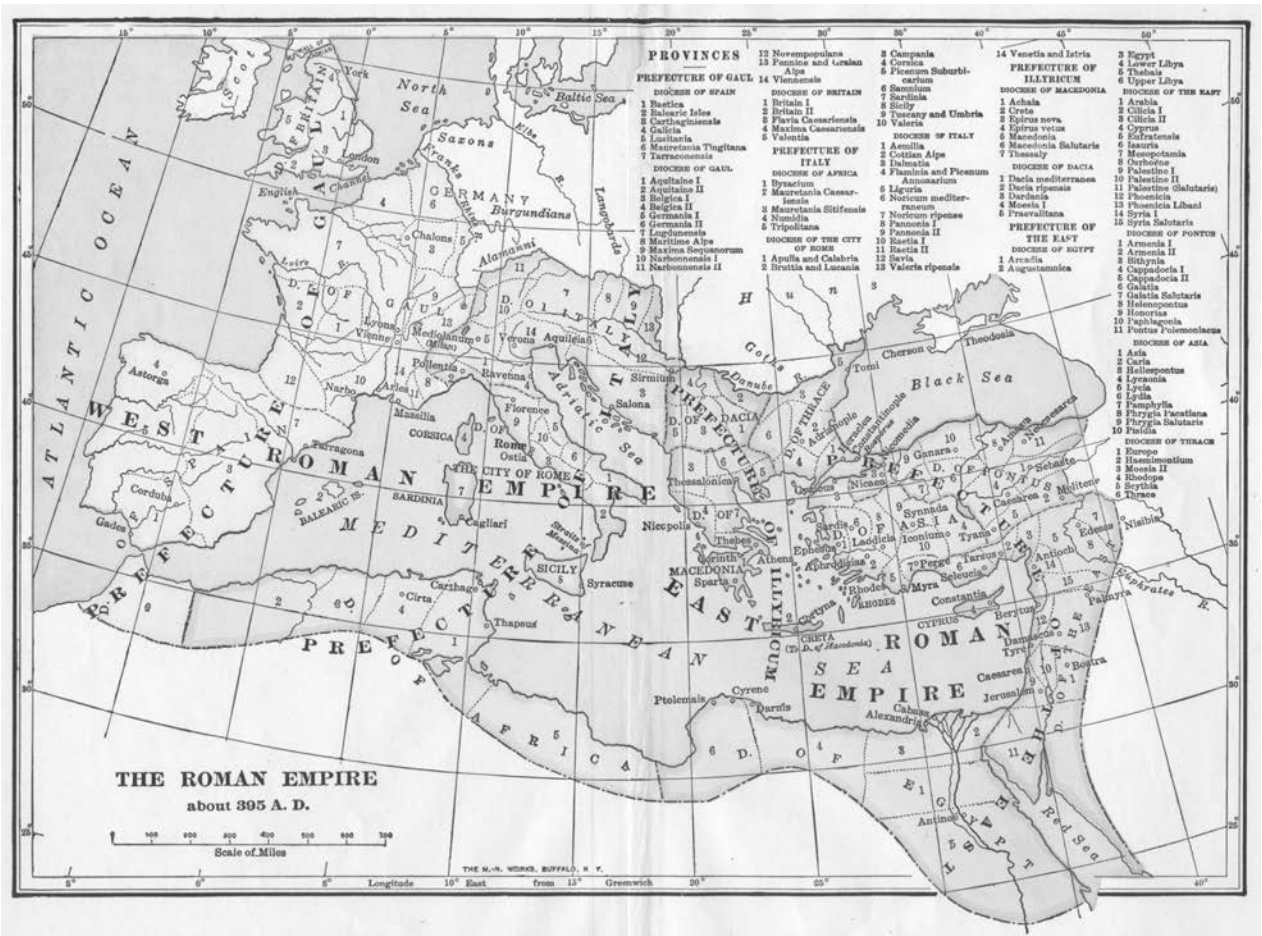

Fig. 1. The Roman Empire, ca. A.D. 395.

grants for research in North Africa and Turkey and for finishing the dissertation. The library, staff, and residents at the American Research Institute in Turkey—Ankara afforded helpful resources and stimulating conversation. The Introduction to the Humanities Program at Stanford University provided a generous research leave from teaching in the fall of 2002 that was essential for transforming my dissertation into book form. Grove City College provided a subvention grant to help with design costs.

My doctoral mentor, John W. Eadie, shaped the project throughout, especially by his interesting and challenging questions, which regularly sent me scurrying off in new directions. Somehow, he also helped me realize that I could answer some of the more intriguing ones. Joseph Scholten and Christopher Celenza read my dissertation thoroughly and posed questions that have guided my years of rethinking and revision. Peter Vinten-Johansen taught me much about rewriting.

Two anonymous readers for the University of Michigan Press provided very helpful and encouraging reviews that both challenged and clarified my thinking in foundational ways. Both saved me from some egregious errors and omissions and improved all of the chapters.

The following friends and colleagues read and commented insightfully on earlier outlines and drafts: Jan Bulman, Carol Cole, Robert Gee, and Alicia Walker. At later stages, conversations with Cindy Nimchuk and Steven L. Jones have helped me sort through some thorny issues involving communication and culture. Bruno Ferrer-Higueras provided some fascinating references and lively exchange on the book's argument. David Naugle graciously read and insightfully commented on sections handling worldview issues. Christine Zitrides and Alicia Walker gave helpful advice on illustrations. Two students at Grove City College, Leah Ayers and Mary Baldauff, provided editorial assistance and helped prepare the General Index. Andrew Welton prepared the *Index Locorum*.

My wife, Becky, has been an ardent supporter at all levels and stages. In addition to proofreading help, she skillfully navigated our trips to both the Roman North African and the eastern frontiers. Estelle May and Sarah Ellen must be thanked for so often and graciously agreeing to share daddy's lap with a computer.

Most of all, I thank Don and Kim Graham, beloved and faithful parents, who have encouraged learning and growing in many ways. The dedication is but a small token of gratitude for your sacrifices, great and small, in my education.

Contents

Illustrations

Abbreviations

Amm. Marc.	Ammianus Marcellinus. *Res Gestae*. Ed. and trans. J. C. Rolfe. 3 vols. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982 (Loeb Classical Library).
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*. Ed. H. Temporini and W. Haase. Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1972–.
BAR	British Archaeological Reports, Oxford.
CC	*Corpus Christianorum,* series *Latina*. Brepols: Turnhout, 1953–.
CIL	*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*. Berlin, 1863–.
CSCO	*Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*. Louvain, 1903–.
CT	*Codex Theodosianus*. Trans. C. Pharr. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952.
D&L	Dodgeon, M. H., and S. N. C. Lieu, eds. *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars (*A.D. *226–363): A Documentary History*. London: Routledge, 1991.
De Civ. D.	Augustine. *De Civitate Dei: The City of God against the Pagans*. Trans. W. M. Green. 7 vols. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963.

ep.; *epp.*	*Epistula* (epistle); *epistulae* (epistles).
frag.	fragment
ILS	*Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*. Ed. H. Dessau. Berlin: Weidmannos, 1892–1916.
JRA	*Journal of Roman Archaeology*. Ann Arbor, 1987–.
JRS	*Journal of Roman Studies*. London, 1911–.
LA	Bowersock, G. W., P. Brown, and O. Grabar, eds. *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999.
or.	*Oration* (oration).
Panegyrici, N&R	Nixon, C. E. V., and B. S. Rodgers, eds. *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors: The* Panegyrici Latini: *Introduction, Translation, and Historical Commentary with the Latin Text of R. A. B. Mynors*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.
Zosimus	Zosimus. *New History: A Translation with Commentary by R. T. Ridley*. Byzantina Australiensia 2. Canberra: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1982.

Introduction

A little over fifty years after the Roman emperor Jovian (r. A.D. 363–64) ceded the frontier city of Nisibis to the Persian Empire in A.D. 363, St. Augustine sat musing far away in North Africa. "Almost in living memory," he wrote, Terminus, the god of boundaries, had given ground. Jovian's surrender of Nisibis and more than a dozen other frontier cities followed on the death of the emperor Julian the Apostate (r. A.D. 361–63), the mastermind of this disastrous campaign against the Persians. The Nisibis episode in particular was to Augustine much more than the surrender of a city; it signaled, in fact, the transformation of the crucial eastern frontier. Jovian's concessions established the boundaries of Empire (*imperii fines*), said Augustine, "where they still are today."[1]

Putting the episode in a larger context, Augustine looked back to the last time something like this had happened. Nearly two and a half centuries before Jovian, the emperor Hadrian (r. A.D. 117–38) likewise had shrunk the boundaries of the Roman Empire (*termini imperii romani*), but the regions he had lost (Armenia, Mesopotamia, and Assyria) had, to some extent, been regained, Augustine related. Jovian's loss thus was more crippling and more permanent and certainly more impressed on the Roman collective memory.[2]

The point of the Nisibis exemplum, alluded to three times in the *City of God,* is to underscore the weakness of Terminus, whose job it was to guarantee that "no one would be able to disturb the Roman frontiers [*Romanos terminos*]."[3] Augustine taunted that Terminus was not supposed to yield even

to Jove but had in fact yielded not to Germans or Persians but to the "will of Hadrian," "the rashness of Julian," and now, apparently permanently, "the necessity of Jovian." These passages reveal much about late Roman frontier consciousness. The amount of interest shown by Augustine and many others in this frontier shift demonstrates an unprecedented focus on frontiers, even by those far from them. This interest likewise shows a break from the earlier empire, when even larger concessions could be all but forgotten.

The loss of Nisibis, *Orientis firmissimum claustrum*, was etched deeply into Roman memory. From the moments immediately afterward until long after the "fall" of the western Empire, writers reflected on its implications.[4] Their accounts show how indelibly the later Roman frontier consciousness was written into the history. Zosimus, writing in the early sixth century, records that after the emperor Augustus had established the Tigris and the Euphrates as the limits of the Roman Empire, "never was this territory abandoned" until Julian's death, which occasioned Jovian's retreat. Again, any earlier concessions, such as Hadrian's and even more recently Aurelian's in the late third century, seem forgotten completely. And Agathias, writing in the later sixth century, characterizes Jovian's "shameful and disgraceful" truce as so bad that it is "even now a cause of ruin to the Roman state, by which he withdrew it into new boundaries, having cut off further the hinder parts of his own empire."[5] Such descriptions of the redrawing of boundaries begin only in the historiography of the later Roman Empire.

Historical Research Problem

At the heart of Roman thinking about their imperial frontiers was the notion of *imperium sine fine*—the imperial power without limit, without bound. According to a dominant ideology from at least the second century B.C. and continuing into the later Empire, the Roman Empire was an organic entity that never had to define frontiers as it fulfilled its destiny to expand throughout the whole world, the *orbis terrarum*. But by the third century A.D., Romans began to express their empire more often in terms of a defined territory. There were some immediate precedents, pointing to a transition in the second century, but by the third century, there is a distinct late Roman frontier consciousness. Behind such reconstructions as the one from Augustine—one voice among many, Christian as well as pagan—lies a "frontier consciousness," those beliefs and ideas that Romans held about their frontiers and how they were perceived. These beliefs, mediated against background knowledge,[6] were specifically challenged and confirmed by news and information coming from those frontiers, especially during the later Empire.

From the third century onward, the flow of news from the frontiers intensified, reaching people and places on a regular basis in unprecedented ways, gradually shaping an image of frontiers different from that held by Romans of the early Empire.[7] Increased threats or perceived threats at the frontiers can help explain this—but only in part. At this time emperors began to frequent the frontier regions, largely in response to internal insurrections and/or external threats, generating more news. This study analyzes the origin, volume, and character of news from and about the frontiers.

What did Romans of the later Empire think about their Imperial frontiers? Did these Romans think differently about frontiers than did Romans under the Principate? Did the average Roman of this period without administrative or military connections care about frontiers or even think at all in terms of them? How did news of or from frontiers reach interior areas? Did the so-called Christianization of the Empire cause a change in the perception of frontiers? These are the questions that undergird this study.

The late Roman frontier consciousness was negotiated through a process that took into account background knowledge (along with inherent worldviews) and news from and about frontiers. Particularly between the third and fifth centuries, Romans understood frontiers more as physical and/or territorial than as just divisions between people or ethnic groups. The change came about from the heightened proliferation of frontier news concurrent with the Roman Empire's decline in relative power. A now-dominant school of frontier studies claims that "frontiers cannot be shown to have performed any historically recoverable function other than to have accommodated the contact of Roman and indigenous society."[8] This book counters by arguing that static frontiers did play an important role in the worldview of Romans of the later Empire.

Regional Considerations

It has long been acknowledged that the frontier took on different forms in different regions of the Roman Empire. There never was one paradigm against which all frontiers were measured.[9] This study focuses primarily on two regions—Anatolia to the eastern frontier and North Africa—while including other areas as well.[10] Larger debates concerning Romanization and cultural unity within the Empire have set the contours for much of the research presented here. This account attempts to acknowledge local variations while positing generalizable "Roman" attributes. The extent to which the later Roman Empire represents a cultural unity becomes an issue when looking at news as well as the official and unofficial infrastructures that served as the essential vehicles for that flow.[11]

Focusing away from Western Europe allows for a perspective that deemphasizes the traditional preoccupation with Germanic settlers who would transgress the western frontiers into oblivion. One can read texts without inserting into them our own expectation that "the barbarians are coming" and that they are going to stay. A regional studies approach can help clarify more globally held Roman views and can help qualify generalizations that have been shaped disproportionately by a traditional focus on the Rhine-Danube frontier.

To be sure, Anatolia and North Africa developed in different ways. Anatolia has throughout recorded history offered routes for conquerors, travelers, armies, and traders. Here, civilizations mingled at the crossroads of civilizations, the meeting point between East and West, establishing patterns of information flow across cultural boundaries.

North Africa, conversely, lacked the change and interchange that were the hallmarks of the Anatolian scene. Certainly, a variety of civilizations had occupied common space here over time—Phoenician, Carthaginian, Numidian, Berber, Roman, Vandal, Byzantine. A long history of transhumance highlights the moving, "bedouin" character of a large portion of the population, especially at the frontier zone. Rarely, however, has North Africa served as a crossroads or a point of blending between civilizations. Here there were no long-term frontier markets at the limits of civilizations and at which groups mingled. The real story of North Africa has been one of continuity. The Roman architecture here, such as temples at Dougga and the famous tricapitol at Sbeitla, maintains a certain Numidian character, for example. North Africa lacked the volume of Roman travelers passing through and had far fewer troops moving through (or stationed here) and fewer pilgrims.

Yet in both the East and North Africa, there was consciousness of a frontier that ended the holdings of the late Roman Empire. The eastern frontier dominates available accounts. Ammianus Marcellinus, Julian, Libanius, and others refer to this frontier and tell, to a certain extent, how armies and civilians related to it. The North African frontier is much less visible in extant sources, and the threats here, although real, were not as momentous as on the eastern frontier or as reported on throughout the rest of the Empire. North Africa thus serves as a test not only for an East/West comparison but also for an "active versus passive" frontier.

These two frontier zones themselves required different immediate methods to maintain them in Roman antiquity. In the East, the great rivers of Mesopotamia had always formed a part of a frontier, if only ideologically. Mountains and open spaces often served as the limit, but it is clear enough in sources and in a growing body of recent studies that the rivers were imagined as barriers

in the Roman Empire. In North Africa, there was some recognition of mountains, but the frontier was seen more as an artificial boundary. The extensive *fossatum* and *clausura* (ditch and wall) networks there continue to provoke much discussion, but their function(s) remain(s) far from clear. Nevertheless, their presence does suggest an idea in the minds of North Africans of a physical limit to Roman holdings.

Likewise, thinking of what was on the other side of the frontier differed for both regions. To many North Africans, the other side of their frontier teemed with raiding nomads and mythical peoples such as the "outermost Garamantes," caricatured in Roman literature from Vergil onward. With so few campaigns beyond North African frontiers, Romans had very little idea of what actually existed there. On the other side of the Eastern frontier was a long-established people, the Persians, conceded by Romans to be in the range of "civilized" and with whom it was possible to negotiate treaties over frontier boundaries. Romans traveled to many parts of the Persian Empire, particularly in military campaign or embassies, and some left accounts of the geography, topography, and people of the Persian Empire.

Along with these differences, it is important to note the commonalities that held together diverse regions of the Roman Empire. In his recent study of imperial ideology and provincial loyalty in the Roman Empire, C. Ando makes a case that the Roman Empire was held together by a consensus between the imperial center and its far-flung provinces. Inhabitants of the Roman Empire, he argues, did participate in a certain intellectual and cultural unity backed up by Rome's mechanisms of control. I explore one aspect of the "profound and widespread redefinition . . . of individuals' relations with each other, their localities, and the larger community of their empire" that Ando postulates.[12] Likewise, in her influential study of Late Antique ceremony, S. MacCormack concludes that a marked Roman unity was expressed and cemented in acts of consensus articulated in ceremonies.[13] Although much recent work has questioned the degree of cultural unity within the Roman Empire, it seems clear that at some ideological level, being a Roman involved sharing a certain set of beliefs or participating in certain aspects of the ceremonial life of the Empire.

Chronological Focus

Finally, a few words on the specific time period of this study. In his seminal work, *The World of Late Antiquity,* P. Brown characterizes the period as a time of "shifting and redefinition of the boundaries of the classical world after AD 200."[14] This observation, written at the dawn, so to speak, of Late Antique studies, continues to fuel research on this fascinating period. Brown himself

extends the period from this starting point to the mid–eighth century. The periodization of the present study is a bit shorter, bounded on one extreme by the "third-century crisis" and on the other by the major barbarian invasions of the early fifth century. The term *Late Antiquity* is retained throughout in spite of the difficulties of applying this term to this limited time period.[15] In the title I have used "Late Roman Empire," which I deem more appropriate since this study deals with the third through the early fifth century and since I focus almost exclusively on Romans and not on non-Roman barbarians, Persians, or Arabs. Even so, I realize that this designation is not free from problems either, since, of course, the Roman Empire was nowhere near its end in the East at this time, and my designation itself would seem to privilege the view of the West.

Beginning with the later part of the third century seems natural enough as a starting point—there is much precedent for beginning here. Importantly, the phenomenon that I analyze—frontier consciousness—was solidified during this time. Taking the early fifth century as my ending point is not so obvious. In some ways this might appear to be turning back the historiographical clock forty to fifty years to a time when everything wonderful and praiseworthy about Rome was seen as crashing down with the onslaught of the savage barbarians. But my focus as well as my conclusions, I trust, lead far away from this outmoded picture.

Much has been and continues to be written about the barbarian incursions into the later Roman Empire. This book intentionally keeps its focus off of the barbarians and on the ways that Romans conceived of their frontiers. Of course, the perceived "violation" of those frontiers by barbarians is a major issue, but it is possible, I think, to keep the focus on Roman perceptions of frontiers even after the barbarian settlements. Also, I have tried to balance analysis of active versus inactive frontiers. A tale only of transgressed frontier zones to the exclusion of inactive or less active frontiers would be imbalanced and would detract from a reconstruction of a general late Roman worldview.

Violated frontiers are well presented in sources, focused as they are on military engagements and other disasters on the frontiers. Getting past such bias might be impossible, but recognizing how it shapes the sources is a crucial step toward understanding Roman frontier consciousness. If S. Mattern is correct about a Roman worldview/value system during the Principate—and I rather suspect she is—that Romans of this earlier period relied on honor, competition, and revenge in pushing frontiers outward, then when that system fell apart in the third century, another mind-set must have risen to challenge it, at the least, if not replace it altogether.[16] That new mind-set is the topic of this

book. During this period, people came to imagine their *imperium* as an Empire with literal spatial and territorial reference as opposed to the exlusively ethnic focus of earlier times. Looking at this period provides a window into the changing perceptions of frontiers and into the emergence of a distinct late Roman frontier consciousness.

PART I

Worldview

1

Frontiers, News, and Worldview

❧ ❧ ❧

> But even the deafest and most stay-at-home began to hear queer tales; and those whose business took them to the borders saw strange things.
> —J. R. R. Tolkien, *Fellowship of the Ring*

This chapter locates the scope of this study, both inside and outside of the contours of existing frontier studies and within methodological paradigms that have informed my reading of the ancient sources. It provides definitions for the terms and concepts central to this study. Frontier studies are fraught with the normal dangers inherent in a subject with a high level of interest and debate but only few and fragmentary sources, which themselves often beg multiple or even contradictory readings. A detailed review of the literature will help frame the basic questions.

Review of the Literature

Roman frontier studies go back centuries. Their sheer volume suggests a topic of importance and enduring interest.[1] In a basic sense, a study of imperial frontiers helps one to define the term *Roman*. Scholars have found in frontier studies valuable information about Roman economy, society, strategy, defense, foreign policy, and even embryonic notions of state and nation. Contemporary and ongoing interest in Roman frontiers is clear in the well-established series of *Limeskongresses* begun in 1949 and still going strong

(sixteen volumes to date). The more recent biennial Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity Conference has resulted in three published volumes and more on the way.[2] Owing in part to the interdisciplinary efforts of frontier studies in general, research on Roman frontiers has added to traditional historical studies methodologies borrowed from archaeology, anthropology, sociology, and literary studies.

The study of Roman imperial frontiers in Late Antiquity remains, though, despite a few protests from the peripheries of frontier scholarship, entrenched in a military/political framework. Little has been done from cultural and intellectual perspectives specifically about the imperial frontiers. This is not to say that a military/political framework is wrongheaded; rather, it is to suggest that there are other viable perspectives that must be taken up if we are more fully to come to terms with a Roman and, more specifically in this case, with a late Roman or Late Antique, experience of frontiers. There are, of course, serious political and military considerations that must guide, at some level, any study of imperial frontiers. Ancient writings usually speak of frontiers, as with much else, exclusively in military terms. Our foremost historical source for the period, Ammianus Marcellinus, himself gives throughout the perspective of a military figure.[3]

Recent literature addresses some of the central issues that guide this study by focusing on four basic areas: (1) the concept of background knowledge, defined as geographical knowledge, or how Romans thought about their world in terms of geography and limits, an area in which recent studies of Roman theoretical and historical geography are to the fore; (2) topography and the question of "natural frontiers," or debates over the role of rivers and mountains as literal frontiers; (3) news and information, particularly the dynamics, contexts, and structures of news and information flow in the later Roman Empire; (4) the intangibles of mentalities, worldviews, and ideology and how these related to the ways that Romans viewed their place in the world and any limits to their claims on a portion of it.

First, several recent scholars have debated how background knowledge might have influenced Roman perceptions of frontiers. Their questions are crucial here because it is against and in terms of such background knowledge that news was reported and understood. Discussion of news and information flow only makes sense against the backdrop of the Romans' knowledge of geographical space and topographical context. Whether their knowledge was right or wrong in relation to findings of modern satellite mapping projects, it is important to explore the knowledge the ancients held and the assumptions they shared. To some extent this is a question loaded with a priori behaviorist assumptions because it holds that the way the Romans acted and thought

depended on the way they perceived their world. This assumption may be contrasted with a structural determinist one that assumes they acted on the way the world actually is.[4]

Some have concluded that geographic background knowledge in particular played a crucial part in Roman perceptions of frontiers. The questions these scholars raise shape chapter 2. A. D. Lee's study of strategic intelligence and foreign relations in Late Antiquity argues that it is crucial to look at background knowledge when analyzing the diffusion and acquisition of information.[5] His work contends that frontiers were information permeable and explores how knowledge of geography and environment helped Romans imagine regions they had never seen, often by a consistent pattern of news flow. He shows in an original way how the human context of frontier zones—urbanization and road patterns, for example—affected their "imageability" in the Roman mind and what role new information played in that process. B. Shaw consistently has argued that such factors as roads, trade routes, settlements, and corresponding architectural arrangements played a part of this human context and must be taken into account in any study of the ancient world. Study of ancient landscapes—the human context—he maintains, must go beyond the mere recounting of features and connect them to the humans who lived there.[6] Columns, triumphal arches, public artwork—all of these played a part in reflecting the setting within which human minds could imagine their world. Frontiers functioned in this context—even if only in the imagination of frontier populations or travelers such as pilgrims, merchants, or soldiers on campaign. As a recent work on worldviews and space has pointed out, "images of space are influenced by settlement pattern, mobility, and means of communication."[7] The very way the Romans viewed their world was influenced by the human context of settlement, mobility, and ease of communication.

F. Millar, the first Roman historian systematically to treat information as a viable historical research problem within frontier studies, explores the role of background geographic and ethnographic knowledge that would have guided emperors and advisers as they worked within a certain conceptual framework of the empire.[8] Although his focus throughout, like Lee's, is on policy decisions, he was an innovator in getting historians to think about the dynamics of information flowing from frontiers. Millar concluded that frontiers were information barriers—a contention that Lee convincingly challenges. C. Nicolet, in a unique work that has introduced Roman historians to theoretical historical geography, concludes that Romans, particularly of the early Empire, needed a certain perception of geographic space in order to set boundaries to their empire.[9] He analyzes how Romans

perceived geographic space and how those perceptions, in part, shaped their understanding of boundaries. As he writes,

> what interested me is not so much the spatial and territorial reality of the Roman Empire at its foundation, but the awareness of it possessed by the main players: the Romans and their adversaries, the ruling classes and the subjects. In a study such as this, geography should not be understood as a reality but as a representation of that reality.

"Geography," he continues, is the "knowledge and representation of the earth."[10] D. Braund, in his various analyses of the Roman frontier in the Caucasus region, concludes that geographical knowledge as well as geographical myth played an important role in how Romans imagined their frontiers.[11] He opens up new avenues for research by asking what Romans thought about their geography and how that affected the way they acted and reacted in response to those assumptions. Particularly, his approach expands the range of sources and approaches one may use in exploring background knowledge. C. R. Whittaker, following Nicolet to some extent, argues that perceptions of geographic space, of which frontiers played a part, are crucial to national solidarity.[12] The first section of his recent survey of frontiers explores how Romans, again mostly of the early Empire, imagined the world and the space of their Empire within it. He argues that one must take into account the knowledge Romans shared about their geography and their cosmology.

Other historians have downplayed the role of background geographic knowledge in Roman perceptions of their frontiers. Many of these historians, implicitly at least, point to the "primitive state" of Roman knowledge of geography and topography compared to a "true" (that is, modern) geographic rendering necessary for legitimate background knowledge. In this sense, most of these writers would be structural determinists in that they assume that people act primarily on the basis of the way the world is rather than on the basis of the way they perceive the world to be. D. Cherry, in a recent work on frontier society in North Africa, concludes that Romans knew—or, rather, cared—little about geography.[13] Such assumptions, it seems, use a modern yardstick of geographical knowledge and refuse to elevate Roman thinking about geography to the level of *real* geography. Cherry's assumptions about the relationship between geography and frontier studies come across in his claim that frontiers performed no "historically recoverable function other than to have accommodated contact."[14] In short, to him, Romans simply did not think about frontiers in terms of or against a set of background assumptions that may be termed geography or geographic background knowledge.

B. Isaac, in probably the most important book on Roman frontiers written in the last twenty years, is less adamant than Cherry on this point but nonetheless works with some of the same assumptions.[15] Through detailed studies of Roman geographic knowledge of the early Empire, Isaac concludes that the focus of Roman imperialism in the frontier zones was always ethnic and had little to do with geographic or background knowledge. In fact, he disparages Roman "knowledge" of geography, a crucial impediment, as he puts it, to any global strategizing about frontiers. The assumption here, it seems, is that because Romans did not grasp a modern and scientific understanding of geography, they were therefore unable to strategize effectively with their frontiers, and thus they did not really think in terms of literal territorial frontiers. Such conclusions, I will argue, do not seem to follow for the late Empire in particular. There is no necessary connection between sharpened perceptions of frontiers and the type of "Grand Strategy" thinking that Isaac is challenging.[16] J. C. Mann likewise concludes that Romans could never have had anything close to a Grand Strategy with their frontiers, in part because they had a poor knowledge of geography and cartography.[17] Again, the standard is modern understanding of the way the world is. S. Mattern also argues, essentially, that geographic knowledge was such that it could not have played a significant role in Roman imperial strategy of the Principate. Rather, the projection of might and the provocation of fear were the central Roman concerns.[18]

Second, many recent historians have explored what role natural topographical or geographic features such as deserts, mountains, and rivers played as frontiers. This question, handled in chapter 3, is part of a much larger historiographical debate in many eras and contexts over the role of "natural frontiers."[19] The question here differs from the preceding one in that it tries to determine if or how topographical or geographical features literally served as frontiers rather than if or how people imagined them as such. The overlap between this category and the previous one is well laid out, in the specific context of North Africa, by B. Hitchner as a question of ideal versus reality. The major issue here is whether so-called natural frontiers such as the Euphrates, Tigris, Danube, and Rhine Rivers or mountains served as military barriers and/or frontiers. An oft-cited exposition of the problem for ancient historians—one that remained dominant for some time—is A. Alföldi's presentation of the Rhine/Danube frontier as a "moral barrier." Alföldi claimed that this frontier solidified a common sense of belonging to an indivisible empire, thus fostering a sense of national solidarity. The question may be contrasted with the preceding one in its structural determinist presuppositions, for it assumes that people act according to the way the world is.[20] Developments in military studies often work this way—ancient battles are analyzed in light of

satellite or other high-altitude photographs to see why they turned out the way they did.[21] The debates here, like the Roman border skirmishes they often focus on, are intense. They are instructive here in their struggles with how natural frontiers were imagined as such by the Romans and how Romans received information from and about them.

Some dismiss the idea of natural boundaries entirely. Much of this research has followed from C. Wells's pronouncement in the early 1970s that rivers never served as barriers in the Roman Empire. Isaac likewise claims that natural boundaries such as rivers do not ever serve as frontiers. In fact, he claims that there is no evidence that geography ever determined boundaries. He proposes that it did not matter much to the Romans where the frontiers ran because Roman imperialism focused on peoples, not territories. There is no evidence, he claims, that topography or geography determined boundaries. Whittaker likewise claims that natural features never served as real boundaries but rather that they often were promoted to that status for propagandistic purposes. Both Isaac and Whittaker would agree that natural boundaries do not serve as real frontiers, but Whittaker holds that Romans did care, at some level, how or where those frontiers were imagined. Furthermore, Whittaker claims, the conflicts among military, political, and administrative considerations in the Roman Empire "preclude natural frontiers." Mattern, while claiming that any educated Roman of the Principate would claim rivers, mountains, deserts, and oceans as borders, argues that this knowledge did not translate into any action in terms of strategy.[22]

Others, though, have seen natural boundaries as literal frontiers. The arguments here tend to support some of my central contentions, especially those focused on rivers. At one time this view more or less was taken for granted, but few have defended it since Wells, Whittaker, Isaac, and others have come out strongly against it. M. J. Nicasie is unusual among recent historians in arguing that "natural frontiers do, as a rule, make sense in military terms. They constitute barriers." These natural boundaries, he claims, did help Romans feel an "acute sense of belonging to one indivisible Empire." Nicasie, then, echoes Alföldi's "moral barrier." D. Braund explores river frontiers, arguing that to look at the purely military functions of rivers misses the point.[23] In the worldview of Romans, he claims, rivers did serve as boundaries both by nature of their "religiosity" and their "natural power to divide and to bound." Braund takes some modern military historians to task for missing what he calls the "point which lies embedded in the environmental psychology of the Roman world."[24] Braund's work undergirds the emphasis on worldview throughout this study. His argument that worldview shaped Romans' background knowledge of their frontiers is compelling. Also, it is important to note that this

worldview shaped the context and format of news coming from natural frontiers, however imagined.

In a unique approach to the geopolitical world of Late Antiquity, G. Fowden analyzes the crucial role that geography played in shaping the diverse cultures of Late Antiquity.[25] One line of his argument suggests that the ideology of a universal Christian empire forced frontiers to diminish in importance in the later Empire. As he implies, geography, not artificially constructed or imagined frontiers, posed the real limits on culture. Christianity in the Empire, for example, pushed far beyond national boundaries through its expansion efforts, its only limit being geography. Thus, geography, he affirms, was the real mover of the history of the region he studies: the notion of frontiers was actually less relevant in terms of culture. His account presents another option in the polarized natural frontiers debate. For if geography provides the real limits, then the Roman Imperial frontiers are not the issue at stake.

Third, some recent works have explored directly the role of information and news in the Roman Empire. Very few studies have analyzed how information moved from peripheries to center. Some of these have debated whether the frontiers were barriers to information from beyond the frontiers. Fewer have studied how information from the frontiers moved and functioned within the Roman Empire.[26] Furthermore, the focus of these studies almost exclusively has been on foreign policy and military decisions.[27]

The study of communication in Roman frontier studies largely has sprung up in response to E. N. Luttwak's (in)famous *Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire*, published in 1976. Luttwak argued that the Roman Empire saw a gradual shift in defensive posture, informed by a Grand Strategy which itself developed over time. Few if any significant studies of Roman frontiers in the past thirty years have failed to react to this work. In spite of some initial positive reviews by foremost Roman historians, the subsequent tide of opinion has shifted to criticism and often hostility.[28] However, it does seem that the work deserves solitary credit for prompting research in a neglected area of frontier studies. In an oft-cited review of Luttwak, Mann concluded that there was "no capacity" for Grand Strategy in the Roman Empire because of the limited means of communication and resulting lack of information available to the central government and because of the Romans' poor knowledge of geography and cartography.[29] Mann critiques Luttwak for assuming widespread proliferation of news and information and with them geographical knowledge. But Luttwak, a policymaker and not a trained ancient historian per se, did not have subsequent studies of Roman news, information, and background knowledge at his disposal. Mann's critique, then, is tantamount to an indictment of Roman military and frontier studies in general up until the time that Luttwak

wrote. This is a point that a continued historiographical tradition of Luttwak-bashing fails to consider.

In a study explicitly prompted by Luttwak, Millar analyzed the formulations of Roman frontier policies and the conceptual framework within which they worked. Millar, who initially described Luttwak's work as "excellent," sought to analyze further some of the issues that Luttwak had left unexplored. Millar argues that there were frontier policies and that they did have "fundamental effects on the political, social, and cultural contexts within which millions of people lived." Furthermore, Millar argues, it is important to note the "extent of geographical and ethnographical knowledge available to emperors and the nature of the conceptual framework which they could apply to this knowledge." Millar focuses on the means by which information was gained, the forms in which it was presented, and the "conceptual frameworks within which it could be used to produce decisions about frontier policy."[30] The way the empire worked as a system, he claims, was very much a function of the way that information was appropriated by the government. His article remains standard for its basic and seminal treatment of how information proliferated *within* the Empire at the political level. He concludes, with analogy to Alföldi's moral barrier, that frontiers were, in essence, information barriers. For him, the study of information was crucial to a study of Roman frontiers. Millar closes his study with some provocative statements designed to prompt further work. He claims that when culture changed (as with the victory of Christianity), so did the values that informed foreign relations. Part 3 here relates this issue to background knowledge, news, and information, with somewhat different results.

Millar's work in turn prompted other significant studies of foreign relations that challenged his notion that frontiers were information barriers. The question behind such studies is whether or not Roman policies were based at all on the retrieval of information from frontiers or beyond them. Lee concludes, in his study of third- to seventh-century Roman foreign relations, that frontiers were "information permeable" and that Romans developed regular networks for gleaning information on their neighbors. Lee's work highlights the personnel, frequency, and context of information ebb and flow across frontiers in Late Antiquity. As such, it sets out parameters of the study of information in Late Antiquity. N. J. E. Austin and N. B. Rankov recently have produced a detailed survey of political and military intelligence in the Roman world, particularly explaining the roles of the various officials involved.[31] Their work, the first of its kind, makes valuable contributions to the study of information in the Roman world by its complete explanation of intelligence functionaries.

Very recently, historians have begun to consider communication outside of foreign relations. Ando, an innovator in this regard, analyzes the Roman government's use of communicative action in building a consensus of power between center and periphery. While his focus is more on official government communication and thus differs from mine, his is the first study to explore in any detail communication action without being limited to military intelligence. The recent Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity Conference collection, *Travel, Communication, and Geography in Late Antiquity: Sacred and Profane*, likewise explores communication from a wide variety of angles beyond military.[32]

Finally, fighting against a predominant tendency to view frontiers as objects only of military and/or political study and importance, a few very recent works have shown how religious and mythical worldviews and cultural mentalities have shaped the placement, defense, and perceptions of imperial frontiers. For the Principate, this now has been skillfully explored by Mattern, who analyzes the role of ideology, psychology, and worldview in Roman Imperial strategy.[33] For Late Antiquity, though, many questions remain. There persists, it seems, a cleavage between predominant views of Late Antiquity as a "supremely religious or spiritual age"[34] and frontier studies of the period that treat the age as if it were striving to be rationalistic and modern in its attempts to construct and defend borders. Works exploring only the purely military or political nature of frontiers are too numerous to mention here. Historians have argued that Late Antiquity was a world rustling with deities and have imagined the powerful role of holy men and women in shaping the age. On the cynical side, the age has been characterized as superstitious and irrational. The notion that this same sense of spirituality and religiosity should be applied to frontier studies has been lacking almost entirely from frontier studies until very recently. Persons of Late Antiquity begin to resemble hard-core "modern" strategists who, as logical calculating individuals, certainly knew better than to let religious ideas and beliefs interfere with their practical considerations. Emperors, governors, or whoever could, in fine empirical fashion, sort out not only what was really out there but also what really mattered.

The Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity conferences have made efforts to bring these two extremes together, but in some senses they have preserved the spiritual versus rational political divide in their treatment of "metaphysical" frontiers over against political and imperial ones. The editors of the first volume of papers explicitly react against an image of *limes* studies that calls to mind a "vast linear array, manned by soldiers and strengthened by fortifications, with the Romans on one side and the rest of the world on the other."[35] By expanding the parameters of frontier studies to include metaphorical and

metaphysical frontiers, they have highlighted a variety of social, ethnic, intellectual, and spiritual boundaries within Late Antique societies. These have been set against traditional studies of geographical frontiers, defined as political frontiers. A collection of articles edited by A. Rousselle attempts much the same thing as the Shifting Frontiers papers and publications and produces similar results. Its insightful papers on celestial and terrestrial frontiers certainly propose new directions in frontier studies and serve as models for expanding beyond traditional historiographical paradigms. Whittaker presents a unique perspective by arguing that we must take into account the "symbolic, sacred character of Roman *limites*." He argues that territoriality, suggested by notions of cosmology, is crucial to understanding a Roman mentality of frontiers. D. Braund innovatively argues for considering the psychology and worldview of Romans and how these affected their perceptions of frontiers.[36] For him, geographical myth and old stories are as important for understanding how Romans perceived frontiers as are any attempts at seeing how Roman policy took account of frontiers. Both Whittaker and Braund suggest that, in the Roman mind, territorial space had a direct relationship to the cosmos. They both acknowledge that frontiers, in a Roman way of thinking, were connected to a notion of sacral space.

Working on a later period, E. K. Fowden argues strongly for breaking down the barrier separating frontier studies from religious studies in Late Antiquity. Her work has been one of a few that recently have challenged the glaring dichotomy between secular and sacred in the Late Antique historiography. In tracing the cult of St. Sergius at the eastern frontier with Persia, she shows the importance of looking to religious forces, such as the power of saints and relics to influence political and military history of the frontier zone. Her approach highlights the role of "divine defense" surrounding holy sites, and she convincingly criticizes frontier studies limited to "arms and walls." "We cannot afford," she writes, "to project onto our evidence a separation of religious belief and political or military action."[37] Her conclusions parallel Braund's, although she analyzes a Christian social context, while he is dealing largely with a pre-Christian Roman world. G. Fowden likewise insists that the changes brought about by Constantine are only comprehensible when we resist separating religion from politics/military.

My approach to frontier studies, although informed by these discussions throughout, is unique in a variety of ways. First, by handling the idea of frontier consciousness, which includes background information as well as news, this study is not limited to policy decisions or strategic intelligence. To date, all studies that explore information and frontiers together have been focused exclusively on policy and/or strategy. Second, I address the question

of worldview in a changing context in a unique way, bridging the gap between pagan and Christian, analyzing changes and continuities. I conclude, on the basis of worldview analysis, that frontiers did matter and that they played a role in Roman perceptions of space, specifically for the later Empire. Third, I present Roman frontier consciousness as different in the third through fifth centuries from what it was in the first and second centuries: it did not, as some have implied, merely replicate or freeze in time the ideology of the early Empire. I maintain that new forces acted on Roman frontier consciousness, diffused in part through heightened news flow. Thus, traditional Roman imperial ideology alone cannot account for the change in worldview in the later Empire. Fourth, by focusing on the third to fifth centuries, this study presents a time in which Romans came to see frontiers as territorial and not just as divisions between peoples. This aspect cannot be found as readily for the early Empire, and it appears to weaken, in some sectors, with the fifth-century invasions. By leaving off where many studies of Late Antique frontiers begin, I believe that I have isolated a period of decided and influential development and change.

Information/Communication/News

M. Stephens defines news as "new information about a subject of some public interest that is shared with some portion of the public."[38] Growing alongside recent emphasis on media has been scholarship across the disciplines in the fields of information and communication theory. Many such analyses have attempted to comparatively analyze premodern and nonmodern societies in light of modern. Such efforts, largely within media studies and sociology, have provided models for analyzing the flow of information.[39]

Historians of all periods have benefited from methodologies gleaned from other disciplines in the study of information and news.[40] One of the upshots of this sociological emphasis has been heightened awareness of terminology in the study of information. Should the appropriate term of study be *news*, *media*, *information*, *communication*, or what? Modern sources tend to highlight news and the dynamics of information flow. Ancient sources rarely if ever mention the context and dynamic of information flow. As S. Lewis contends, news is one of the most taken-for-granted aspects of life in the premodern world. To us, in a modern world, news holds "a privileged and prestigious position in our culture's hierarchy of values." But to the ancients, the "very ordinariness of news means that its transmission is often present in our sources in inexplicit form, because it required no explanation."[41] Reconstructing how news functioned in any ancient society requires detailed reading of a variety of ancient sources. Further complicating study is the fact

that ancient sources and modern studies tend to overemphasize the military and other visible institutions of communication. Lewis claims to have written her book in reaction to the idea that the entirety of news flow among the ancient Greek *poleis* could be understood merely with reference to the herald or signal fire.

I break the study of information into two basic components. The first is what Lee calls background knowledge, which I incorporate into analysis of worldview. Worldview involves knowledge and assumptions about cosmology, geography, topography, chorography, and environment. The second category is what I will call news. Whether coming from persons such as soldiers, pilgrims, merchants, spies, hostages, and so forth and channeled through various media, there was new information about Roman frontiers working its way to people throughout the Roman Empire. To be news to the ancients, it did not have to be as recent as what we today would define as news. Ando gives a helpful definition of *contemporary* in the ancient world as "within living memory."[42] News was prompted by disastrous events such as the surrender of Nisibis in 363 or the Battle of Adrianople in 378, but it also arose from less momentous observations by persons talking or writing about their experiences at or near frontier zones. News was interpreted and appropriated vis à vis worldview or background knowledge. Images of space are, in fact, influenced by settlement pattern, mobility, and means of communication.[43] Through a variety of media, news reached the Roman people and challenged or confirmed their worldview(s). Both of these aspects of information, worldview and news, functioning together, are crucial to the study of frontier consciousness.

Sociologist P. Bourdieu provides a model for understanding thought and action (that is, practice) in a habitus, a concept with much in common with my use of worldview. Central to Bourdieu's approach are questions of how a society is held together, how it comes to be a unit, so to speak. One of the means is communication, which allows actors to participate in a "commonsense world endowed with objectivity secured by a consensus of meaning." Communication can only be communication if there is some type of mechanism whereby the members of a society can share in its meaning. He posits a dialectical relationship between objective structures, some of which I will explore for the later Roman Empire, and cognitive or motivating structures that they produce and of which they are products.[44] Communication structures play a part in this process. His explorations of how historical events, especially "newsworthy" ones, related to human practice have shaped my understanding of societies and communication in this project and will be explored in more detail.

Worldview Analysis

The analytical category of worldview (*Weltanschauung*) requires some explanation. I present it here as a coherent theoretical framework on which may be located the many stray pieces of evidence that come together in this study.[45] Analyzed first in German scientific historical study, worldview suggests an intellectual environment. The historian and historical theorist W. Dilthey (1833–1911) was one of the first to employ the term. Dilthey's emphasis on studying the totality of human life itself led him to demarcate a category of thought that guided human action but that was rarely set forth by humans explicitly. Worldview analysis emerges as a response within and against scientific approaches to history, as the coherency that comes forth as humans piece together a "pattern of *meaning* for life." Even as scientific and "objective" a historian as Dilthey recognized the need to account for a fuzzy region in which "humans' minds come to terms with the riddle of life"—the *Rätselhaftigkeit*. A worldview is a "general sense or feeling about how life as a whole hangs together."[46] M. Kearney also provides some helpful approaches to worldview, drawing analogies to cosmology and insisting that ideas in worldviews are rarely expressed directly "and thus consist of tacit knowledge." Particularly helpful has been Kearney's analysis of images of space as a function of worldview. He shows how means of communication and mobility have an influence on images of space and thus worldview.[47]

To the extent that this "region," to use Dilthey's own term, can be studied historically, it is useful for considerations of Late Antiquity.[48] Crucial questions I ask here are what role frontiers and information about them and from them served in modifying and confirming Late Antique worldviews and to what extent that process varied in different regions of the Empire and between center and periphery. At the frontiers or limits to one's claims on the world, the ideological limits of one's worldview may be analyzed. As Whittaker notes, borrowing from anthropological study, "ideology tends to be at its purest on the frontier, where it is most under pressure."[49]

But how does one analyze something as fuzzy and implicit as a worldview? The study here is an experiment in how information shapes and is shaped by worldview. Subtly, through choice of what to record and how, historians, poets, churchwomen and churchmen, orators, architects, artisans, and so on betray to readers, listeners, or other consumers their worldview. Historical and polemical accounts, monuments, and visual arts all give information filtered through a worldview. An analysis of a change in limits, for example, can reveal how one views his or her world, a "worldview." Here the stress and strain of change is reflected by and on the way that one views the world.

To illustrate the importance of worldview, a personal anecdote might help. I have stood at the Roman frontier zones of North Africa and the eastern Roman Empire and asked the proverbial "Why?" To my view, both regions appeared desolate, arid, semidesert, and rocky. Why would anyone want to hold onto these regions or struggle for recognized mastery over them? By my worldview, it seems absurd to fight over these regions, but to a Roman, the answer was self-evident—so much so, in fact, that no Roman, to my knowledge, ever gives us a detailed answer to my basic question.[50] As Bourdieu put it, "what goes without saying goes without saying."[51]

It is in the step the researcher must take from the individual text(s) or piece of material culture to generalizable conclusion(s), however, that problems arise. Reading texts in terms of audience expectation presents a host of thorny issues and very difficult questions. Can one really speak in general terms of a late Roman or Late Antique worldview, or must one speak of a North African worldview or even a Cappadocian worldview? In the most extreme reduction, is the question really one of analyzing St. Augustine's or Julian the Apostate's worldview? My perspective is that texts are not individual and personal symbol systems but that they must be read in terms of audience expectation, as part of a collective enterprise.[52] Granted, texts can also present idiosyncrasies, but images in a variety of texts and shared by a wide variety of writers can certainly get us toward a worldview.

Along with these physical elements come the intellectual and cultural context that likewise shaped worldview. Myth, religion, history, memory, sacred texts, oracles, and satire all shaped and expressed the worldview(s) of Romans. Comparatively few Romans ever visited their frontier zones. But most or all from the late Empire had some consciousness of what those frontiers were like, what they meant, and what they signified. Whether submerged in ideologies of *imperium sine fine* or in Augustine's musings on the problem of shrunken borders, Romans of the later Empire had some consciousness of frontiers. Fluctuating frontiers or ever-advancing frontiers were both ideas arising out of intellectual and cultural milieus.

Myth also has proven helpful in analyzing Roman thinking on frontiers. D. Braund has argued that myths about rivers, for example, were a very important part of the "environmental psychology" of the Roman world. He also contends that myth was "very much part of contemporary government and diplomacy." "Myth," he writes, "structures the world and makes sense of it."[53] An understanding of such myths is necessary if we are to enter the world of Late Antiquity and explore the ways in which frontier consciousness functioned in a Late Antique worldview.

Working in a way similar to myth are biblical texts that shaped the way persons of Late Antiquity imagined their geography. That late Romans were influenced by biblical texts is beyond doubt. Interpretation, as always, was tricky business, but the fact that the Scriptures shaped the later Roman and Late Antique imagination is certain. A. Cameron writes,

> The Scriptures, then, presented both an opportunity and a challenge in late antiquity. They provided vocabulary, imagery, and subject matter for poets; models for holy men and women; and ways of understanding humanity and the world. But they required exegesis, and this could be difficult and risky.[54]

The extent of the difference Christianity made in the late Roman Empire is the topic of part 3. Behind my analysis here lie questions of both how their own view of geography affected the way persons of Late Antiquity read biblical texts and how biblical texts affected their worldview. In the allusions of Romans of the later Empire to biblical texts, one may in some sense see the current state of their knowledge of the world. The Euphrates River, for example, was a powerful biblical symbol for borders; its role as such must be considered in any study of Late Antique borders.[55]

Prophecy reflects worldview as well. Prophecy formed a part of the Late Antique worldview in that history made sense, to Christians anyway, as part of the plan of God—past, present, and future were all part of a continuum that had its fulfillment in prophecy. To pagans, history was no less viewed as part of a pattern—oracles, prodigies, and the like were part and parcel of the notion of history and could not be divorced from it. Prophecy connected nature to religion in a way that expressed and shaped worldview. In this sense, commentaries or references to the prophetic works of the Hebrew Scriptures as well as pagan and Christian prodigies and oracles also play a part in shaping and/or revealing a late Roman worldview.[56]

Taken together, these testimonies—ancient as well as modern—give strong suggestions as to how the Romans of the late Empire made sense of changes on and challenges to their frontier zones. The combination of worldview analysis and the focus on news can expand the scope of frontier studies, especially as regards the Roman world. As an analytical category worldview is helpful, and arguably essential, to frontier studies because it highlights how Romans viewed the Late Antique world as they struggled between its dominant forces of perceived ancient structure and rampant innovation.

2

Toward a Late Roman Cosmology of Space and Frontiers

I think Heaven smiled on you [Constantius] and willed that you should govern the whole world, and so from the first trained you in virtue, and was your guide when you journeyed to all points, and showed you the bounds and limits of the whole empire [τῆς ἀρχῆς ἁπάσης ὅρους καὶ πέρατα], the character of each region, the vastness of your territory, the power of every race, the number of the cities, the characteristics of the masses.

—Julian, *Oration* 1:13–14 (Loeb trans.)

The connection here between the celestial/divine and the mundane of Roman territory and boundaries is hardly incidental. Heaven itself, or God himself, revealed to Constantius II (r. 337–61) the boundaries of his empire and all the space in between. In the Roman world of all periods, images of territorial space were intertwined with cosmology and thus with worldview.[1] In the words of C. Nicolet, "territory was not neutral: it was viewed as having a relationship with the cosmos, religiously oriented and pervaded with sanctity."[2] Nicolet focuses on the early Empire, but there is no indication in the sources that such a religious mentality disappeared in the later Empire.[3] The very notion of bounded space, assumed by the presence of frontiers, was central to Roman cosmology. Anthropologist M. Kearney, in his book on worldview, writes that "cosmologies are by nature pre-eminently statements about

space."[4] Roman views of territory and boundaries cannot be disconnected from cosmology, as is suggested by the fact that at Roman territorial boundaries stood Terminus, the god of boundaries at center and periphery alike.

During the early Roman Empire, the definition of cosmos seemed "to broaden in meaning and more often denote[d] not just the world as the natural, physical structure of the universe, but especially the inhabited world." Cosmology came to encompass the whole, undifferentiated, realm of the gods, nature, and the human. Sources from this period begin to show the cosmos as the sphere of man's activity and not just that of the gods or celestial bodies. Pliny as well as the Gospel of St. John, for example, refer to the cosmos as the abode of "mankind," "the inhabitants of the world," "the sphere of man's activity," and "the scene of life." Pliny presents cities as well as rivers and islands as basic elements of the cosmos.[5]

Although less explicitly so in the early Empire than the later, frontiers of both divine and human construction were expressed as elements of the cosmos as well. Writing in the early Empire, Pliny would nowhere refer to physical boundaries or frontiers of empire but always to divisions of people groups. When he does refer to the limits of Roman rule, he connects "the rule of Rome and the rule of *Natura,*" thus implying the connection to the cosmos.[6] Other writers of his era likewise refer to boundaries as divisions between human groups rather than space or territories. In general, the later Empire saw a shift away from an exclusively ethnic emphasis on frontiers and more toward literal divisions of territory and space demarcated by those frontiers. The ethnic focus does not disappear, but it becomes only one mode of expression, and a subordinate one at that.

If Nicolet is correct in arguing that the Romans saw no distinction between the celestial and terrestrial worlds, then it follows that a dominant celestial cosmology could never be separate from terrestrial geography. Of the three major cosmologies known in the history of Western civilization, the Romans primarily occupied the second, the so-called Hellenistic or Ptolemaic cosmology.[7] The Ptolemaic cosmos was part of a key shift in thought of the Hellenistic period and beyond, one that shaped understanding of the universe for centuries to follow until it was replaced during and after the sixteenth century. Examples of its influence on the New Testament, for example, suggest that the Ptolemaic cosmology reached beyond a small circle of scholars.[8] According to this cosmology, earth was the center of a systematic cosmos, surrounded by rotating planets, sun, and moon. The ordered universe opposed the chaos outside of it. Romans were sure that their Empire was located at the center of the cosmos. Pliny the Elder as well as Christian writers well into the seventh century and beyond thought within this cosmology.

The assumptions of this cosmology permeated all Roman thinking about their world. Their world was part of an ordered cosmos and not merely a large flat space on which empires fought for control of peoples or territory. The bishop Isidore of Seville (r. 600–636), borrowing from classical images, continued to see the earth (*terra*) in the middle of *mundus:* "Everywhere the ocean flowing around encompasses its borders in a circle." The eastern region of the world was its head, *quasi facies*, and the north the hind part. Although it might be difficult for the modern mind to imagine such cosmological assumptions working together comfortably with images of topography and space, both fit together naturally in the Roman mind.[9]

The connection between cosmology and topography is clear in the imagery of the sphere, an important component of imperial ideology that could function well within a Ptolemaic cosmology. The large number of associations of the sphere or globe with successful Roman military and/or political leaders is a testimony to the prevalence of the Ptolemaic cosmology.[10] The globe generally symbolizes imperial power in Late Antique, Byzantine, and Medieval iconography. Ammianus gives the following example involving such a sphere:

> In this welter of adverse events Constantius' fortune, already wavering and at a standstill, showed clearly by signs almost as plain as words that a crisis in his life was at hand. For at night he was alarmed by apparitions, and when he was not yet wholly sunk in sleep, the ghost of his father seemed to hold out to him a fair child; and when he took it and set it in his lap, it shook from him the sphere which he held in his right hand and threw it to a great distance. And this foretold a change in the state, although the seers gave reassuring answers.[11]

The sphere clearly was a powerful sign, connected with the solvency of the state and with it the cosmos. It indicated the possession or loss of power.

From a slightly later context, Procopius describes Justinian's equestrian statue.

> He directs his glance toward the rising sun, taking, I think his course against the Persians. In his left hand he holds a globe, by which the sculptor indicates that all land and sea serve him, but he has neither sword nor spear or any other weapon, but on his globe there is a cross, by which alone he has acquired the empire and victory in war. And extending his right hand to the rising sun and spreading out his fingers he orders the barbarians in that direction to remain at home and to advance no further.[12]

Fig. 2. Globes on coin. Valentinian I and Valens seated with globes; young Gratian between. SPE-S RP, "hope of the state."

Again, we see a connection between the solvency of the empire and the fact of frontiers beyond which "barbarians" are not allowed. Emperors who maintain the frontiers are worthy to claim that "the land and sea serve" them. The symbols of majesty, both through the outstretched right hand and the possession of the globe in the left, communicate a strong empire, one whose frontiers would not admit barbarians.

Other examples of the globe appear on coins and in the visual arts and further connect the globe to the *oikoumene* and the cosmos itself. The iconography of the globe shows the dominion of the emperor or figure pictured receiving or holding it. On one coin, the emperors Valentinian (r. 375–92) and Valens (r. 364–78) sit enthroned, each holding a scepter and a globe. A young Gratian (r. 367–83) stands between them. On another coin Maximianus (r. 286–305, 307–10) is shown receiving a globe from Diocletian; on other coins he is shown receiving a globe from Jupiter.[13] The Missorium of Theodosius II depicts a seated emperor flanked by Valentinian II and Arcadius, each holding globes.

The image of a ruler seated on a globe was prevalent and was absorbed readily into Christian symbolism and iconography. Jesus is shown on a globe, signifying his connection with the *oikoumene* and the *cosmos*. The association of Christ and the globe also appears on mosaics. The apse mosaic at San Vitale features Christ seated on a globe. A. Grabar has pointed out that the globe-shaped throne was a symbol of universal dominion for emperors that was taken over in Christian iconography to show the universal rule of Christ.[14]

Both literary and visual evidence, then, show the connections among the cosmos, divinity, and the frontiers. The existence and maintenance of the frontiers is very real in the worldview of Romans. Strategic and rational concerns of frontier defense worked together with the cosmic and divine to form a single unit. The seen and the unseen worlds were in cosmic union. During the later Empire, a sphere firmly held in the hand of an emperor is a visual indication of the solvency of the Empire, especially due to defended frontiers. Thus, a late Roman cosmology is strongly connected to frontiers.

To the ancients of any period, cosmology was partially a function of religious beliefs, however the exact expression of those beliefs might have differed from period to period and region to region. The world of the Romans, no less than the world of any ancient peoples, was one in which the "constant intervention of divine powers was taken as a fact of life."[15] Assumptions about the cosmos necessarily are thus shot through with religious meaning. Although he dismissed the classical "heresy," which claimed that "heaven has a spherical form" (he proposed a large, "orthodox" cuboid instead), the sixth-century Byzantine writer Cosmas Indicopleustes wrote nearly half of his *Christian Topography* on topics celestial, even extending it to demons and to angels. His description of geography juxtaposes indiscriminately what we might consider divine and mundane elements.[16]

Pagan or Christian, Romans envisioned divine powers holding together the system of the cosmos. Julian, the famous pagan emperor, expressed his views thus in his "Hymn to King Helios": "this divine and wholly beautiful cosmos, from the highest vault of the heaven to the lowest limit of the earth [*ges eschates*] is held together by the continued providence of the gods." Julian wrote this while on a military campaign to Persia to claim for Rome a new portion of that earth by extending his own frontiers. He, no less than his Christian contemporaries, believed that ultimately the will of God or the gods held together the world, even down to its seemingly temporal boundaries. Most evidence from the period suggests that Julian shared basic worldviews with his contemporaries, pagan and Christian. And Julian's personal friend, Ammianus, at one point associates a shift of the eastern frontier with a disturbance of the cosmos itself.[17]

At the heart of this discussion are Roman perceptions of space. Frontier consciousness can only be formulated against a backdrop of notions of space. These visualizations were part of a process by which Romans analyzed their world and changes within it. Recent work on Roman space perception, primarily for the early Empire, has shown how risky it is to ignore Roman assumptions about space when one is exploring Roman frontiers or any other aspect of imperial ideology. In the words, again, of Nicolet, "in order to set boundaries to their Empire and to claim to have reached those that were

marked out, the Romans needed a certain perception of geographical space, of its dimensions and of the area they occupied." Within this space, Romans could make sense of their administrative framework as well as imagine their Empire and its limits.[18]

Anthropological and sociological research on space perception shows that it cannot be divorced from a value system or worldview. R. M. Downs, an anthropologist analyzing space perception, writes,

> The *real world* is taken as the starting point, and it is represented as a source of *information*. The information content enters the individual through a system of *perceptual receptors*, and the precise meaning of the information is determined by an interaction between the individual's *value system* and their *image of the real world*. The meaning of the information is then incorporated into the image.[19]

Downs imagines here something of a recurrent yet organic system in which new information, filtered through a value system, changes one's perception of the "real world." As new information is processed through perception and that value system, the perceived world itself actually changes and then fresh information can renew the cycle, so to speak.

The real world is thus perceived through a worldview, to impose terminology foreign to Downs's system but widely used by anthropologists such as Kearney to describe the same general phenomenon. Downs's model suggests how news (information) can relate to cosmology and worldview. During the later Roman Empire, new information and new types of information, specifically from frontiers, challenged traditional notions of space perception. Thus, an altered worldview emerged, based in both traditional and changing value systems and new information and new types of information.

A visual example of this type of change may be seen in a few depictions of the emperor in late Roman art. On the so-called Barberini diptych (ca. 500), the traditional Roman ceremony of *adventus*, recognizing the arrival of the emperor, is infused with new meaning. On this piece appears a "cosmic hierarchy where emperor and empire mediate between Christ in the clouds of heaven, and subjected barbarians." The Roman image of the cosmos here had incorporated new information with the image of the *parousia* of Christ. The image of the subject barbarians at the bottom of the diptych, clearly separated by a strong line, suggests Roman images of boundary and of space perception, presented in cosmic time. The west side of the base of the column of Arcadius gives a similar example of a changing value system, of new information producing or reflecting a new image of the real world. The *parousia* of the emperor

Fig. 3. The victorious emperor defeating his enemies. Central section of the Barberini Diptych. Byzantine ivory from Constantinople (?), first half of sixth century CE. 34.2 H 26.8 cm. Inv: OA 9063. Photo: Chuzeville. Located in Louvre, Paris, France. (Courtesy of Réunion des Musées Nationaux Art Resource, NY.)

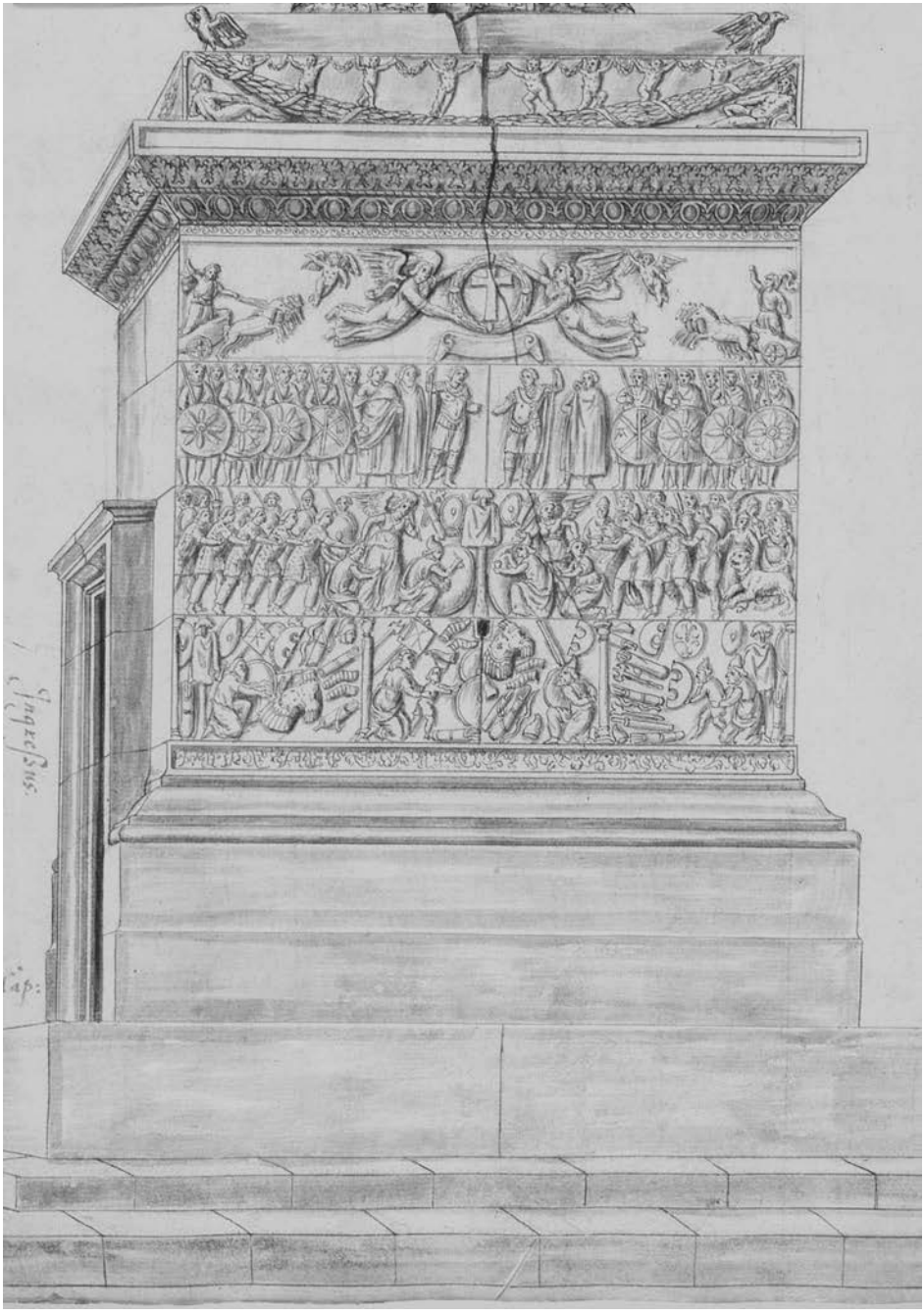

Fig. 4. West side of column base, column of Arcadius (Freshfield drawing). M5. 0.17.2 f.13. (Courtesy of Master and Fellows of Trinity College Cambridge.)

presents a clear hierarchy: "Christ in heaven, the emperor on earth, and the subject nations, by means of a division into registers."[20]

The cosmic presentation in these visuals suggests the ways in which the space perception of the Romans mingled with value and belief systems. The divine and mundane were a unit, as before, but now a Christian reading of the cosmos mixes with the classical. Such changes present the frontier consciousness of the later Roman Empire.

The Shapes of Roman Geography

As suggested earlier, there is a general divide among historical geographers on how to interpret human thought and action in geographical and topographical context. On the one hand are the structural determinists, who hold that people think and act according to the way the world *is*, and on the other hand are the behaviorists, who stress that people think and act according to the way they *perceive* the world to be.[21] I am more interested in how Roman perceptions of such features shaped thought and action than in a scientific analysis of the way their world actually was/is. Perceptions and ideologies are seen best, if not exclusively, in texts and visual images.

On the ground, so to speak, the Romans' understanding of space was directly related to their understanding of geography. Debates over Roman knowledge of geography and their application of it are ongoing. But in general, Roman thought has been seen as shaped by two different traditions in geography. The first of these was the Ptolemaic geographical tradition, which aimed to produce a "graphic representation of the whole known part of the world."[22] This tradition, probably the minority, could plot spatial points in relation to others using a demi-Cartesian grid system and aimed to produce something of a two- or even three-dimensional depiction of the globe. In a Ptolemaic system, any given point could be related to any other point on a grid. Ptolemy and Marinus of Tyre worked out a system of projection drawn from eight thousand points, with latitude- and longitude-type coordinates. This tradition, although it would be more influential in the modern period, is less noticeable in Late Antiquity. According to P. Janni, this mode of thought aimed to comprehend what he calls "spazio cartografico," closer to our own understanding of space. Janni cautions that this type of study was highly theoretical and was pursued only by a few academics.[23]

The second tradition was more utilitarian and purely descriptive, often working with written topographical texts more than with graphic representations. This tradition often is seen as the mainstay of military strategists and campaign planners, although Whittaker has recently challenged its prevalence

even among them, at least for the early Empire.[24] More geographical information, it must be noted, was available to emperors of the later Empire, especially since this period witnessed the increased presence of the emperor on the frontier. And an increase in the number of eastern campaigns as well as the number of literate soldiers increased the available knowledge of the geography at and even beyond frontiers.

This second tradition was probably the one on which Julian relied when, due to his extensive reading before his Persian campaign, he was "as informed about the geography of the region as if he had been born there, such long acquaintance with the terrain had his books given him even when he was far away."[25] It seems that Julian was able to read up on the geography of the Roman frontier region and beyond in available books and in pamphlets prepared by soldiers and other travelers in these areas. This geographical tradition imagined points on a line in relation to each other. According to Janni, this common system of imagining space was closely related to the Roman method of road construction; Roman *spazio odologico* was defined in terms of points along a road. Thus, Janni contends, the vast majority of Romans conceived of space as linear rather than two- or three-dimensional. This is the presentation of the *itinerariae* (literal descriptions of roads), of which many are extant, as well as of the *Tabula Peutingeriana,* a twelfth-century copy of a fourth-century Roman road map, which seems to be a visual depiction of *itinerariae*.[26] Both the written and the visual forms conceive of the world as being laid out along a road system or systems.[27]

As foreign as this linear geography is to our own cartographic mentality, recent historical geographers have begun to suggest that the difference might not be as extreme as it seems at first glance. Nicolet in particular has criticized attempts to put forward a "'natural' difference between the ancient way of thinking and our own." A linear mentality, he contends, "must not systematically be set in opposition to a cartographic mentality, which only appeared in modern times and which brought about a totally new vision of space in two dimensions, through complete charts based on astronomical measurements and on actual triangulation." Although the ancient understanding was different from ours, there seems to be no reason to deny outright any type of global vision to ancient cartographers. In fact, as Nicolet has argued, from Augustus onward, knowledge and representation of the imperial sphere implied "the creation of a geography, chorography and a cartography that were coherent and progressively improving."[28] Janni's contentions seem supported by a newly discovered map of Spain from the first century.[29]

The Roman cartographic mentality was, though, different from ours in crucial ways. Janni warns against "taking for granted the thought-world of easy,

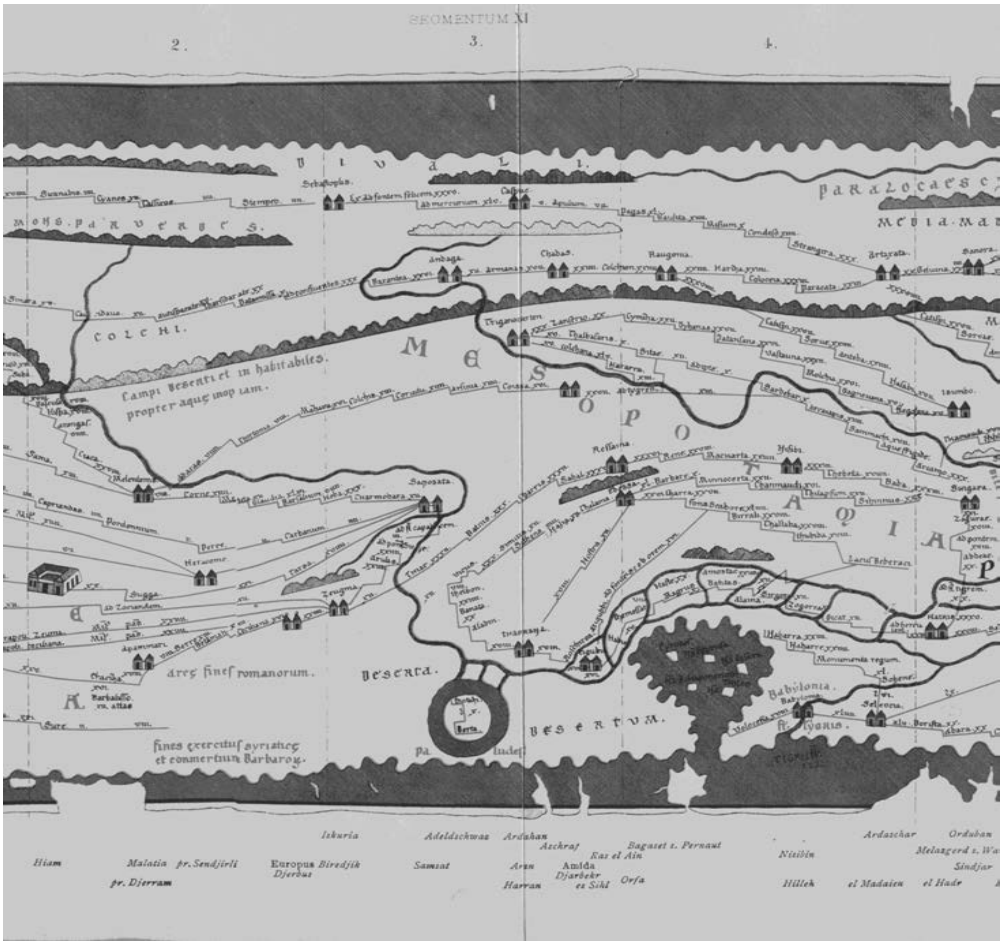

Fig. 5. *Tabula Peutingeriana*: *"fines romanorum"* and Nisibis.

habitual map-literacy," so standard in the modern world, when one looks at the ancient world. As B. Isaac has put it, "using maps must be learnt. . . . [T]he mental translation of two-dimensional graphic representations into larger surfaces, is an acquired skill." Thus, to a writer like the fourth-century churchman Eusebius, a given point can only be located in relation to one or two other points, and those in a straight line.[30]

That Romans knew about some types of maps and used them fairly regularly is beyond doubt; the format and method of using those maps involves a bit more conjecture. Vegetius, a late-fourth/early-fifth-century writer on military strategy, records,

> indeed, the more conscientious generals reportedly had itineraries of the provinces in which the emergency occurred not just annotated but illustrated as well, so that they could choose their route when setting out by the visual aspect as well as by mental calculation.[31]

Such a description shows a new development in thought and in campaigning. Such visual images for common use are not attested before the later Roman Empire. These most likely would have looked something like the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, with visual depictions of the natural and civic features of the Empire laid out in a long horizontal panel.[32]

Furthermore, a third tradition of geographical knowledge appears in the sources, challenging the basic idea that only academics, generals, and statesmen, if anyone, cared or knew anything about geography. There is some indication of interest in educating the Roman public in geography by means of large wall maps. Although references in existing literature to such wall maps are clear, none survive. The most famous one from the early empire was the world map of Agrippa, erected in a portico in Rome on the east side of the Via Lata. We know of this particular map through a reference to it by Pliny.[33] In the late Empire, Theodosius II ordered a map of the world for display at a school in Constantinople. A surviving hexameter poem describing Theodosius' wall map gives us some indication of what it would have included.

> This famous work—including all the world,
> Seas, mountains, rivers, harbours, straits and towns,
> Uncharted areas—so that all might know,
> Our famous, noble, pious Theodosius
> Most venerably ordered when the year
> Was opened by his fifteenth consulship.
> We servants of the emperor (as one wrote,

> The other painted), following the work
> Of ancient mappers, in not many months
> Revised and bettered theirs, within short space
> Embracing all the world. Your wisdom, sire,
> It was that taught us to achieve this task.[34]

Another map, from the very end of the third century (to be explored in more detail in the next chapter) was designed "for educational purposes" in order to "let the schoolchildren see it in those porticoes, . . . rivers, oceans, peoples."[35] The intent here seems to be that Romans might experience their vast empire visually and keep up on happenings throughout it, especially occurrences at the peripheries, as will be shown later in the chapter. Such a usage does not quite fit the image of geography only for arcane academics and generals and suggests a third category of Roman understanding of geography at a more popular level.[36]

A couple of visual depictions survive that might give some indication of what such maps looked like. On a parchment fragment discovered earlier in the last century at Dura Europos, near the eastern frontier, there is a small painted map. According to one estimation, the map can be dated to just before A.D. 260. It gives a fairly accurate portrayal of the north shore of the Black Sea, the Danube River, and a few other points along with a few mileage indicators. The points are listed along the shore and show an attempt at a two-dimensional rendering of space. It is generally believed that this parchment was affixed to the inside of a shield and was used on an eastern campaign. Not much more can be said with certainty about this map, but it gives some indication, on a small scale, of the type of rendition given in the wall maps of the early and later empire.[37]

Recently, another small map has come to light that is similar in some respects to the Dura Europos map as well as the *Tabula Peutingeriana* but that also incorporates some characteristics of the Ptolemaic tradition.[38] Executed in Egypt between the time of Nero and Domitian, the surviving portion of the map is of Spain along with a quotation from the Hellenistic geographer Artimedoros of Ephesus. Containing small drawings of buildings similar to those on the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, the map shows rivers and routes, with topographical features and perhaps even military stations marked. It contains information from Roman *itineraria* and could have worked together with these verbal descriptions of the Roman road system. But as C. Gallazzi and B. Kramer, the publishers of this important map, make clear, we are dealing here with a genuine scientific map, a distinct section of a picture of the world, not just the depiction of a road system. More studies of this map are forthcoming, no

doubt, but it is worth noting that the only extant parallel to this map actually produced in the ancient world is the shield map from Dura Europos. Its survival has rightly been noted by its publishers as extraordinary. Yet it gives us clues to the potential of Roman minds to depict their world visually. Perhaps the distinction between a Ptolemaic theoretical geography and the practical use of road descriptions was not so firm.

Geography and Boundaries

The relationship of geographical knowledge with Roman understanding of frontiers is fairly clear in available sources. A recent view that Romans "knew or . . . cared little about geography"[39] largely has been formulated in opposition to E. N. Luttwak's Grand Strategy notion. Fortification lines at the peripheries of the empire seem, to the modern eye, irregular, unscientific, and even random. These observations supposedly debunk the idea that Romans could ever have had a universal strategy, simply because they had no global geography. As Isaac puts it,

> There is no evidence, in fact, that geography determined the boundaries of the empire. . . . [W]hat we know of ancient geography indicates that it had by no means reached the level required to provide military planners with global strategic insight of the sort required for a territorial strategy.[40]

But such conclusions seem to take us far beyond the evidence. Available sources do suggest that Romans cared a great deal about geography, especially during the later Empire.

To understand a late Roman view of geography, it is necessary to assess a variety of texts expressing views of the world. Late Roman knowledge of geography brought myth, biblical texts, and classical cosmology to its understanding of frontiers and boundaries. Myth played a crucial role in the Roman imagination of space and frontiers. D. Braund has argued that myth was critical in defining the Roman frontier in the Caucasus region, for example. To the extent that myth does structure the world and helps make sense of it, Romans relied on it when observing or imagining their frontiers with foreign peoples or with another's territory.[41] One feature of the world chroniclers of Late Antiquity is the means by which they imagine the history of the world, including remote stories and hoary myths, playing out anachronistically in terms of their own Late Antique context. One such way they do this is to imagine various myths enacted along the Roman *limes*. For the most part, these references

reflect images of the frontier from the perspective of the fourth century or later.[42] For example, John Malalas records that Orestes took Iphigenia, the daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, and "traveled to the East, to the Saracen *limes*, and reached Trikomia in the land of Palestine." His spatial dimensions here are late Roman. And again, Tauros, the emperor of Crete, fights Agenor and his sons in the east, on the *limes*.[43] Such references, placing events of the remote and mythical past in a contemporary Roman setting, remind us that there was no clear divide between the world of myth and lived experience when Romans imagined their imperial frontiers.

Supernatural elements were also seen as defining frontiers, or at least boundaries. The author(s) of the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* record(s) that "many declare that there is a certain decree of fate that no emperor may advance beyond Ctesiphon, and that the emperor Carus was struck by lighting because he desired to pass beyond the bounds which fate has set up."[44] The author of this passage himself was not quite convinced by the story, believing instead that Carus had been killed by an illness; many did believe, though, that there was something supernatural about such boundaries. Aurelius Victor, on the same incident, claimed that in spite of oracles of warning, Carus had indeed passed "immodestly and vaingloriously" beyond Ctesiphon and had thereby paid the price by being struck dead with a thunderbolt.[45] A similar reference records that the emperor Julian's big mistake was that he had disobeyed a sibylline prophecy that proclaimed that "the emperor must not that year leave his frontiers [*limitibus*]."[46] Again, the connection of frontiers to divinity is unmistakable. Ammianus elsewhere records that one of the blessings bestowed by Fortuna on Julian was that "no barbarians crossed his frontiers [*fines*]."[47]

Biblical stories could function similarly to myth in world chronicles. Malalas, combining chronology of Greek mythology and biblical story, records that after the time of King Minos, Solomon built a city on the *limes* which he called Palmyra (Past Fate), because in the past the village had been fatal for Goliath, whom [Solomon's] father had slain there." The reference point of the Roman eastern frontier is read anachronistically into the biblical and preclassical past. Later, Malalas records, Mary and Joseph departed to Persian territory by way of the *limes*.[48] The reader and/or hearer of biblical stories could thus fit them into a framework of a Roman conception of space.

Biblical passages also provide a framework for the fourth-century Western pilgrim/nun, Egeria.[49] She prepared for her eastward trek by perusing all the books of the Old and New Testaments for their descriptions of "the holy wonders of the world, and its regions, provinces, cities, mountains, and deserts."[50] Her notion of geography was shaped powerfully by biblical texts, as is clear throughout her pilgrimage account. The same must be said of Cosmas

Indicopleustes, who based his entire description of the universe on his interpretation of biblical passages.

The relationship of geography and boundaries also may be seen in descriptions of the Roman Empire as extending to or almost to the bounds of the earth itself. The boundaries of the empire become, in a certain sense, the boundaries of the earth.[51] Such references speak at some level to Roman cosmic notions of space. The fifth-century North African presbyter Orosius speaks of the Roman Empire as being extended "almost to the outermost boundaries of the earth."[52] Egeria, who traveled from Western Europe to the eastern frontier of the Empire, is described by a biographer as traveling to the "other side of the world." In another section, the same biographer describes her journey "to the bounds of almost the whole earth" and enumerates her "labor of traveling the whole world." Her travels throughout the earth are a means of seeking "the kingdom of heaven on high; . . . as she trod this earth, she was obtaining paradise in calm and exultant glory."[53] Egeria herself records that when she arrives in Edessa, a city near the eastern frontier, the bishop greets her warmly because of her journey from "the other end of the earth."[54] Such descriptions suggest ways in which Romans used the language of boundaries together with their understanding of geography.

Before the third century, the dominant means of referring to frontiers is in the context of an ever-expanding hegemony of the Romans. Pompey's *Res Gestae* claims that he "extended the frontiers of the empire to the limits of the earth."[55] Early imperial references were bound to the ideology of *imperium sine fine*, and with few exceptions they present Roman frontiers as ever-expanding to natural or logical stopping points.[56] If that expansion stopped in any place, it was only because it was convenient to do so and because going further would lead into useless areas or might include unwanted persons. Appian records in the second century, for example, that

> on the whole, prudently possessing the best parts of land and sea, [the Roman emperors] choose to preserve their empire rather than extend it indefinitely over poor and profitless barbarian peoples. In Rome I have seen embassies of some of these offering themselves as subjects, but the emperor did not accept them as they would be useless to him.[57]

By the late Empire, however, this way of viewing the world is only one of the options. A whole array of sources presents a definite shift. The ideology of *imperium sine fine* continues, but along with it are notions that the frontiers are defensive barriers, that they are placed against outsiders, and that they demarcate a clear space known as the *Imperium Romanorum*.

Key sources on imperial and frontier ideology from the late third century onward are panegyrics. Panegyric gives insight into the worldview of Romans at many levels by indicating how Romans viewed the temporal and spatial limits to their world at specific moments in time. Looking at tacit dimensions of worldview can show us something about the long periods of peace between punctuating moments of crisis and disaster.[58] As examples of epideictic (display) oratory, panegyrics give insight into the Roman mind by presenting a reconstruction or construction of the recent past according to established literary conventions. A panegyric was literally a public speech by a skilled rhetorician given in honor of the emperor or other outstanding figure. Every New Year's Day, imperial birthday, and anniversary was commemorated, and every deed remotely deserving of honor was used to praise the honoree. Panegyric was a widely circulating medium, touching not only an immediate listening audience but potentially the whole of the literate public and beyond as well. Many panegyrics became rhetorical models in schools and were studied and quoted from. Panegyrics present the hopes and joys of Romans, particularly at the moment the speech was uttered. In the words of C. E. V. Nixon, editor of the most recent collection of late Roman panegyrics, the panegyric is "a priceless historical document reflecting the outlook of the day."[59] Panegyrics aimed to give stability and hope to a people otherwise uncertain of the future.

The panegyrics present frontier consciousness in a variety of paradoxical ways. The strengthening or perceived strengthening of frontiers provided orators with specific and concrete reference points in their praise of the emperors. Audiences for such panegyrics would have appreciated the factual grounding of these references even amid the epideictic rhetoric. S. MacCormack, in her influential study of ceremony in Late Antiquity, has pointed out that Roman audiences would have been conditioned to sort facts as "facts" from facts as symbols and tokens of imperial majesty.[60] The praise or flattery, therefore, would fall flat if not grounded in some type of perceived fact. Information about frontiers thus helped describe the solvency of the Roman Empire. The variety of references shows the relation of space and frontiers in the late Roman mind.

First, and connecting to Roman structural ideologies such as *imperium sine fine*, most panegyrics imply that Romans are firmly in control of where they place their ever-expanding imperial frontiers. The image is one of growth that would eventually lead to the takeover of the whole world, or at least what was worth having. A panegyric from the last decade of the third century highlights how, through his campaigns into Germany, the emperor Maximianus has expanded indefinitely the frontiers of the empire.

> Indeed, could there have eventuated a greater one than that famous crossing of yours into Germany, by which you first of all, Emperor, proved that there were no bounds to the Roman Empire except those of your arms. For previously it seemed that Nature herself had mapped out the Rhine so that the Roman provinces might be protected from the savagery of the barbarian by that boundary. And before your Principate who ever failed to offer thanks that Gaul was protected by that river?[61]

Maximianus preserves the solvency of the Empire through his defense of the Roman frontiers. He is praised in different panegyrics for "extending the boundaries of Rome by means of *virtus*" and for traversing "the frontiers tirelessly where the Roman Empire presses upon barbarian peoples." The theme of indefinite expansion continues in this and subsequent panegyrics as emperors are praised for "so many frontiers pushed forward," for pushing forward "the boundaries of Roman power by means of *virtus*," and for traversing "the frontiers tirelessly where the Roman Empire presses upon barbarian peoples."[62]

Second, and partly in tension with the first usage, many panegyrics imply a static frontier along which Romans live and fight, a frontier they maintain against the harshest attacks. The rhetoric now highlights the strictly defensive nature of Roman frontiers. In one panegyric, Constantius I (r. 305–6), the father of Constantine, is praised for "protecting the whole frontier" near the Rhine "by the terror inspired by [his] presence." In other panegyrics, speakers rejoice at all the "camps of cavalry units and cohorts reestablished along the Rhine, Danube, and Euphrates frontiers" and "the Rhine secure with armies stationed along the whole border"[63]—certainly reasonable cause for rejoicing after the tumult that was the third century. Here, the medium of panegyric reveals, even if unintentionally, questions about world mastery that must have been on the minds of many Romans at all levels. The emphasis is on reestablishment in the face of hostile foes.

In the process of defining or redefining imperial power, a changing Roman attitude appears. One panegyricist goes into some detail on how living on these frontiers shapes the character of Romans at the periphery. He praises an emperor for coming from an area

> whose frontier, exposed to the enemy (although a beaten one) and always arrayed in arms, has taught [him] the tireless habit of toil and patience, in provinces where all of life is military service, whose women even are braver than the men of other lands.[64]

Third, alongside these images are indications of a belief that the Roman Empire was always (or at least should be) coterminous with the world and thus had no frontiers. One emperor is praised for having "conquered everywhere" and for conquering beyond the limits where the sun rises and sets.[65] This image also occurs in a speech by Libanius. Libanius presents the scale of empire as "from the west to the rising sun."[66] A number of passages highlight Maximianus' defense of the frontiers. In fact, among surviving panegyrics hardly any other emperor is more specifically associated with Roman frontiers than he, due to his momentous redrawing of the eastern frontier with his defeat of Narses in 298.[67] Continuing the theme, one panegyricist claims that Constantine the Great (r. 306–37) has made fortifications along what were once frontier zones into "ornaments to adorn" rather than to protect—the restitution was so complete that military defense was no longer necessary.[68] The variety among these usages of frontiers in the panegyrics suggests a highly diluted *imperium sine fine* ideology and a shift to something else.

Beyond the Boundaries of Empire

Much has been made recently of the idea that the Romans thought in terms of peoples, not territories. Therefore, it is claimed, Romans thought of themselves as conquering human groups rather than space when they moved beyond what once were frontiers. Isaac provides a clear example of such an assertion, claiming that "there can be no doubt that the focus of Roman imperialism tended to be ethnic rather than territorial or geographic. The Romans conquered peoples, not land."[69] However true this may have been for the early Empire, it is not defensible universally for the later Empire.[70] Appian, for example, spoke of "the boundary of the peoples subject to the Romans" rather than "the boundary of the Empire." But such a differentiation cannot hold completely past the third century.[71] The problem, it seems, is that ideology and ideas of the early Empire are frozen in time and then read by recent historians into the later Empire.

A change occurred in the Roman way of thinking about territory, part of a shift to late Roman frontier consciousness. Specifically from the third century onward, Romans did begin to think of their holdings in terms of bounded territories and not just divisions between peoples. It was not until the third century, in fact, that Augustus was seen, anachronistically, as hedging the empire around with natural frontiers such as rivers, deserts, and mountains (on which more in the next chapter).

One way to assess the later Roman understanding of boundaries is to consider Roman analyses of the space beyond. An initial problem is that

conservatism in terminology makes it difficult to assess in some cases whether *Imperium Romanorum* in the sources refers specifically to Imperial rule of the Roman people or whether it reflected a transition to a strong territorial connotation. The shift in meaning from *imperium* to Empire, imperial rule to the bounded territory of empire, was gradual and followed the pattern of other Roman designations of space.[72] The transfer in concept from the limits of one's rule or hegemony to a definite spatial area was perfectly natural to the Romans. A famous example is the change in meaning of *provincia* from the power prescribed to a given magistrate to what we know as *province*, a bounded territory whose borders were clearly demarcated.[73] Less known is the development in meaning of the provincial subdivision known as *conventus*. Beginning as a gathering of Romans for legal or commercial reasons, the *conventus* eventually became associated with the space covered by that central meeting and then the territory from which people could gather. Some provinces then were divided up into bounded *conventus* districts for purposes of administration.[74] So, the transition of terminology that once designated hegemony and/or administration exerted over a given space to the space itself reveals a general Roman pattern.

The Romans of the late Empire clearly had a concept of an end to their claims, the influence of the ideology of *imperium sine fine* notwithstanding. Many available sources, particularly of the later Roman Empire, refer to Romans going outside of space that was the *Imperium Romanorum* by going beyond its boundaries. Libanius, for example, in summarizing the campaign of Julian, claimed that he "passed beyond the boundaries of the Roman Empire and still ruled over it: physically he might be in enemy territory, but he retained his own empire under his sway, and whether present or absent, he had the same ability to enforce universal peace."[75] The emphasis is on Julian's projection of power—a perfectly Roman notion in any period—but there is a definite spatial aspect embedded in this reference. From the perspective of one inside the bounds of empire, Julian had gone beyond the Roman frontier and into the territory of another. It seems impossible to read the *ges* as anything other than a territorial description of the Roman Empire. *Imperium* might be read as "power" with no territorial connotations, but *ge* is a bit more difficult to deal with this way. The *basileia* also might be open to multiple readings, but it is clear that Libanius, at least, conceived of the Empire as a territorial and space division and not just as a people. Furthermore, the substantive use of *te polemeia* clearly refers to enemy territory; the phrase is common enough with the *ge* or *chora* understood. If not, then Libanius' rhetoric must necessarily have fallen on deaf ears. For what was Julian's accomplishment if it were not ruling the land, not just the people, of the Romans even while he was

specifically outside of it? Although hard data on worldview shifts are necessarily elusive, such references do suggest a change in frontier consciousness as well as a consequent change in ways of imagining territory. Other examples come from a variety of late Roman sources. Sozomen records that Julian, after he had defeated Ctesiphon, was "no longer desirous of proceeding further, but wishing only to return to the Roman Empire," burned his vessels. A guide, a secret Persian sympathizer, volunteered to take Julian's "army very speedily to the Roman frontiers."[76] The implication, again, is that there was a definite point at which they would be in Roman territory, not just among the Roman people rather than among the Persian people.

A further example comes from a letter of Libanius to a certain Aristainetos concerning an ambassador to the Persians named Spectatus. Libanius records that on Spectatus' return from the embassy, many saw him as very fortunate because he had seen the land, mountains, and rivers of the Persians.[77] Such examples as these could be multiplied many times over for the later Empire to show that Roman audiences conceptualized boundaries as literal divisions among the space claims of various peoples. The ancient knowledge of space seems not to have been limited to the concept of hegemony over peoples occupying a given space.

Egeria's account of her pilgrimage also provides examples. When she asks a bishop the whereabouts of Ur, she is told that "the place you seek is 10 staging-posts from here, inside Persian lands. From here to Nisibis is five staging-posts, and it is five more from there to Ur, which was the city of the Chaldees; but at present, Romans are not allowed to go there, since that whole area belongs to the Persians." "This area in particular," the bishop continues, "lies on the border between Roman, Persian or Chaldean lands" and "it is called the Eastern province."[78] Such descriptions are difficult to imagine absent literal boundaries that were known and appreciated by Romans locally at the frontier.

Did Frontiers Matter?

> Since almost nothing is so unimportant that it does not obtain the greatest forethought from Our Clemency we consider that especial care must be bestowed upon the borders, by which the whole state is protected.[79]

Compare this late Roman legal assessment with the words of a modern writer.

> It is not at all clear that the concept of an imperial frontier as such was of great importance. It was not marked by any boundary stones and the

> only ancient map we have, the Peutinger Table, nowhere indicates the boundary of the empire as such. . . . The only boundaries which had actual relevance were those of provinces.[80]

What role did frontiers play in the late Roman worldview? Worldview, as spelled out in the previous chapter, is often tacit; crucial elements of it rarely are spelled out in the sources. One of the key ways of assessing frontier consciousness is to look at how Romans of the late Empire viewed a loss of territory. To return to an example used throughout this study, after the famous surrender of Nisibis in 363, Ammianus, far from the only one to find the occasion arresting, gives the following analysis.

> Never (I think) since the founding of our city can it be found by an unfolder of chronicles that any part of our territory has been yielded to an enemy by an emperor or consul; but that not even the recovery of anything that had been lost was ever enough for the honor of a triumph, but only the increase of our dominions.[81]

This passage is helpful in a few different ways. For one, it shows that Ammianus, an avid reader of history himself, had come across no indication that Roman territory had shrunk previously. In fact, it had, and the ignoring of that shrinkage in territory fits in well with the model of *imperium sine fine*, so prevalent up until the third century. In the worldview of writers and readers in the early Empire, the idea of losing territory was unthinkable, and hence it had gone unrecorded in earlier times. Hadrian's concessions following Trajan's expansions, noted more clearly by St. Augustine than Hadrian's own contemporaries, is but one example.[82] For another, this passage shows that in the later fourth century, people were thinking of the Roman Empire in terms of a bounded territory, not just people (the people of Nisibis, in fact, were moved into another city, which was then named Nisibis).[83] And that is specifically what makes the loss of Nisibis so poignant—it caused Roman frontiers to shift and led to a consequent loss of territory. St. Augustine's assessments well express Hadrian's concession in a way that Ammianus seems to not have known or to have ignored. Again, the key to the disaster was specifically the loss of territory and the establishment of a new frontier.[84] Later, Agathias would connect the loss of territory and the establishment of a new frontier, both of which were devastating to the Roman state. The shameful and disgraceful truce was so bad that it "is even now harmful to the Roman state, by which means he made the empire contract into new boundaries and cut off the outer parts of [Jovian's] own territory.[85] Here, space, territory, and

boundaries are brought together to suggest the impact that the loss had on the Romans. Clearly, Romans of the later Empire did, in fact, find the concept of an imperial frontier significant.

Other references to the loss of territory are found in the *Orations* of Libanius. As speeches, these would have had a wide audience and would reflect at some level the expectation and knowledge of the audience. On two different occasions, Libanius praises emperors at the expense of Constantius, whose postmortem memory Libanius and others handled less than gently. In the funeral oration of Julian, he records how Constantius would generally arrive after engagements in which Roman territory had been lost to the Persians, and then Constantius would just express thanks that they did not do worse. The point is that Constantius was an ineffective emperor for allowing territory to be lost. Echoing the same sentiment, in more direct wording, Libanius records that even as the Persians came every year to "nibble away bits of our territories and increase theirs at our expense," Constantius enjoyed favor because he had the eastern cities on his side.[86] Again, the implication is that Constantius was a bad emperor because he allowed Roman territory to be lost, regardless of his reputation in the East. Romans clearly were interested in territory, and that interest, especially during the later Empire, strengthened a frontier consciousness.

A later universal history looks back on how the Roman people could be distressed by the loss of regions. Zonaras, a twelfth-century Byzantine writer, records how the emperor Philip the Arab (r. 244–49), on learning that the Romans were upset by the loss of Armenia and Mesopotamia, broke a peace treaty in order to regain them.[87] Philip had acted on the idea that Romans were disappointed by the loss of territory. It is important to note, however, that Roman reactions to such losses were not consistent. Reactions would have had something to do with available news. Nowhere in our sources, for example, is there recorded any negative reaction to the surrender of the province of trans-Danubian Dacia by Aurelian in 282.[88] A new Dacia, cis-Danubian, was then founded and seems to have taken its place. In such regions, it appears that the Roman memory of borders could be short term. It would be difficult to assess whether Romans cared about this loss because there survive absolutely no sources reacting to the concession. The absence of references, juxtaposed with the abundant references to anything that happens near frontiers afterward, attests to the fact that, soon after, the Tetrarchs, led by Diocletian, reorganized the frontiers.

Memories of the recovery or addition of territory could provoke joyful reactions and demonstrate that Romans were interested in territory and were attuned to frontier shifts. In his *Satire on the Caesars,* for example, Julian

presents Constantine as claiming to rank equal to Trajan "on the score of that territory which he added to the empire, and I recovered."[89] The reference is obviously tongue-in-cheek, but the humor would have to be grounded in the idea that late Romans accorded greatness to one who added or regained territory. Orosius records that Aurelian overcame the Goths and established rule within the "former boundaries" of the Empire; Orosius had a clear idea of where they ran.[90] Diocletian specifically is singled out in panegyric for his restoration and advancing of Roman frontiers, although in fact some sections were abandoned under him.[91] Later, Zosimus would record that the "Antonines were good men because they recovered [territory] their predecessors had lost and even added to the empire." Such a description is obviously based on Zosimus' own notion of territoriality; similar references are much more prevalent in his own context and do not exist from before the third century. A famous passage, which Zosimus uses to criticize Constantine by contrast, praises Diocletian for restoring Roman frontiers by setting up extensive defensive systems along them.[92]

In their haste to distance Roman frontier studies from nineteenth-century notions, nurtured mainly in a British imperialism focusing on "territorial control, defined frontiers, clear divisions of responsibility, and channels of communication,"[93] recent historians have overcorrected. To suggest, as foremost scholars have done, that frontiers did not matter much to Romans, ignores the role they did play in a late Roman worldview. Frontiers loomed large in a late Roman worldview, specifically because of their connection to cosmology and to a growing sense of bounded territory. As will be seen in subsequent chapters, such a growing consciousness of frontiers would come about in part because of a heightened proliferation of news throughout the later Roman Empire, much of it from and about the Roman frontiers.

3

Ὅρος Ἀρχαῖος: Natural Frontiers in a Late Roman Worldview

Here let the most noble accomplishments of the bravest Emperors be recalled through representations of the separate regions, while the Twin rivers of Persia and the thirsty fields of Libya and the recurved horns of the Rhine and the many-cleft mouth of the Nile are seen again as eager messengers [*nuntii*] constantly arrive. . . . For now, now at last it is a delight to see a picture of the world, since we see nothing in it which is not ours.

—Eumenius, *Panegyric* 9.21 (Nixon and Rodgers, trans.)

At some point during the final two years of the third century, a high-ranking civil servant delivered these lines in panegyric to an otherwise unknown governor. Eumenius was trying to convince the governor to allow him to donate his salary toward the rebuilding of the rhetoric schools of his hometown of Autun, in Gaul.[1] In addition to the rare insight the whole of this panegyric gives into later Roman educational structures, it reveals how Romans perceived some of their natural frontiers as well as how they came to possess that knowledge. Eumenius had just finished describing a great wall map in the porticoes of the Autun school. The map, he claimed, let "young men see and contemplate daily every land and all the seas" as well as "the sites of all locations with their names, their extent, and the distances between them, the sources and terminations of all the rivers, the curves of all the shores, and the

Ocean, both where its circuit girds the earth and where its pressure breaks into it."[2] Eumenius then spoke the finale of his panegyric, with which this chapter begins. The selection is fascinating for what it reveals about a scarcely attested aspect of Roman geographical education as well as the way it highlights some natural frontiers.

The orator's focus is on the frontiers, which within the very recent past had been challenged, strengthened, or reestablished.[3] The students, he affirmed, needed to "see clearly with their eyes what they comprehend less readily by their ears."[4] The map, then, was regularly updated "as eager messengers constantly arrive" with news. The speech itself obviously was informed by very recent news from such messengers. These messengers were coming from the peripheries of the empire, expressed specifically in terms of rivers, deserts, and ocean. The arrival of very recent news from the frontiers let the limits of the empire be "seen" again, to delve in the synesthesiatic oratory of Eumenius. An effective education, Eumenius argued, depends on having "the best masters of all virtues" skillfully communicate the recent happenings of the world—that is, news—to students visually as well as verbally.[5] The rest of the public, with "their minds . . . gazing upon each of these places," will "see" the peripheries of the Empire in the words arriving with the messengers.[6] News would thus help shape perceptions of the peripheries.

Although there is much debate over their actual role, natural features were perceived as frontiers and barriers by Romans, especially during the late Empire. Natural features at the frontiers, as suggested by Eumenius, were an important part of a Roman worldview. This worldview was shaped by news coming from the frontiers inasmuch as news was interpreted against it. Such a dynamic affirms that people act and respond to the world as they perceive it—a worldview. This chapter explores features of the landscape that Romans saw as forming frontiers or barriers to the empire—rivers, primarily, but also mountains, deserts, and the sea or ocean. Rivers are prominent here because they appear much more often in Roman texts. As is often the case with frontiers in general, references to natural frontiers usually appear after moments of crisis or celebration—over transgressed frontier zones or of victory over extended frontiers. Much of our knowledge about the way that Romans viewed their peripheries is found in images in public oration and in visual arts. The association of natural features with the frontiers of empire was solidified in the later Roman Empire.

Early in the third century, the historian Herodian looked back on the policies of Augustus, contrasting them to those of the Roman Republic as well as the recent ones of Septimius Severus (r. 193–211). Augustus, Herodian claims in this brief aside, had changed the Republic by stationing mercenary troops

all around the empire to act as a "wall of the Roman Empire." Furthermore, Augustus had, according to Herodian, "fortified the empire by hedging it around with major obstacles, rivers, and trenches and mountains and deserted areas which were difficult to cross."[7] Herodian's presentation is anachronistic; the image of the wall of empire, fortified by natural barriers, is, in fact, an artifact of his own recent past and cannot be traced to the early Empire. To be sure, Augustus had bragged in his *Res Gestae* of expanding the empire to the natural limits of Roman *imperium*.[8] The rivers and other physical features of the Empire were seen as natural places to stop expansion. But at no time prior to the late second century does one see these limits emerge specifically as "barriers" or "walls" rather than just natural, logical stopping points. Such references reveal a new stream of thought that emerged sometime in the second century but became more pronounced due to the events of the third century.

By the later Empire, the image is clear. Romans began to imagine physical features as their frontiers whenever possible. The Roman Empire became seen as bounded by various physical or topographical features. Mountains, rivers, deserts, and the sea were all recognized as the frontiers to Roman holdings.

Firm challenges to the concept of natural frontiers have questioned whether physical features actually functioned as frontiers of empire. J. C. Mann puts one view succinctly:

> To the unthinking, the Rhine or the Danube can appear as a "natural frontier." No such thing as a "natural frontier" exists. Rivers in particular hardly ever function as effective boundaries between groups.[9]

Such pronouncements generally come from structural functionalists, many of whom have been strongly influenced by the *Annales* school. Although C. R. Whittaker describes himself as somewhere in the middle between structural functionalists and behaviorists, his own position on this issue puts him clearly with the former. He claims that "politicians find rivers or mountains convenient geographic markers around which to bargain or focus patriotic fervor," but natural frontiers never really functioned as frontiers. He and many other Roman historians see mountains, rivers, and deserts not as real barriers but as having been "'promoted to the dignity of being a natural frontier' by victorious nations in the process of expansion, and in the desire to define space."[10]

Such statements appropriately caution against taking ancient references too quickly at face value, especially the type of rhetorical sources used throughout this study; but they also seem to overstate the case. Many of Whittaker's examples are drawn from nineteenth- and twentieth-century contexts and say little about the ancient context and ancient responses to geographical features

of the landscape. To say, as he does, that the Duke of Wellington rejected the Indus River as a frontier in India in 1808, for example, need not mean that the same could be said of the Romans and the Danube.[11] In terms of worldview, physical features were crucial to Roman understanding of frontiers. Perhaps natural features are ineffective militarily (although even a certain number of Roman military historians are beginning seriously to doubt this chestnut),[12] but it is perfectly natural to imagine them as frontiers or boundaries. The sources say as much, even, especially those that were not part of the Roman political propaganda machine.

B. Isaac's denial that geography determined the boundaries of Empire seems motivated by a desire to see how the frontiers actually functioned, usually in military or strategic terms, and he does much to illuminate the eastern frontiers in an ancient military context.[13] But he, like Whittaker, is concerned much "less about ideology than about actuality."[14] What Isaac, Whittaker, and others seem to be questioning is whether physical features actually served as strategic frontiers in any meaningful sense. Were they used to shape a frontier policy or strategic planning in any global or long-range sense?

These questions are not unimportant; rather, they are irrelevant to this study. Whittaker himself claims, in commenting on Roman imperial ideologies, that "ideology is no guide to the reality of frontiers."[15] My interest is not so much in how frontiers or natural frontiers functioned in a strategic sense but rather in how they were perceived—the habitus shaped in schools like Autun. Glimpses of those perceptions in media of the day are vitally important for understanding how Romans viewed their frontiers and their world.

In his famous polemic against the pagans, Orosius gives a fascinating overview of the whole world, noting its divisions into three major parts as well as by regions and provinces.[16] This work can be considered a medium in that it reports on current problems to people demanding an explanation for recent happenings within the Roman Empire.[17] The whole world, he notes, is under the control of the city of Rome, even to his present time. As he describes each region, he follows Pliny in mentioning natural features and the number of *ethne* in each area. In almost every case, the critical border for each region, large or small, tends to be a river, a mountain, or the sea. When Orosius defines what separates Roman territory from "barbarian," he records, for example, that the "Danube separates territory from the land of the barbarians in the direction of Our Sea."[18] The "farthest boundaries" of Africa are the Atlas Range. Orosius, a Spanish monk, does not seem to be promoting natural boundaries to the level of frontier as imperial propaganda, unless that itself forms a central, if unconscious, part of his habitus. He exults in the Roman Empire as the fulfillment of God's plan for the earth, but he is not blind to

problems and losses. In other parts of his work, he is content to see that God himself controls the Empire's frontiers and allowed barbarians to enter or violate them simply by removing his protective hand.[19] And yet Orosius focuses on physical and natural features as boundaries to empire. Perhaps he has imbibed imperial ideology here, but it is useful to set this type of ideology in the context of his own thought and that of his contemporaries, for clearly it had a strong hold on his own worldview. It shapes his whole view of geography.

Mountains, Oceans, Deserts

In what is most likely the only formal definition of a Roman frontier term from before the modern period, Suidas, a tenth-century Byzantine lexicographer, offers the following, using a popular Late Roman example.[20]

> *Eschatia.* The areas toward the *termasi* of the land are called *eschatia,* which border on a mountain or the sea. . . . Again, Diocletian, when considering the state of the empire, considered it necessary to strengthen all *eschatia* with sufficient forces and to build forts.[21]

In Greek sources of the Roman period, *eschatia* is the equivalent of the Latin *limes*.[22] Suidas probably based his example here on descriptions in Zosimus.[23] It is interesting that he singles out mountains and the sea specifically as the site for *eschatia*.

The notion that mountains divide territory has a long history. The Romans were not exceptional among peoples, ancient and modern, in imagining that mountains bounded their territory of control. Herodian, it will be recalled, claimed mountains as one of the natural features with which Augustus fortified the boundaries of the Roman Empire.[24] A similar reference appears in the writing of the fourth-century philosopher and rhetorician Themistius. Dismayed over the "indescribable Iliad of disasters" of the barbarian invasions of the late fourth century, he would claim that not even "uncrossable mountains" could hold out the hordes of barbarians. This reference is linked to "unfordable rivers" and "unpassable wastes." Ammianus likewise presents the Taurus Mountains as separating the peoples beyond the Tigris from Armenia.[25] From a later period, Procopius describes how the "Persians opened the way from Iberia into Colchis which was beset at every point by precipitous ravines and unmanageable brush, with woods so thick that, before the Persians, it seemed impassable even to a fit man."[26]

Oceans and the sea also functioned as frontiers and boundaries in a Roman worldview. In fact, ocean was presented under the Principate as the

"most prestigious boundary" for measuring conquest.[27] The author of the *Expositio Totius Mundi* refers to the Ocean as "a waste, and there is the end of the world."[28] Romans traditionally treated the ocean as part of the boundary of the earth itself. The elder Seneca, for example, presented "the outer ocean" as "earth's boundary, the border of nature itself, oldest element and birthplace of the gods—darkness prevails here."[29] Ocean himself, a deity, was the father of rivers, also boundaries.[30] In oration and panegyric, ocean functions more visibly as a boundary. The linking of Roman rule to this type of "from sea to sea" imagery is fairly common. As Libanius put it at one point, "Constantius, besides possession of the islands and regions lying upon the Atlantic, was master of the land from the very far shores up to the streams of the Euphrates."[31] An inscription to Julian records that as "lord of the whole world," his rule extends at one extreme from the Britannic Ocean.[32] A panegyricist sees the two oceans as the places where the sun sets and rises—all, of course, under the sway of the emperor.[33]

Oceans also hold a crucial position in the Roman cosmology. The so-called Near Eastern cosmology envisioned the ocean as chaos surrounding the cosmos. The Ptolemaic cosmology did not dispense with this image entirely, even as it set forth a planetary picture of cosmos. Eusebius writes, "In the Middle, like a core, He laid out the earth, and then encircled this with Ocean to embellish its outline with dark-blue color."[34] The ocean is more decorative now than a threat to the cosmos, as it is presented in the Old Testament and other Near Eastern writings as well as the Revelation of St. John (21:1). St. Augustine would summarize his own view of the world in commentary on Psalm 72:8:

> For the land is encircled by a great sea which is called the Ocean: from which there flows in some small part in the midst of the lands, and makes those seas known to us which are frequented by ships. Again, in *from seas unto sea,* that from any one end of the earth even unto any other end, He would be Lord.[35]

He explains this passage again in a letter concerning the end of the world. He writes that the "universe is surrounded by the Ocean Sea," and then he refers to "the whole world which is, in a sense, the greatest island of all because the Ocean also girds it about.[36] To St. Augustine, as to his contemporaries, the Ocean was the ultimate boundary. Later, Isidore of Seville would envision Terra as a region surrounded everywhere by the Ocean, which "flowing around encompasses its borders in a circle."[37] Orosius likewise shares this cosmography of the ocean. In his view, the whole world is surrounded by a periphery of

ocean. The boundary of Europe is the Western Ocean, "where the Pillars of Hercules are viewed near the Gades Islands and where the Ocean tide empties into the mouth of the Tyrrhenian Sea." But at the same time, Orosius could present the Roman Empire as extending almost to the outer part of the ocean: "The boundaries of Africa toward the west are the same as those of Europe, that is, the mouth of the Strait of Gades."[38] His wording suggests the difficulty at times of distinguishing cosmological references to the bounds of earth and the boundaries of the Roman Empire. As seen earlier, the union of cosmology and empire is significant to worldview.

The connection of ocean to boundedness was very powerful in Late Antique art and iconography. Abundant mosaics present Ocean as encircling the earth.[39] This idea is echoed in a mosaic inscription from the transept of the basilica of Dumetios in Nikopolis, which describes a scene portrayed there.

> Here you see the famous and boundless ocean
> Containing in its midst the earth
> Bearing round about in the skillful images of art everything
> that breathes and creeps
> The foundation of Dumetios, the great-hearted archpriest.[40]

This same image is expressed in panegyric, where Ocean is said to "gird the earth."[41]

As seen with Themistius, deserts also functioned as frontiers.[42] The desert frontiers were quite extensive, reaching from southern Syria and across Africa to Mauretania and the Atlantic. Surprisingly, they figure only slightly in recorded Roman ideology and cosmography. Successful invasions generally did not come from the desert frontiers, and their place in the sources is consequently small. In the words of C. Daniels, "in short, the desert frontier was successfully held, over immense distances and by the smallest regional armies, for something over half a millennium."[43]

Rivers

> I do not know much about gods; but I think that the river
> Is a strong brown god—sullen, untamed and intractable
> Patient to some degree, at first recognised as a frontier
> —T. S. Eliot, *The Dry Salvages*

It was not until the early 1970s, particularly with C. Wells's *German Policy of Augustus*, that Roman historians seriously began to question the significance

of rivers to the Empire and its frontiers. It had long been assumed by most writers of history (of any era and context) that rivers served as natural barriers. The Roman Empire was pictured by most historians as clearly bounded by the Rhine, Danube, and Euphrates on its northern and eastern frontiers for most periods. The rivers themselves complemented a firmly held view that saw linear barriers, like Maginot lines, surrounding the Roman Empire. Beginning with Wells, many Roman historians proposed that rivers in fact served as links between peoples on both banks or as modes of transportation and communication rather than as boundaries. Rivers, in effect, came to be seen as highways or bridges rather than as barriers.[44] From that time until very recently, this view has held a firm consensus. Roman historians following this trend effectively have challenged a simplistic view of a Roman Empire surrounded at all periods by linear barriers.

Initially, the "bridges rather than barriers" view of rivers gave little if any credit to the *Annales* historian L. Febvre. Writing exactly fifty years before the publication of Wells's book, Febvre first proposed (in his *La Terre et l'Évolution Humaine*) that rather than serving as natural frontiers, rivers in fact link groups together for common activities such as trade and communication. It had taken exactly half of a century for Febvre's idea to hit mainstream Roman historiography.[45] Many Roman military historians in particular, following Wells, have essentially argued that rivers were never military barriers and hence did not serve in a significant sense as the barriers that ancients and moderns alike had imagined them as being. The argument has been made for many contexts and not just for the Roman Empire.[46] While it certainly may be debated to what extent rivers function as military or strategic barriers in reality, it remains important not to ignore the place of rivers in the worldview of ancients.[47] A Roman view of rivers encompassed a variety of factors, cosmological and religious among them.

To be sure, available sources do refer to rivers as modes of transportation and communication. Gregory Nazianzus, for example, in describing Julian's Persian expedition, presents him using the Tigris as a way to carry his provisions as he marched next to it.[48] And Persians were notorious for being able to cross the Euphrates very easily by building temporary bridges.[49] And yet it does not follow that such pictures invalidate rivers as significant boundaries in the minds of Romans.[50] It is not clear to me how rivers "could hardly have served as a line of communication" if, in fact, they "became considered a defensive line."[51] Whittaker here denies, in fact, that they were considered a defensive barrier, but that seems an overstatement in light of the evidence.

The abundance of references in Roman sources to rivers as boundaries speaks strongly to the contrary. A full range of factors shaped the ways that

Romans viewed their rivers and their frontiers. In the recent words of D. Braund, one of a growing number of dissenters from the Febvre/Wells thesis,

> For Romans, boundaries were redolent of rivers and rivers of boundaries at centre and periphery alike. . . . From a Roman perspective, rivers were indeed natural boundaries in a sense that includes their religiosity, their natural power and their tendency to divide and to bound. . . . Modern strategists . . . miss much of the point which lies embedded in the environmental psychology of the Roman world.[52]

M. J. Nicasie is another recent historian who has begun to question the current consensus that rivers do not make sense as barriers in military terms.[53] More recently, S. Mattern claims that even during the Principate, "in some ways the river boundaries functioned as political borders," and she provides some telling evidence.[54]

One of the strongest attempts to refute the natural frontiers model with actual ancient evidence is by Isaac.[55] A critical dialogue with his view might explain how mine differs both in emphasis and conclusion as well as in interpretation of the ancient evidence. His method is, first of all, to quote passages to the effect that rivers were not difficult to cross when bridges, boats, and trained swimmers were available. The specific swimmers he mentions, the Batavians, were known for their abilities, and he refers to Tacitus and Dio to that effect.[56] But Isaac fails to mention that the same passage also records that other barbarians were terrified by the demonstration of the Batavians—that is, it was not a normal "barbarian" thing to be able to swim rivers with ease. Other swimmers, described as Germans, actually fought on the Roman side during Claudius' (r. A.D. 41–54) campaign. Isaac draws from this fact that if any army were to be hampered by rivers, it would, in fact, be the Roman rather than the barbarian.[57] Isaac then uses Dio to show that rivers can be bridged with little difficulty, as Roman soldiers regularly practiced building bridges on the Danube, the Rhine, and the Euphrates.[58] So far, so good—but the issue at stake seems to be whether barbarians were building bridges at all, and neither Isaac nor his references give any hints that they might be. Thus, it seems that the point stands that barbarians would also have been hindered in crossing rivers if even bridge-building Romans in fact were.[59] Isaac does not prove his case here but rather turns the issue around by showing that Romans were hindered rather than answering whether the barbarians were actually blocked out en masse by rivers. It seems, even as his own examples make fairly clear, that they were.

Next, Isaac turns to a passage from *De Rebus Bellicis* that provides, as he sees it, crucial refutation of the concept of natural frontiers. I quote at length the same section he does, written ca. 368–69:[60]

> First of all it must be recognized that frenzied native tribes, yelping everywhere around, hem the Roman empire in, and that treacherous barbarians, protected by natural defenses, menace every stretch of our frontiers. For these peoples to whom I refer are for the most part either hidden by forests or lifted beyond our reach by mountains or kept from us by the snows; some, nomadic, are protected by deserts and the blazing sun. There are those who, defended by marshes and rivers, cannot even be located easily, and yet they tear peace and quiet to shreds by their unforeseen attacks. Tribes of this kind, therefore, who are protected either by natural defenses such as these or by the walls of towns and towers, must be attacked with a variety of novel armed devices.[61]

The passage is significant, Isaac claims, because it shows "genuine ancient comments on the value of natural obstacles as the frontier, made by a man with a professional interest in military affairs."[62] Natural features, he concludes, are then obstacles to Roman action rather than barriers to repel barbarians.

This simply does not follow. The passage occurs in a description of offensive military machines and does not seem to be making overarching statements about the defense of the empire against the "yelping savages." Truly if the river is a barrier to action for the Romans on one side of the river, it will be so (if not more so) for barbarians on the other as well. The anonymous author seems to be giving us a view from only one side of the river here—interestingly, the defense against the barbarians. None of this precludes the view from the other side, namely that the Romans also are protected by such obstacles from those who "menace every stretch of our frontiers." To continue, as Isaac does, that the "only strategy [the anonymous author of *De Rebus Bellicis*] can conceive of is preventative or retaliatory attack across the frontier" is an argument from silence at best. The context, again, is a description of military equipment, and that focuses the author's presentation—any argument about the real limits of his conception from this passage seems a stretch.

Rivers were easy to ford, Isaac continues, because of easily transportable bridges that the Romans could carry and that the anonymous author in fact describes. But what about the barbarians, who, it seems, should be the real focus? We are not told here or elsewhere whether the barbarians had transportable bridges. Other evidence suggests, in fact, that they generally did not.[63]

Therefore, it seems to me that the passage could in fact be implying the opposite of what Isaac argues—namely, that the rivers did a better job keeping barbarians on one side of them than Romans, even if rivers and other natural obstacles also served to shelter the barbarians (and hence the need for military machines). Again, without the benefit of bridges and machines, how effective could the barbarians be against the Romans?

Isaac continues with references to easily crossed rivers, but, again, his examples generally fail to convince. He cites as evidence barbarians crossing on the frozen Danube from Pliny's *Panegyric* and Florus' *Epitome*. Isaac concludes, "In other words, the river, at least in winter time, did not help in keeping them out." So much is true, although that did not seem to restrict barbarian campaigns to that time of year either.[64] Such statements should not be taken as a general refutation of rivers as barriers. Although the Danube did freeze regularly, it did not do so consistently.[65] The whole ancient fuss about a frozen river, it seems, could hardly be stronger indication that the unfrozen river was, in fact, seen as a substantial barrier.

Isaac's further analysis of *Panegyric* 6.11.1 is generally unconvincing as well. "We are not now defended by the waters of the Rhine, but by the terror of your name" appears to be epideictic praise of the emperor rather than, as Isaac suggests, the general denial or depreciation of a river barrier as such.[66] Isaac continues with the panegyric, "Nature does not close off any land with such an insurmountable wall that courage cannot cross it." But, again, this statement seems to be in praise of the type of courage that can surmount the difficult-to-cross bounds set by Nature. If just anyone could cross them at will, then what is so praiseworthy about this emperor? Isaac's own reference seems, again, to argue against his case. His final example, from Procopius, that Persians could cross the Euphrates easily because of bridge-building equipment, is more convincing.[67] And yet it also shows that rivers would generally be crossed only for large-scale invasions. Isaac thus proves the point I will argue later in the chapter: that crossing a frontier river was perceived as entering a foreign land.

Isaac's case against rivers as natural frontiers simply does not hold much water, in my estimation. My point here is not necessarily to resuscitate rivers as "scientific" boundaries but rather to argue that they were, in fact, *perceived* as frontiers of the Roman Empire by the Romans and probably the barbarians as well. Rivers thus served an important role in the worldview of Romans.

The treatment of rivers as frontiers is clear both in terminology and in concept. In the early Empire, rivers were presented at times as the natural bounds of *imperium* or imperial power. By the later Empire, however, they are seen more as linear boundaries. From the early Empire, the term *ripa*

(riverbank) was used to designate a river boundary.[68] Tacitus records one such example: "It was no longer the land and river-boundaries of the empire, but the winter quarters of the legions and the ownership of territories which were in danger."[69] Here Tacitus distinguishes land and river boundaries, a separation that does not hold past the fourth century, when *limes* becomes a term used as well for river. But here we see rivers serving as the boundaries of imperial power, or *imperium*.

A further example shows this same tendency to distinguish land and river boundaries and gives hints to the way that late Romans imagined natural barriers. Although it is difficult to determine whether the author is presenting a late-Imperial or a second-century perspective, the author of the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* records, in a reference to Hadrian's reign, how a river separates Roman from barbarian: "In many areas where the barbarians are separated [from the empire] not by rivers but by land boundaries [Hadrian] shut them off with high stakes planted deep in the earth and fastened together so as to form a palisade."[70] The implication here is that rivers were imagined as the boundary separating Roman from barbarian, and their absence was seen as a lack of such a boundary.[71] Otherwise, it would hardly be worth mentioning the fact that in some places barbarians were not so separated. The construction of the palisade seems to be an attempt to make up for nature's deficiency.

By the later Roman Empire, the term *limes* became more clearly associated with rivers in a way that it never was for the earlier Empire.[72] Perhaps the constant association through time of rivers at or near *limites* blended the two in Roman minds. News from their frontiers often was associated with rivers, particularly on the northern and eastern frontiers. Ammianus, for example, could write in the late fourth century that the "*limes* of the East, extending a long distance in a straight line, reaches from the banks of the Euphrates River to the borders of the Nile."[73] The association of *limes* and river is clear and specific to the later Empire. Another late Imperial source likewise refers to "forts on the Rhine, Danube, and Euphrates frontiers."[74] Jerome refers in an epistle to the fact that the "frontier of the Danube has been shattered" by barbarian invasions.[75] As will be seen later in the chapter, he is communicating news about the frontier in this letter, and he equates the frontier with the Danube River. This change in terminology concomitant to a shift in frontier consciousness is expected; rivers no longer serve as the outer limits of expansion or just dividers of peoples but as the frontier and *limes* of empire.

One could object that because the term *limes* occurs more frequently in later sources than earlier, it might mean little, then, to say that its application to rivers is also more frequent. But we have gone from absence to frequency, a change that cannot be ignored. The change in meaning is further highlighted

by usage in other fourth-century writers. Ausonius, a fourth-century teacher and writer, speaks of a river as a *limes*. He describes the emperor Gratian in glowing terms: "a most powerful emperor: the witness, pacified in one year, is the *limes* of the Danube and the Rhine."[76] *Limes* qualifies the rivers.

This is not to say that *limes* became exclusively associated with *river*. In fact, other writers from the fourth century continue to see a difference between *limes* and river, although the association is stronger than in early imperial writings. Festus claims that "Trajan made Armenia, Mesopotamia, Assyria and Arabia provinces and established the eastern *limes* beyond the banks of the Tigris." And "Mesopotamia was restored and beyond the banks of the Tigris a *limes* was re-established, so that we gained sovereignty over five peoples beyond the Tigris."[77] Such references anachronistically reflect a late Imperial change in the meaning of the terminology, which can allow it to be more strongly associated with rivers.

Even where the term *limes* is not specifically connected with rivers, available sources present rivers as the actual boundaries of empire. The connection of rivers to imperial power was strong from earlier times, but its expression would change in the later Empire. The tie might be summed up for the early empire in a phrase from Propertius (born ca. 50 B.C.): "*Tigris et Euphrates sub tua iura fluent* [the Tigris and Euphrates flow under your jurisdiction]."[78] Here the eastern rivers flow under the jurisdiction of Augustus rather than serve as the literal limits of empire. The ambiguity of Rome's imperial reach is apparent in such early references. By the later Empire, Romans could look back, anachronistically, on a long history of eastern rivers serving clearly as their *limites*. Much earlier, rivers had functioned as some type of division, at least in the mind of Romans. As early as the 90s B.C. a governor of Cilicia negotiated an agreement with the Parthian king in which the Euphrates was set as the bound of their respective holdings.[79] Crassus, according to one Late Antique source, was rebuked by the Parthians for crossing the Euphrates contrary to a treaty made between Lucullus and Pompey.[80] The Parthians, it seems, held the Romans to that agreement. Later developments challenged this arrangement. Trajan, for example, established the eastern frontier at the Tigris—although Festus, in terms more comprehensible to a fourth- than a second-century audience, records a *limes* beyond the Tigris—a move rejected by Trajan's successor, Hadrian, who wanted the border between the Persians and the Romans to be the Euphrates. These arrangements had a long resonance within the collective memory of the Romans.[81] They became, in effect, benchmark moments of history by which Romans could evaluate the condition of the present empire. Galerius' defeat of the Persians in 298, for example, was seen as reestablishing the boundary between Rome and Persia set by Trajan.[82]

Clearly, then, the status of rivers as boundaries played a key role in frontier consciousness, and this consciousness crystallized in the later empire. By this time, the memory of the river bounding the two empires was long. Julian calls the Euphrates the "ancient boundary" (ὅρος ἀρχαῖος) between "that country and ours."[83] The pilgrim Egeria calls the Euphrates the *fines Mesopotamiae*.[84] In reference to what Persians could have taken from the Romans, Libanius uses the formula that they could have extended "all the way to the Euphrates, the Orontes, the Cydnus, the Sangarius, or to the Bosphorus itself."[85] The reference points for territorial conquest, at least from a late Roman perspective, have become rivers.

The idea of rivers as boundaries occurs in most historical accounts from later Roman sources.[86] Theodoret (393–466), monk, bishop, and native of Antioch, writes of the Persian campaign of 363 that Julian's folly was that he "crossed the river which separates the Roman Empire from the Persian" and burned his ships.[87] To Zosimus as well, crossing a frontier river was synonymous with leaving the Roman Empire itself. He claims that Julian's crossing of the Rhine in 357 was a way to assure that war was fought in "barbarian rather than Roman territory." He further writes that on the Danube, "Romans were to retain what they previously possessed with full security and the barbarians were forbidden to cross the river or to enter Roman territory at all." The two actions, it must be noted, are contemporaneous; crossing the river *is* entering Roman territory. In one case, the besieged Palmyrenes decide to "flee to the Euphrates and there seek aid from the Persians against the Romans." When describing barbarian affairs beyond Roman borders, Zosimus writes that the Saxons sent the Quadi into Roman territory but were "hindered from crossing the river by the neighboring Franks."[88] Again, crossing the river is tantamount to entering or exiting Roman territory. Zosimus further writes concerning the eastern frontier that when Julian "penetrated the Persian frontier," he was crossing the Euphrates River.[89]

There was also something intrinsically symbolic for Romans about crossing rivers as frontiers. This aspect can be seen early in Roman Imperial history with Caesar's famous crossing of the Rubicon, which Suetonius calls "the boundary between Gaul and Italy."[90] The theme continues, even as the boundaries are stretched far and wide. According to Ammianus, one of the two central oaths of conquest that Trajan would swear was "as I hope to cross the Hister and the Euphrates on bridges."[91] Trajan's column uses scenes of river crossing to represent Roman departure into barbarian land. It begins with a series of forts along the Danube River and proceeds with figures crossing in boats.[92] And crossing rivers, especially those near the eastern frontiers, was suggestive of invading a foreign power. The column of Marcus Aurelius does much the same thing.

The later Empire saw the solidification of these symbols from the earlier Empire. As Libanius writes of Julian's campaign, he "is still crossing rivers, facing the might of Persia, pondering upon his invasion, and considering how, when and where to attack the foe." Here, news from the front, the type Libanius craved and for which he carried on his lively letter exchange, is couched in language of crossing rivers. Rivers could be crossed in both directions; Libanius suggests in a letter that Julian needs wings to bring himself quickly back over the Euphrates to be restored to Roman territory, symbolized by "our river, the Orontes." Libanius also records in panegyric that a foe "cannot capture cities by the Euphrates or attempt to cross the Tigris . . . for the emperor's fortune fortifies them."[93]

This idea of crossing a river as equivalent to entering another's territory is captured well in an inscription from Ancyra. Julian, "lord of the whole world," is praised for conquering right up to and crossing the Tigris after defeating the barbarians in the West. The inscription is a tribute both to the fact that crossing the Tigris was symbolic of leaving the Roman Empire and to the fact that news could travel very quickly from the eastern frontier to communication centers like Ancyra.[94]

Perhaps because of their tendency to use symbols and metaphor, orations and panegyrics from Late Antiquity often imply that rivers were boundaries. In them we can see that the idea of "boundariness" of rivers is functioning even more strongly than in earlier times.[95] Reading panegyrics is tricky, however, as it involves appreciating the hyperbolic conventions of epideixis while still gleaning hints of worldview and actual fact. Panegyrics are a way of communicating news from the frontier, of special interest from the fourth century onward. The orator would receive the facts and put them into a rhetorical format for proclaiming those facts widely. Libanius gets much of his material from letters from or beyond the frontier. It is when requesting such information from beyond the eastern frontier that he tells one informant, "you will inform me of the bare facts, I will clothe them in the garb of oratory."[96] In one panegyric, Julian connects directly Constantius II's crossing of the Tigris with entering the enemy's country. "You often crossed that river [Tigris] with your army and spent a long time in the enemy's territory [*en te polemia*]."[97] Libanius would praise Constantius as "master of the land from the very far shores up to the streams of the Euphrates."[98] Libanius later recanted such praise, bestowing it on Constantius' rival, Julian. The river now became for Constantius a symbol of loss: "Every year Persians would cross the rivers and desolate cities; Constantius would arrive and be thankful that they did not do worse." Julian would then be praised in Constantius' place as the master of the rivers—"although 70 days march from the Tigris, you caused panic among the Persians

who were threatening our cities."[99] Libanius also used riverine allusions to praise Julian after hearing news of that emperor's victory in the West. Messengers brought the news first to Constantius but could not contain it:

> many messengers sped to your senior colleague, but none requested an army of reinforcement; all bore tidings of victory. The news spread and burst upon the Persians, and then they prayed for you to stay in Rhine regions, while the Germans prayed for you to cross the Tigris.[100]

Libanius, in effect, conceives of the rivers as the boundaries between the Roman and Persian and/or barbarian lands. In a panegyric to the Emperor Theodosius II (r. 402–50), Claudian presents a personified Roma asking a series of questions:

> Was it with a looser grip that the men of old held the Danube and the Rhine, they who made me their home? Did Tigris and Euphrates tremble less, when from this place, and from my citadel, the Indian and the Mede begged for treaties that would give them peace?[101]

All three major frontier rivers are presented as setting out the limits of the inhabitation of the Romans.

The invasions and warfare of the third and fourth centuries prompted a heightened proliferation of news about frontiers in general and are no doubt partly behind the shifts in meaning that concepts like *limes* were undergoing. Rivers functioned as the specified frontier between Roman and Other. Rivers could serve as demarcations of culture, at least in media. The Thirteenth Sibylline Oracle, in reference to battles of the third century, describes the appearance of a mysterious figure:

> When the swift-moving man flees from Syria through Soura, escaping the Romans across the flood of the Euphrates, no longer like to the Romans, but to the arrogant arrow-shooting Persians, then the king of the Italians will fall in battle, smitten by gleaming iron, in a state of disarray; and his sons will be destroyed by him.[102]

In crossing the Euphrates, this figure begins even to look more like a Persian. Whether this passage is meant to be taken literally or not, its symbolism is clear—crossing the river makes one actually look like the Other across it. St. Jerome would write in response to events since the infamous Battle of Adrianople in 378,

> Now for a long time, from the Black Sea to the Julian Alps, our land has not been ours. During the last 30 years, the frontier of the Danube has been destroyed and war has fallen upon soil in the very center of the Roman empire.[103]

In imagining what was at one time at least a demarcation between Roman land and that of others, Jerome sees a crucial moment of transition to be the destruction of the Danube frontier. The problems have even gone from periphery to center, and the loss of the *Danubii limites* has brought catastrophe throughout the Roman Empire. Referring to the same catastrophe, the orator Themistius lamented how the "indescribable Iliad of disasters on the Danube" had led to the Roman empire being overrun—not even "unfordable rivers" had been able to keep out the barbarians. The implication here, once again, is that the rivers were, at some level, construed as natural boundaries for keeping the barbarians out.[104] The shock of the barbarian conquest is that the Goths had surmounted such seemingly impossible obstacles.

Further hints to the place of rivers in the worldview of the Romans may be found in visual and verbal references to the sacredness or even divinity of rivers.[105] Like the Greeks before them, the Romans imagined rivers as gods, descending from Oceanus, the father of all rivers.[106] The Danube, for example, was revered locally as a deity.[107] The sacred character of rivers may also be seen in the ceremonies of propitiation required for crossing them. The river gods were to be appeased with sacrifices before a bridge could be built across a river.[108]

Statues and depictions of river gods abound and give some visual insight into the place of rivers in a Roman worldview. Multiple depictions of river gods, often assuming reclining poses, may be seen in the *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*.[109] Euphrates often appears in a reclining pose, suggesting a supine boundary.[110] Some rivers appear here with long, flowing tails, signifying the flow of the river.[111] Trajan's column depicts the Roman troops leaving Roman territory by crossing the Danube while the river god Danuvius looks on, immersed up to his midriff in the water.[112] The deified Euphrates and Tigris appear on Trajan's arch at Benevento. On the reverse of one coin of Trajan, the Tigris and Euphrates are portrayed along with an inscription celebrating Armenia and Mesopotamia under his power.[113] And the Merida Mosaic Map has personifications of the Euphrates on it.[114] That the theme continued in Late Antiquity can be seen in the grand effigies of the Nile and Tigris in the Baths of Constantine.[115] The iconography of rivers reminds us of their sacred status as well as their status as a boundary. Abundant numismatic evidence suggests more of the same functions.

Fig. 6. River gods on coin. Trajan standing; Euphrates and Tigris reclining with Armenia subjugated (*Armenia et Mesopotamia in potestem P R redactae*).

In the later Empire, rivers continued to be deified or, in a Christian context, personified. Numerous mosaics depict personified rivers. The Basilica of Thyrsos, for example, depicts the Tigris and Euphrates as persons.[116] The iconography of rivers is also expressed in terms of the rivers of paradise flowing somewhere near the eastern bounds of the world. In Christian cosmology, the rivers of paradise often were depicted as surrounding the whole earth, as the outer frame of the terrestrial world. Their appearance on mosaics, especially at the frames, suggests a continuity of the idea of rivers as boundaries.[117] The four rivers of paradise often serve as the outer frames of depictions of the terrestrial world, blending iconographically with Ocean.

Related to their role in the religious world of Romans, rivers were believed to have been put in place by forces of nature that were not to be disturbed. The elder Pliny presents rivers as having a harmonious relationship

Fig. 7. Tigris from basilica nave. Tegea, Basilica of Thyrsos. (Courtesy of Henry Maguire, *Earth and Ocean: The Terrestrial World in Early Byzantine Art* [Penn State University Press, 1987].)

with humans. They could serve as prophets of warning, at other times demarcations. Rivers, as part of the natural order, were in place for a reason. Pliny, for example, sees changing their course as "*contra naturam*."[118] Although this could equally refer to rivers at the center as at the periphery, it is specifically invoked for the frontier rivers. There was something about their placement that implied dividing and bounding.

Such images continued into the later Empire. In his *Satire on the Caesars*, Julian depicts Octavian in an argument with Alexander the Great over who was the greater ruler. Octavian claims, "For I did not give way to boundless

ambition and aim at enlarging her empire at all costs, but assigned for it two boundaries, defined as it were by nature herself, the Danube and the Euphrates."[119] Inflated rhetoric aside, Nature herself had determined these boundaries, at least from Julian's fourth-century perspective. In a panegyric already referenced, one emperor is praised because now his own name makes up the boundary of the empire while "previously it seemed that Nature herself had mapped out the Rhine so that the Roman provinces might be protected from the savagery of the barbarian by that boundary."[120] Nature was behind the placement of the rivers, and their role as frontiers is fairly clear.[121]

Christians, likewise, saw rivers as a part of Nature, although their view of how Nature was governed could differ from traditional Roman views.[122] The fourth-century Cappadocian father St. Basil describes natural boundaries in an extended reference in one of his homilies.

> How is it that all the different species of fishes, having been allotted a place suitable for them, do not intrude upon one another, but stay within their own bounds? No surveyor apportioned the dwellings among them; they were not surrounded with walls nor divided by boundaries; but what was useful for each was definitely and spontaneously settled. This bay gives sustenance to certain kinds of fish and that one, to other kinds; and those that teem here are scarce everywhere. No mountain extending upward with sharp peaks separates them; no river cuts off the means of crossing; but there is a certain law of nature which allots the habitat to each kind equally and justly according to its need. (4) We, however, are not such. Why? Because we pass beyond the ancient bounds [ὁρία αἰώνια] which our fathers set.[123]

This passage and the quotation from Proverbs 22:28 at the end suggest much about how Romans, perhaps specifically Christians, viewed the boundaries set by God through Nature. At one level, Basil's homily here may be read in terms of a Cappadocian civic patriotism.[124] Throughout his letters and homilies, he is complaining about efforts by non-Cappadocians to take over his territory. People impinge on others by taking over parts of their villages, cities, provinces, and countries.[125] It is the "law of nature" that constrains the fish—humans, Basil implies, need visible boundaries, like surveyor lines, mountains, and rivers. Passages such as this can reveal attitudes toward such natural boundaries. Why would Rome want to impinge on the territories of others when clear natural boundaries existed?[126]

The Euphrates River particularly becomes a reference point for boundary or limit from the Scriptures. Examples of its use show the effects of scriptural

texts and their echoes in the worldview of Late Romans. The Euphrates functions as a border in the Scriptures, a fact not lost on Romans of the later Empire. Genesis 15:18, for one of many such examples, sets the boundaries of Israel's Promised Land "from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates."[127] Such passages could be read by Romans with reference to the Roman Empire and its boundaries.

We have explicit proof that some were. Egeria, the western pilgrim, in describing the Euphrates, quotes Genesis 15:18:

> The Bible is right to call it "the great river Euphrates." It is very big, and really rather frightening since it flows very fast like the Rhone, but the Euphrates is much bigger. We had to cross in ships, big ones. . . . After crossing the river Euphrates, I went on in God's name into the region of Syrian Mesopotamia.[128]

Later, Cosmas, the sixth-century Christian "cosmographer," would write that the eastern border of the world itself is paradise from which flow four rivers, the Nile, Tigris, Euphrates, and the Pheison (Indus).[129] Cosmos' reference point for the eastern frontier or border of the world is river sources. We could critique his topographical accuracy, but that would do little justice to his own worldview, which saw rivers on the eastern border of the world itself, a worldview apparently shared by the average sixth-century Roman.[130] The fourth-century author of the *Expositio Totius Mundi* likewise devotes a space in his short geography of the world to speak of the centrality of these four rivers to universal topography.[131]

The Old Testament provided a timeless ideological model of frontiers. Its references were taken outside of historical time and into a continuous present, often with specific reference to the Roman Empire rather than the land of Israel. Ammianus himself uses phrasing that seems to echo biblical passages.[132] In his formula connecting the Nile and Euphrates together as the *limes* of the East, his wording seems strongly reminiscent of the wording of Genesis 15:18, which also connects the two rivers as a boundary.

> But the *limes* of the East, extending a long distance in a straight line, reaches from the banks of the Euphrates to the borders of the Nile, being bounded on the left by the Saracenic races and on the right exposed to the waves of the sea.[133]

My point here is not that Ammianus studied Scripture regularly or that he is even intentionally echoing Scripture here but rather that its images shaped, at

some level, the way that he and others, possibly raised as Christians, viewed their world. A "biblical geography," so to speak, was not unique to Christian pilgrims like Egeria or monks like Cosmas.[134]

Epilogue: Shaping the Physical and Metaphysical Context

One thing is certain about the constructed barriers that survive from Roman times in England, North Africa, Germany, and elsewhere—recent historians are far more eloquent on their purpose than are ancient writers. References to them in ancient sources are rare. The author of the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* was clear, in one such example, that walls were intended "to separate barbarians and Romans."[135] This same author contends that Hadrian built structures wherever Romans did not have a natural barrier like a river to keep the barbarians out.

Most surviving structures, in fact, are attributed to Hadrian and a frontier policy of solidification and containment following Trajan's expansion. The most famous "frontier" feature surviving from Roman times is the wall of Hadrian in Britain, followed distantly by the wall of Antoninus Pius. The role of such structures long has been debated, and modern views seem to change periodically with new interpretations of such barriers in general across human history.[136] Their role in the later Empire is even less clear. Other examples are the *fossata* ditches and *clausurae* walls of North Africa, also generally agreed to be of a Hadrianic construction, mostly through analogy with Hadrian's other wall projects. It is far from certain what these ditches and small fence-walls were actually used for; even less can we can generalize on their function over time and into the later Empire. Some of the latest arguments present them as designed to regulate the movement of pastoralists near North Africa's frontier.[137] Rare, however, are real indications in the sources of what these structures were used for or how Romans perceived them. One example from Procopius presents an effective defensive function for small walls in the East, perhaps exaggerating a bit:

> For the Saracens are naturally incapable of storming a wall, and the weakest kind of barricade, put together with perhaps nothing but mud, is sufficient to check their assault.[138]

Such walls would have been smaller projects and can hardly approximate the larger and more famous ones in Britain and North Africa. It is difficult to be clear on any of these structures. Possibly, they were a way the Romans sought to surround their Empire with barriers where nature was not kind enough to

provide such for them. The presence of such structures does hint at a changing frontier consciousness.

In one intriguing reference, an edict by Honorius (409) states that land in Africa was granted to *gentiles* for the care and maintenance of the frontier and *fossatum*.[139] The association of *limes* and the *fossata* is explicit here, but this type of reference is quite rare, and few if any other references survive for corroboration. While it is thus tempting to suggest that the *fossata* were perceived as the *limes* by the fifth century, such a conclusion is far from certain. P. Trousset, citing boundary markers from beyond the *fossata,* warns against a picture that sees them as functioning literally as the limits of empire. Recent debates over the role of the *fossata* and *clausurae* range widely. Most now see them as elements of control and channeling of the northeast and southwest seasonal transhumance routes.[140] Some, however, have begun to challenge any picture that sees them purely as regulators of nomadic movement. Perhaps, as A. Rushworth contends, they are better seen as a whole series of responses to various problems on the frontier zone rather than just transhumance.[141] Rushworth allows that such barriers were at least perceived to divide Roman from barbarian and "set clear limits to the Empire," although he imagines that they were utilized locally "for far more prosaic concerns" as well.[142] It remains unclear how one should interpret ideology from these silent monuments (that is, those without images or words), but it is certainly feasible that they could have functioned as barriers in the worldview of the Romans.[143] Mattern has recently suggested that walls had a "profound psychological impact."[144]

References to barriers and walls are elusive in Late Antique sources. Ammianus describes how Diocletian encircled the city of Cercusium,

> whose walls are washed by the Ebora and Euphrates rivers (which formed a kind of island) with walls and towers when he was arranging the inner lines of defense on the very frontiers of the barbarians in order to prevent Persians from overrunning Syria, as had happened a few years before with great damage to the provinces.[145]

The walls of one city, anyway, were seen as protecting a section of the Empire. The later Empire saw a number of city walls constructed, such as the Theodosian Wall of Carthage, largely in response to barbarian threats, real or perceived. Speculating on how these walls were perceived is tempting but goes beyond available ancient evidence.

One of the key developments we can trace in available sources, however, is the imagination of ideological walls around the empire. Such references have been commented on before, but there is much controversy here as well.

Interestingly, there exists no general study of this phenomenon that takes into account all available evidence from the later Roman Empire. Following, most likely, from the type of containment carried out in various parts of the Empire under the direction of Hadrian, the Empire was imagined as encircled by a wall. At all events, the appearance of Hadrian's Wall in the literature coincides with Hadrian's policies. Appian is the first extant author to speak of this figurative wall around the empire, and the image persists far into Late Antiquity. These images emerge during the second century and give, perhaps, rare insight into a transition in Roman thinking about the Empire and its frontiers. This wall imagery, probably because of third-century developments, becomes more standard and solidified for the later Empire.

Appian speaks of a wall in a circle blockading and guarding the great army camp, pulling together the earth and sea as if a country.[146] A little later, Aelius Aristides speaks in these terms: "Beyond the outermost ring of the civilized world you drew a second line, quite as one does in walling a town. . . . An encamped army, like a rampart, encloses the civilized world in a ring."[147] Herodian, as seen earlier, speaks of the Empire as an army camp surrounded by a wall—τείχος τῆς Ῥωμαίων ἀρχῆς.[148] From the third century, the Thirteenth Sibylline Oracle refers to the barbarian invasions in general as "disorderly races" coming up against the walls of Rome (ἐπὶ τείχεα Ῥώμης).[149] The usage appears metaphorical of barbarian invasions throughout the Roman world.

By the later Roman Empire, the reference to such an ideological wall (or walls) had become more standard and appears in a wide variety of sources. The picture here backs up R. Seager's argument that Roman frontier policy in the fourth century was defensive in nature, even the Persian campaign of Julian.[150] Ammianus refers to Jovian's concessions of 363 as "abandoning the *murus* of the provinces, behind which they had remained unshaken since earliest times."[151] Here, the eastern frontier, anyway, was imagined as a protection of the eastern provinces. John Chrysostom makes a similar suggestion when he writes of Nisibis itself as "an unbreachable wall [*teichos arrages*]" of the Empire.[152] Libanius echoes this exact image when he speaks of the "cities, territories, and provinces that formed the defensive walls [*ta teiche*] of the Roman Empire"; he mentions these while criticizing Jovian for conceding them all too quickly. In one panegyric to Julian, Libanius praises the emperor for the "*teichos* which you have constructed around the Roman Empire [*Romaion arche*]."[153] Libanius presents the wall as coming from a mixture of Julian's religious devotion and eloquence. The wall image continues in hagiographical writers. Severus of Antioch (patriarch 512–18), for example, praises the holy martyrs who make a "strong wall for all the inhabited

earth."[154] In the context of martyr cult that was seen as protecting the Empire, such references in hagiography and other ecclesiastical writings show the endurance of the wall metaphor.[155]

The development of the wall metaphor, like the shift in meaning in *limes*, is just one of many indications that the frontier consciousness of the Romans was in transition and that generalizations about frontiers in Roman thought for the early Empire simply do not apply absolutely for Late Antiquity. Walls, real or imagined, were of human construction. Yet it seems that they were also a way to mirror natural frontiers, the ideal boundaries of empire, at least according to late Roman frontier consciousness. So much is implied, at least, by the teaching that one would hope was able to proceed in the restored schools in Autun.

PART 2

Media: The Triumph of the Periphery

4

Modes of Communicating Frontiers

Rumor [*Fama*], the swiftest messenger of sad events, outstripping these messengers, flew through provinces and nations, and most of all struck the people of Nisibis with bitter grief.

—Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* 25.8.13

Rumor [*Pheme*], the messenger of good news, does not cease announcing to us that you have been darting about like the stars, appearing sometimes in one part of the barbarian land, again in another.

—St. Basil, *Epistula* 196 (Loeb trans.)

The striking contrast between these two statements, both written in the late fourth century, reflects more the immediate mood of the writers than any significant difference in outlook. Rumor has been alleged, in all ages, to be the most active source of news and information, accurate or not, good or bad. Often Roman writers get no more explicit in describing how news moved from one place to another. Ancient persons observed, as we often do, that news just travels. They imagined Rumor as a divine being, flying with wings. In Athens, an altar to Rumor reinforced its divine status.[1]

Since at least the days of Hesiod, *Pheme* reported on events in a manner mysterious in its quickness. The common translations of *Pheme* as both "common report" or "the god Rumor" show the lack of a clear divide between

divine and human news. Even St. Basil's reference retains the idea of Rumor as a person or entity. Ammianus, like Greeks of the classical period before him, saw Rumor as a divine source of information, coming seemingly from nowhere and, if interpreted correctly, always true.[2] When describing at one point how news was able to circulate so quickly throughout the eastern provinces and even beyond, Ammianus claims, "We believe (nor in fact is there any doubt of it) that Rumor flies swiftly through the paths of the air" with the "circulation of the news of these events."[3] Such a description fits in well with the general tendencies in the fourth century toward popular belief, at all levels. The fact that Ammianus, in effect, expresses his views so strongly (*neque enim dubium est*) shows that he is not just talking of "Rumor flying" in a poetical way but rather affirming his belief in Rumor as deity.[4] This fact should not be forgotten, as it shows ways in which perceptions of news could reflect ancient worldviews.

The opening quotations also suggest that rumors of events near or even beyond frontiers were of particular interest to Romans of the later Empire. The recipient of Basil's letter, Aburgius, is traveling with Gratian's western army on the Danube frontier, supplying money to the soldiers, as we are told later in the letter. Rumor, here, effectively crossed a natural frontier. Ammianus' reference highlights how news of the surrender of Nisibis, defining in the minds of many Romans the Empire's easternmost point, spread quickly.[5] Rumor from the peripheries was also the most risky—long travel distance and long-standing images of those near and beyond the frontiers could make the interpretation of it difficult.[6] But perhaps that added to its very attraction.

The sources also describe the spread of news in far more mundane ways, although the element of mystery often lingers. But the actual passage of news is one of the most taken-for-granted aspects of the ancient world. The Romans, like the Greeks, are generally reticent about their media. We frequently read in the sources of someone learning or hearing of something. We catch but fleeting glimpses of its spread in such phrases as "news reached," "news circulated," and "news spread and burst upon . . ."[7] The means of communication is rarely if ever mentioned. The ancients' apparent disinterest in describing what we would call media does not, of course, deny media a present and active role in their world. It is possible to look beyond the assertions of Ammianus, Basil, Libanius, and others that news literally flies on wings, but then we are left with historical questions about human agency and the human-created structures through which news moved. The clues are there, if somewhat spotty, but it does seem a bit anachronistic to dwell on the lack of organized news media as if the ancients lived in a state of disappointment or frustration at not having modern media.[8] The role of news in Late Antiquity,

as in many ancient contexts, has received little systematic attention. In a sense, news flow was hardly worth noting by the ancients due to what one historian has called its unspoken "very ordinariness."[9]

The Roman Empire itself remained together, in a sense, because of formal and informal channels of communication. These channels became more important in the later Roman Empire as they carried news from and about the frontiers to people increasingly attentive to happenings on them. Part of this interest was the increased presence of the emperors on the frontier as well as escalating transgression of the frontiers by outsiders. But there is more to the story. This shift was roughly concurrent with what J. Eadie calls "the general collapse of the centre of gravity in imperial politics and the triumph of the frontier."[10] Eadie traces this phenomenon with reference to the third-century insurrections in the East. Images of frontiers were passed via expanding media through the human context. A wider and stronger proliferation of media reporting on frontiers placed them at the fore in a later Roman worldview.

News and information afford crucial insight into the study of Roman frontiers in Late Antiquity and especially of a late Roman frontier consciousness. Consciousness is shaped by one's worldview as well as new information that complements or challenges that worldview.[11] In her study of news in the Greek polis, S. Lewis argues that news is always mediated by a particular set of beliefs and expectations.[12] As news entered the polis, she claims, it could only be analyzed against a backdrop of preexisting, if tacit, knowledge. Orators and writers appealed to this backdrop in proclaiming their messages. Thus, a modern reading of an ancient text should include, in a sense, consideration of both the knowledge backdrop and the expectations of the audience. Both can give insight into news flow.[13] Such an approach assumes analysis of tacit knowledge. Again, "What goes without saying, goes without saying."[14] There is a type of objective consensus that shapes a "common-sense world" that does not have to be rationalized, analyzed, or made explicit.

Various studies have explored the time of news travel, usually focusing on the deaths of emperors or the results of battles or invasions.[15] These studies are crucial to understanding communication and action in the ancient world. But analyzing news involves more than tracing the speed at which information travels and against which policy decisions were made. News structured thoughts and lives; it defined communities. For the Roman world, more so than for the Greek, we know about formal channels of communication, the likes of which are necessary for holding together a vast empire. More, in fact, can be said about the content and form of news in the Roman world simply because, for much of the empire's existence, anyway, we know of the roads on which it was carried and often the officials responsible for disseminating

the information. But therein also lies a danger inherent to most studies of ancient communication in general and of the knowledge of frontiers in particular. One should not overemphasize the role of the official (usually political or military) channels of communication to the neglect of more popular and/or implicit means of communication. Sources do tend to highlight the role of military news when they mention news at all, but there was much more at work structuring the late Roman imagination and in particular its frontier consciousness.

My focus is on news as such and not on military or strategic intelligence. It is, however, difficult to escape the emphasis on wars and rumors of wars, so central to the ancient sources. Although much of our knowledge of news in Late Antiquity does concern wars, usurpations, and the like, a careful reading of the sources can provide clues to the diffusion of news about and from frontiers in a more general sense.[16] I will examine a variety of media of communication individually, organized within broad categories borrowed widely from modern media studies.

The Written Word

As a key element of long-distance communication throughout much of human history, the written word often preserves news in a way impossible with more ephemeral modes. It can also record reception of news in a way impossible for any other mode. Communication over space and time is a prime mark of literate and civilized societies. "Civilization is built on literacy because literacy is a universal processing of a culture by a visual sense extended in time and space."[17] As mentioned throughout this study, the Roman Empire was an "empire of the written word." W. V. Harris estimates that the rate of literacy in the Empire averaged perhaps not much above 10 percent, albeit with significant regional variation. Late Antiquity probably saw a steady decline from this rate for reasons outlined by Harris in his analysis of that period.[18] Yet the cultural influence of literate people on the rest of the population continued to be significant and was felt far beyond their shrinking circle. The written word thus continued to function at all levels of Late Antique society.[19] The predominance of more visual media and symbolic modes of communication in the later Roman Empire further suggests that news continued to proliferate alongside or even in spite of the decline in literacy.

Our most detailed written source for the late Empire, Ammianus' *Res Gestae*, is one example of how historiography itself is a form of media.[20] He was writing, at least in the surviving books, contemporary history.[21] His *Res Gestae* is, in one sense, a medium for transmitting news, much of it gleaned firsthand,

to a public. News contained in historical writing generally was slower than that from other modes in reaching the public (and slower still in reaching the illiterate public, if it did so at all). But such information also tended to be viewed as the most accurate. This is not to say that the educated public trusted historians implicitly. Rather, there was a general expectation that historians, unlike, so often, the panegyricists, had done serious research. As a crafter of current history, Ammianus was very aware of his own audience and their expectations as he wrote. At times he expressed frustration with his ever-demanding public. In a passage that says as much about his own historical theory as the role of his writing as media, Ammianus writes,

> Having narrated the course of events with the strictest care up to the bounds of the present epoch, I had already determined to withdraw my foot from the more familiar tracks, partly to avoid the dangers which are so often connected with the truth, and partly to escape unreasonable critics of the work which I am composing, who cry out as if wronged, if one has failed to mention what an emperor said at table . . . or because in an ample account of regions he ought not to have been silent about some insignificant forts . . . and many other matters which are not in accordance with the principles of history. For it is wont to detail the highlights of events, not to ferret out the trifling details of unimportant matters. For whoever wishes to know these may hope to be able to count the small indivisible bodies which fly through space, and to which we give the name of atoms.[22]

I quote this passage at length for what it reveals about audience interest and the place of the written word in communicating news meaningful to Romans, not to mention the difficulties of meeting the demands of that audience. And yet the very fact that Ammianus mentions the complaints gives a sense of his sensitivity as both a historian and a crafter of media—in short, he knows what people will say because he has heard their complaints, and he does care. He even shifted his emphasis to avoid having to listen to them. This passage suggests that Ammianus is interested in what the audience considers relevant, even as his professed deviation from that standard gives clues of its expectations. The public interest in the emperor and forts, both of which often were located at or near frontiers, is readily apparent in the passage as well.

Ammianus' audience also included potential informants. Writing contemporary history in the Roman world came with its own set of dangers and problems as well as responsibilities.[23] Ammianus, like most Roman historians, is aware of the dangers of offending someone in power or potentially

coming into power. His reference to the "dangers which are so often connected with the truth" is, no doubt, acknowledgment of the risks all Roman historians faced. Accuracy in reporting news had to be balanced against saying too much, or even too little, in a dictatorship sensitive to the value of news in shaping perceptions.

A further example of Ammianus' sensitivity to his audience occurs at the beginning of his account of Julian.

> I shall describe [his achievements] one by one in progressive order, deploying all the resources of my modest talent, if they will suffice. What I shall narrate will come close to the category of panegyric, yet it is not made up of eloquent deceit, but is a wholly truthful account, based on clear evidence.[24]

Again his historical theory merged with his self-reflexive sense of being a crafter of media. This passage also demonstrates how Ammianus thought an audience would receive panegyric. He is aware of his audience, and he is sensitive to its critiques and hesitations. Media communication has as one of its primary essentials that it respond to the expectations and demands of the audience. Much of what Ammianus wrote would not have been otherwise known by his audience.

Major written histories, like Ammianus', were themselves in part the products of the written word in their dependence on shorter written accounts, even for contemporary events. On a much smaller scale than historians, soldiers, out of duty or just curiosity and interest, wrote accounts of campaigns and journeys to and from the frontiers.[25] These accounts kept the frontiers more in the public arena by their proliferation and by the increased number of them, specifically along the eastern frontier. These minor writings generally do not survive; we know about them through fortunate reference among the letters of Libanius and others. Their role in spreading news was vital. Plying the *notarius* Philagrius for information, Libanius notes that Philagrius would, while on campaign with Julian, "examine and put into writing every particular, the nature of the localities, the dimensions of cities, height of fortresses, width of rivers, and all successes and reverses."[26] It seems that as a *notarius* (a fact noted by Ammianus rather than Libanius), Philagrius was expected to do this. It is in this letter that Libanius claims that he will take the "bare facts" and "clothe them in the garb of oratory."

Other examples come in the aftermath of disaster. Immediately after the death of Julian and the subsequent retreat from the eastern frontier, Libanius begins to ply persons passing through his native Antioch for news from the

frontier. His writings suggest that he was searching for news from, and from beyond, the frontier to incorporate into his orations and that some of the news was of a more popular nature than would be contained in official military records. He rounds up all the usual suspects for information, but suddenly no one wants to give him the news he craves. In his complaints over the reluctance of participants to talk about the "disregarded" Julian, he mentions those who would never neglect to keep a "written account of such events."[27] These people, even his friends, he claims, said that they did have such accounts and that they would give them, "but none did"; in fact, they refused even to give verbal accounts. Libanius admits that he did get a few lists of "some days and route distances and names of places," from a few strangers, but the news coming from the frontier was far less than he expected. He specifically wanted a detailed account of Julian's achievements so that he could "fully explain" the campaign beyond the frontiers. Libanius closes the epistle hinting that there are written accounts to be had but that he is having trouble getting them.

The implication here is that written accounts of a popular as well as technical nature were quite common in association with military campaigns and hence gave news about and from frontiers and beyond. They covered a variety of topics beyond just troop movement. The fact that people would, under normal circumstances, part with their writings, even to strangers, suggests that these accounts were recorded for just such purposes.[28]

Libanius was primarily interested in getting news to fill his orations and letters. Many of his orations he delivered to critical acclaim in Antioch; he also had them circulated in written form throughout the Greek-speaking world, where his status as a literary figure was immense. Libanius thus provides one example of how the influence of the written word, even accounts by an army commander or scribe, could go far beyond the small circle of the literate and/or army leaders to touch a much wider audience. Such news from the frontiers, highly regarded (and progressively more so), was also shaping and expressing frontier consciousness.[29]

Written records of events were stored in major cities for official purposes but were also available to historians and others as well.[30] Ammianus notes "extant statements filed among the public record houses" that he used in writing his own history. The collection must have been extensive; as recorded earlier, when Ammianus states that not everything done is worth recording in a historical account, he claims that if he wanted to relate all the activities of the lowest class of people, "even the array of facts to be gained from the public records themselves would not suffice."[31] C. Ando interprets such records as pieces of information that "formed part of the larger history of the imperial commonwealth." The information was not placed here for the benefit of

historians but nonetheless was diffused as available news.[32] In a fascinating topographical study of Eusebius' *Onomasticon,* B. Isaac has argued that Eusebius wrote this whole geographical work, with its full reference to roads, cities, and topographical features, primarily from information in the archives.[33] Evidently, the material available in archives was quite extensive and available for perusal.

Another form of written news was short pamphlets (*biblidia*). These seem to have been circulated widely for people to read. They could be incorporated into longer histories, but sometimes they stood on their own. Julian, for example, "enthused by his own achievements," wrote up a *biblidion* of his campaign on and over the Rhine frontier. Eunapius notes that he would not repeat the account in his own story but rather suggests that "those who wish to observe the greatness of his words and his deeds I shall direct to turn to his *biblidion* and to the splendors of his account."[34] It seems that such accounts were in demand and readily available, else Eunapius' injunction to read them would be empty and would imply that Eunapius was just being evasive.

Similar to these pamphlets would have been personal memoirs that were made available to historians. One of these, a particularly valuable source, was written by Oribasius of Pergamum, the doctor and close friend of the emperor Julian. Oribasius was familiar, we are told, with all the details of the campaign, "having been present at them." He wrote up for Eunapius "a detailed memorandum" designed especially to further Eunapius' historical work.[35] There is some indication that Ammianus and Libanius made use of this memoir as well.[36]

Written legal texts and imperial pronouncements also functioned as media for dissemination of news.[37] Ammianus describes how Constantius II sent "laureled letters" of his "conquests" (at some of which he was not even present) for proclamation through edicts. Constantius' own utterances were "deposited in the public record houses." Ammianus used these very records in composing his own history, although he remained skeptical of Constantius' outrageous claims of victories in battles in which he was not even a participant.[38] Imperial letters and edicts present the blurring of the boundary between the spoken and the written word and show how news, in the form of imperial pronouncements, was disseminated. The fact that they often were read aloud also breaks down, or at least weakens, any real or imagined barrier between the literate and illiterate in late Roman society in terms of news reception.

One type of written news, channeled through official pronouncements, was less direct in the way it could reach the public. In a law of 443 we are told that the Eastern *magister officiorum* was required to submit an annual report every January concerning the frontiers in Thrace, Illyricum, Oriens, Pontus,

Egypt, and Libya for the sake of rewarding and punishing frontier commanders.[39] Such a report implies news gathering on or near the frontier. But through the "worthy rewards" and "suitable indignations"—public acts themselves, no doubt—the message would have been spread of the importance of defending the Roman frontiers.[40] Such laws show, again, the interest of the center in the peripheries of the Empire and the increased attention to news and information from there. The edict goes on to imply that the purpose was to spread abroad the report on the stability of the Roman frontiers.

The written word proliferated widely through inscriptions as well, especially in cities, although the question of readership and reception is vexed.[41] One can imagine that these would have been read much less than modern historic markers, because they were much more common. But we do have some evidence that new inscriptions could garner attention. In a commentary on Deuteronomy 6:5, a rabbi claims that the things "which I command thee this day . . . should not be in your eyes like some antiquated edict to which no one pays any attention but like a new edict which everyone runs to read."[42] This reference shows that Romans were interested in news as much as people in any age. So-called history walls are quite common as well and show emperors, specifically, trying to shape an image by enumerating their accomplishments, often at or near Roman frontiers. As D. Potter points out, they differ from ordinary civic inscriptions "in that they were assembled over a period to form a coherent group: they were not *ad hoc* inscriptions reflecting immediate public concerns."[43] Examples here are abundant, and I will choose one that specifically shows the importance of frontier information. Julian is praised in an inscription from Ancyra as the "lord of the whole earth" who has conquered up to the Tigris River.[44] The bounds of Julian's conquest are the natural frontiers of Ocean and the Tigris River. The movement to Ancyra of news from and about the frontier thus is proclaimed by the written word.

One interesting fact of the later Roman Empire is the increasing number of inscriptions that proclaim that an emperor has constructed a defensive work. J. J. Wilkes has documented this phenomenon, drawing attention to inscriptions such as one concerning Constantine:

> following the subjugation and control of the Franks through the excellence of Constantine, the *castrum* of the *Divitenses* was constructed in their territory in the presence of the emperor himself.[45]

Such a picture further corroborates the heightened frontier consciousness during the later Empire, a consciousness to which emperors could appeal.

Inscriptions directly at or on the frontier also could proclaim a message about the frontier. Although their audience might have been very small, their impact would have been clear. Their role is hotly contested—not surprisingly, since they suggest a linear frontier—but a few such inscriptions are possibly attested in the literature, even if none have been discovered yet. John Malalas, in describing how Diocletian built "forts on the *limes* from Egypt to the border of Persia," explains the system by which *duces* were assigned to frontier zones in order to ensure security. He records that there then were erected "boundary posts" or "statues" to the emperor and the Caesar right on the *limes* of Syria.[46] It is possible that these "statues" were actually inscriptions recording the emperor's exploits at or near the frontiers. Whatever the translation, it appears that the purpose of demarcation was clear, at least to Malalas. One other inscription marking the boundary of empire is feasible. If "Romans and Burgundians" is the correct reading of the manuscript of Ammianus's *Res Gestae*, as Potter and others think it is, this is another example of Romans marking, or at least imagining, boundaries this way.[47] It is interesting to see the debates over this passage. Those who see a defensive view of the Empire developing in Late Antiquity read *Romanorum* in the manuscript; those who reject any change in Roman understanding read *Alamannorum*.

Letters among the literati were also a very effective means of spreading news, particularly if the direct recipients were orators or preachers. Letters generally were not a private matter in antiquity anyway and were more available for wider circulation and diffusion than today. Epistolography was the major way of directing news and information across and throughout the empire. Their crucial role in the late Empire in particular is highlighted by the fact that "the provincial aristocracies of the Greek East of the fourth century engaged in more travel and expanded more effort in the creation and maintenance of extended networks of influence via personal visiting and exchange of letters than their predecessors of earlier periods of antiquity."[48] The letters exchanged between Julian and Libanius, for example, provide fascinating insight into how information could move from the frontiers to more interior regions. And again, such news as that found in the letters would often make it into Libanius' orations, diffusing that news widely and effectively.[49] In one oration he specifically mentions getting news in the form of a letter straight from the frontier:[50]

> [Julian] sent me a last letter from the frontier of the Empire [*apo ton tes arches horon*], and marched on, ravaging the countryside, plundering villages, taking fortresses, crossing rivers, mining fortifications, and capturing cities.[51]

The fact that the letter is seen by Libanius as coming from the frontier gives a clear sense of the way that news from the frontier itself could proliferate in official channels. Yet the frontier marked an end to formal channels of communication. This passage, delivered in oration, also shows the news that a Roman public was receiving and how it could come from "private" letters.[52]

In a letter to a certain Modestus, Libanius also mentions together frontiers and the passage of letters. This time the letter is going from the interior provinces toward the frontier, as did many of Libanius' own letters to Julian. Libanius exclaims, concerning a letter sent by Modestus, "But your letter has crossed the Euphrates; no wonder then that it only arrived lately in the emperor's hand."[53] The Euphrates, as a natural frontier, was permeable, but news was neither quick nor efficient moving across it. And it could slow down communication both ways. Libanius goes on to tell what he knows the emperor Julian is doing beyond the frontiers through reports from prisoners of war.

Letters from North Africa also give news from frontiers and show efforts to diffuse it. As in the East, references often are to conflicts of some sort, although those in North Africa were much smaller in scale. References are much fewer, due to the comparative inactivity of the frontier there, the infrequency of the emperor at the North African frontier, and the lack of writers, such as those who covered the East, analyzing current situations in North Africa. In short, North Africa lacked the momentous event, the mainstay of ancient historiography, and, it seems, audience interest as well.[54]

St. Augustine reports occasionally on the North African frontiers. Very interested in the placement of the eastern frontier, he gives us only an occasional glimpse of those to his south. In a letter to Boniface, ex-governor of Africa, Augustine mentions the "ravaging of Africa" by African barbarians. After referring to how Boniface, during his tenure, had protected the churches of North Africa from the incursions of barbarians, Augustine warns that the barbarian inroads have started again.[55] Augustine specifically mentions the "common talk" of how, on assuming office, Boniface had made the barbarians tributaries almost immediately. News of the renewed attacks was now circulating in the same way that it had circulated before Boniface had subdued them. All we get is a brief insight here, but it makes clear that news of the barbarian pillages filtered freely through North Africa.[56] In another letter, written concerning "the end of the world [*de fine saeculi*]," we get a further glimpse of frontiers. Augustine tells his reader(s) that he gets daily "information" from the North African frontier. He gains this information by regularly seeing actual captives from there.[57]

Another reference shows us that the pastoral nomads on the other side of the Roman frontier were not always so hostile.[58] It also gives some indication

of how the frontier functioned. A provincial named Publicola wrote a letter to Augustine in the last few years of the fourth century to ask about an ethical dilemma. Publicola had heard that barbarians who crossed Roman frontiers to work were required to swear by their own *daemones* to the decurion or tribune in charge of the *limes*. He refers to the guard of the *limes* a few more times throughout the letter, highlighting the guard's role as a keeper of the *limes* against the barbarians. His ethical dilemma over whether Romans should require this oath had been provoked by news he had heard from the frontiers. Augustine's response is practical, assuring that peace is secured by the oath of the barbarians, "not only for a single *limes*, but for whole provinces."[59] Such news kept North Africans apprised of the situation on their frontiers.

A final written mode of disseminating news was through pilgrimage and other travel accounts of journeys to frontiers, usually in the east. The rise of Christian pilgrimage, following on Helena's famous visit to Jerusalem in the early fourth century, allowed Romans more contact with far-off frontiers. Pilgrimage was a very established institution in the ancient world, but Christianity focused it on the eastern parts of the empire. Pilgrimage would not be confined to the Holy Land per se but included trips to Old Testament sites as well, often near Roman frontiers.

The most famous pilgrimage to these Old Testament sites was that of Egeria. Egeria was especially keen to visit all the places with direct biblical significance along the way.[60] Although her intention is to visit and describe the biblical sites of the East, she does not neglect more contemporary descriptions and concerns, and she regularly mentions Roman forts and soldiers as she approaches Rome's eastern frontier.[61] In doing so, she conveys news, even if unwittingly, about local conditions near the frontier. She is told by a bishop that Haran is "10 staging-posts from here, inside Persian lands," about 5 staging posts from Nisibis.[62] As noted previously, the frontier city of Nisibis had been ceded by Jovian about twenty years before Egeria's arrival. The locals presumably recognized a very literal territorial boundary here (as marked by staging posts), and Egeria includes the detail almost incidentally. She records what she was told, and thus she gives an account of the local view of the frontier. Her account, read into the Medieval West, provided a picture of the eastern frontier and thus passed into the imagination of the Western Middle Ages a view of the extreme east of the Roman Empire. One late-seventh-century monk uses the story as a prod to encourage his monks to learn from the example of this amazing woman who "transformed the weakness of her sex into iron strength" by traveling to the "bounds of almost the whole earth."[63]

Visual Modes

News also traveled via visual media, probably even more so during the later than the earlier Empire. Visual modes included ceremony and various types of visual art. J. Matthews makes clear, largely in agreement with S. MacCormack, that "ceremonial, in sight and sound, is a mode of communication." The expanded elaborateness and frequency of public ceremonial in the late Empire is one of the central features of the period, one of many that distinguish it from the earlier empire.[64] Ceremonial served, in a sense, as a means of popularizing communication. In the ceremonial of Late Antiquity, emperors could capitalize on the interest that Romans had in their frontiers. They regularly paraded prisoners of war from beyond Roman frontiers. These processions themselves were a medium of proclaiming news from and from beyond the frontiers of the empire and carried on a tradition of processions from the early days of Rome.[65] And yet with the elaboration of ritual and ceremony in Late Antiquity, the message proclaimed became more clear and dominant. The presence of these captives in processions would proclaim the victories of Roman generals at or beyond Roman frontiers. Furthermore, prisoners of war and hostages were for Romans an excellent source of information about things going on at the peripheries of the empire.[66] In one of his many laments over the death of Julian, Libanius mourns that the emperor could not return, leading prisoners as a token of his accomplishments. Libanius writes this in the same letter in which he also is complaining that written accounts have suddenly become inaccessible to him.[67] The prisoners themselves were potential sources of information.

The presence of foreigners in and of itself was a medium for proclaiming established or subdued frontiers. The Blemmyae of Africa, for example, seem to have been a favorite of the Roman people. At least by Late Antiquity, they had come a long way from their image in the first century, when Romans regarded them as humans with no heads, and eyes and mouths attached to their chests.[68] Yet still, less than flattering images of African groups persisted. The author of the *Expositio Totius Mundi* describes the desert borders of Africa, "beyond which dwell the worst peoples of the barbarians."[69] The author of the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* records how the emperor Probus, after subduing the Blemmyae beyond Egypt's frontier, sent them northward and "thereby created a wondrous impression upon the amazed Roman people."[70] The Blemmyae are described elsewhere as being transported around the Roman Empire. A certain Abinnaeus writes in a petition to Constantius II and Constans in 341 that, after serving for thirty-three years in the Roman army, the commander of the frontier region of the Upper Thebaid in Egypt had commanded

Abinnaeus to escort a group of Blemmyae to Constantinople. The letter survives on papyrus as part of an archive of his letters and papers. It seems that he spent three years with the group, traveling slowly.[71]

Again, the very presence of such peoples proclaimed a frontier between Roman and Other, even if that frontier was far away. Eusebius mentions "men of the Blemmyan race" as well as others lining up outside of the imperial palace gates. He describes their

> exotic dress, their distinctive appearance, the quite singular cut of their hair and beard; the appearance of their hairy faces was foreign and astonishing. . . . The faces of some were red, of others whiter than snow, of others blacker than ebony or pitch, and others had a mixed color in between.[72]

Such persons created quite a spectacle and served as a visual medium of communication, pointing to the frontiers from which such people came from and beyond which, to the Roman mind, they still belonged. These also would have been the type of people whose presence in North Africa gave St. Augustine daily reminders of the frontier to his south.

The presence of an emperor traveling on campaign also served as visual form of communication, increasing interest in frontier events and news. With the emperors present on frontiers from Marcus Aurelius onward, there was heightened interchange of information and news between peripheries and centers.[73] His visible presence on the frontiers generated more news and brought together, in effect, center and periphery. It also increased the number of visitors to frontier regions.[74] Libanius mentions in one oration that, with barbarians harassing Constantius II's "frontiers all around, what was needed was the presence of the emperor to rally the troops and stem the flood."[75] As seen in the Panopolis papyri, the presence of the emperor at the frontier—in this case, the stern Diocletian—could create a scene in more ways than one.[76] The administrative stir occasioned by an emperor's visit generated news and speculation.

Traveling ambassadors also provoked interest in things peripheral. Libanius specifically records how a certain Spectatus, a philosopher and ambassador, was seen as "fortunate in the eyes of many; to some because he had seen so much of the land and the mountains and the rivers of [Persia], to others because he had observed the Persian way of life and customs."[77] There are sufficient examples of philosophers serving as ambassadors to conclude that this type of interchange of news was common enough.[78] Their gifts of persuasion were well used, as we can see in the case of a Neoplatonist philosopher named Eustathius. Not only did he almost persuade Sapor II of the terms of the mission,

he nearly convinced Sapor to become a philosopher as well (until some magi talked some sense into him).[79] The loquacity and perambulatory lifestyle associated with these figures generated interest and thus led to the delivery of news from the frontiers and beyond.[80] Eustathius, Eunapius records, could not even with effort get away from those wanting to hear him. Philosophers often traveled on personal business as well. One, a certain Hellespontius of Galatia, was "so ardent a lover of learning, he traveled to uninhabited parts of the world to find someone who knew more than himself."[81]

Other visual modes of communication included public maps and paintings of campaigns. These would have displayed to the Roman world happenings at its frontiers. As Eumenius, the orator at Autun mentioned previously, made clear, such visuals were designed to put a picture of the Roman world into the minds of Romans so that they could imagine scenes of action as well as their frontiers.[82] Messengers coming from frontiers would present news in relation to such views of the world. The *Tabula Peutingeriana* has a few notations that could perhaps be the visual depictions of frontiers.[83] Wording on the Table near depictions of the border of Syria and Mesopotamia records the "*fines Romanorum*," suggesting a frontier of the Empire.[84]

Large visual depictions of campaign scenes were also sources of news.[85] These tableaux could be fixed in place or carried in processions. Herodian reports that after defeating the Parthians in 198, Septimius Severus "dispatched a report to the Senate and people, making much of his achievements and ordering that his battles and victories should be painted and publicly exhibited."[86] He adds that nearly forty years later, the emperor Maximinus Thrax, having defeated Germans in a difficult battle among some marshes,

> made a report on the battle and his own distinguished part in a dispatch to the Senate and the people. But he went further, and ordered huge pictures of it to be painted and set up in front of the senate house, so that Romans would be able to see as well as hear about his exploits.[87]

These pictorial accounts depicted Romans at or near frontiers and served as media for proclaiming news to the public. It is far from certain how common this practice was in Herodian's day. His own wording suggests that he might be describing something new to his audience. Whatever its origins, the practice is attested into the later Empire. Eunapius mentions such a painting as well:

> There was a Persian, a prefect at Rome, who reduced the success of the Romans to mockery and laughter. Wishing to offer a representation of

> what had been done, he assembled many small panels in the middle of the Circus. But all the contents of his painting were laughable, and he unwittingly mocked his subject in his presentation. For nowhere did the painting show or allude to either the bravery of the Emperor, or the strength of the soldiers, or anything that was obviously a proper battle. But a hand extended as if from the clouds, and by the hand was inscribed, "The hand of God driving off the barbarians" (it is shameful, but necessary, to write this down) and on the other side, "The barbarians fleeing God," and other things even more stupid and odious than these, the nonsense of the drunken painters.[88]

The purported unconventional nature of this particular picture gives us a sense of the type of information that should have been on such paintings. Eunapius implies that there was a norm for this type of painting, and these "drunken painters" were certainly not meeting it. It also suggests the boundary between the habitus of native-born Romans and newcomers, such as this naturalized Persian. This prefect is identified as a Persian, even if he has become a prefect of Rome. Singling out this fact suggests Eunapius' own dislike for him. To Eunapius, the prefect just did not know the correct way to portray the Romans—emperors or soldiers. And his portrayal of God driving off the barbarians, although it might have been the view of some Romans, was far from palatable to the pagan Eunapius.

The stereotypes Eunapius presents here also give us some indication of how Romans viewed themselves. As so often, these appear in a denunciation of the Other. When Attila the Hun, in Milan, saw a painting of Roman emperors with Scythians "lying dead before their feet, he sought out a painter and ordered him to paint" himself with Roman emperors bringing him gold.[89] The value of spreading a definite message through a visual medium was not lost on Attila.

Sculpture was also a common visual medium for presenting news from the peripheries. The image of the emperor seated in majesty over stylized barbarians was a powerful symbol of frontier conquest.[90] The base of the obelisk of Theodosius in the hippodrome of Constantinople provides one of many extant examples in sculpture. Persians and barbarians are shown in submission, begging for victuals and bringing offerings to Theodosius, who is seated in majesty among the Senators. Such images, placed in areas of high visibility, would provide people in Constantinople with images of the conquered as well as news of imperial campaigns on the two most active Roman frontiers in their own day. The base of the column of Arcadius also depicts enemies in submission in a similar arrangement to that on Theodosius'.

Fig. 8. Base of obelisk of Theodosius at Constantinople. Subjugated Persians and barbarians beneath emperor.

Coins fulfilled a similar purpose and at a much more diffused level.[91] The submission of barbarians became, by the late Empire, a cliché on coins and probably led to a point of diminishing returns in terms of news diffusion. Yet emperors continued to put out stylized images of themselves on the frontiers of Empire, defeating the barbarians.[92] The power of news is clear in the quick and efficient quashing of new coinage of the usurper Procopius in 365 by Aequitius, the military commander of Illyricum.[93] Procopius had circulated gold coins bearing his own image as a form of enticement to join in a revolt. Aequitius executed those involved in the coin circulation. His swift and resolute actions as well as those of Procopius' partisans show the power of coinage in diffusing a message. It is doubtful that another picture of a defeated barbarian on a coin would have provoked any particular type of response, but the very presence of frontier peoples on coins would serve to keep the frontier in the minds of Romans.

Spoken Modes

Spoken modes of communication are, of course, the most predominant yet the least recoverable. If their writings are any indicators, we can be sure that late Romans were talking more and more about their frontiers. Verbal accounts were, to some, the most believable. Eunapius contrasts written history with oral history, which he defines as contemporary history.

> In the case of persons and events before our generation, we must defer to written authorities or to the reports about them which memory passes down to us via an oral tradition. But contemporary events we must hand down to posterity with due regard to truth, as Plato says.[94]

A close reading of available sources does reveal some of the possibilities of such spoken modes of communication and of the type of contemporary events that late Roman audiences found significant enough to discuss.

Often it is difficult to discern whether written or spoken modes were used in communicating news. For example, it seems as if the messengers that Eumenius mentions in his request for the restoration of schools at Autun delivered their messages at least in part by speaking (such is implied, at least, by the description of them as *nuntii*).[95] Internal revolts and external problems on various frontiers had led to a heightened news flow from periphery to center.[96] Eumenius' panegyric is just one of many hints of the flow of this news and its potential in shaping and expressing a late Roman worldview. Messengers, especially those arriving from peripheral areas, were critical to this process.

Libanius also records their activity when he speaks of reports, true and false, that have filtered back from the eastern frontier after the death of Julian.[97]

War captives could also play a role in relating verbal information about the frontiers in addition to a role as symbols and visual media. Although he can only imagine, for a while, what Julian is doing beyond the eastern frontiers, Libanius' curiosity is to some extent satisfied, he explains, because "the prisoners of war tell us what he is achieving, and they tell that he is making quick progress and that the towns are in ruins. But we do not know what to do with all the prisoners."[98] So, in Antioch, Libanius is able to keep up with Julian through the steady stream of prisoners who are sent back. He later relates that the information they gave him helps compensate for the lack of news he is getting from the Romans after the death of the emperor. Julian also avails himself of information from war captives. He plies one old captive for information on the topography of an area beyond Roman frontiers. The old man is forced to tell the truth once he discovers that Julian can verify the reports from his own knowledge gained from reading books.[99]

News could also proliferate verbally as Romans and non-Romans mingled more freely in the later Empire. Julian gives hints in one of his orations that "barbarians" could be found throughout the empire discoursing on frontier matters with the Roman population. He delivered an oration while still a Caesar and campaigning in the West in which he suggests that many in his audience in Gaul knew about the barbarian name of Nisibis because of their "frequent interchange with the barbarians of those parts."[100] The implication is either that people throughout the Empire knew details about the eastern frontier because of foreigners who circulated throughout the empire or that many members of his audience had actually been to the eastern frontier. Either way, it is interesting that he notes the sharing of knowledge so freely between Persians (or perhaps Saracens) and Romans.

The choice of Nisibis here is instructive in that it shows that Romans themselves throughout the Empire were talking about the extreme eastern frontier. A further hint of this type of interaction between periphery and center is provided by the description of Nisibis and Edessa in the *Expositio Totius Mundi*. This work records that the inhabitants of these frontier cities were "on good terms with all the provinces," implying, again, some level of interaction between frontier areas and those far away from them.[101] Both Nisibis and Edessa are singled out in this passage as the centers of Roman/Persian trade, a further catalyst for such interactions.

Travelers from frontier zones would share news from the frontiers with people eager to hear about occurrences at these frontiers or about the state of affairs at them. A significant number of these travelers would have been

pilgrims. One can only imagine the number of people Egeria and others like her told about their travels right up to the eastern frontier. Malchus of Nisibis, a Syrian hermit, once told Jerome, early in the fourth century, that he was stopped at one point in his travels on account of "the closeness of Persia" and Roman soldiers he encountered. His wanderings, he tells Jerome, then took him westward by necessity.[102] Such glimpses gave news and information to many who, like the vast majority of Romans, would never get near Roman frontier zones.

Such bits of information impart small yet telling glimpses into whole networks of exchange by which people related information from the frontiers. We also hear of a desert saint, nearly one hundred years old, living in the East and upset by the pillaging of the town nearby, making his way to Constantinople to report the damage. He never returned, as Theodore of Sykeon tells us, but died on his way back after relaying the news in person. Here we get a picture of the way that news could be spread by travelers.[103] The fact that this old desert saint took it upon himself to bring news to Constantinople personally suggests that in the region in which he lived, the news might not otherwise have reached anyone who could do something about it.

Soldiers also were key sources of information when they were traveling back from the eastern front. Libanius' habit of pressing them for details appears throughout his letters and orations and shows an interest in the frontiers not only by himself but also by his audience. Especially at major stops along the way, a mass of soldiers would attract a significant amount of attention and thus further the relay of news.[104] And veterans returning to their native communities would have had plenty of stories as well as a wide variety of geographic and ethnographic material from the peripheries of empire to share in addition to the perennially popular war story.[105] These stories, in fact, must have been a major, if not *the* major, way of communicating news to local communities throughout Anatolia and elsewhere.[106]

The role of orators themselves was vital, as well, in spreading news. The speeches of Symmachus, for example, were one way for the people of Rome to learn of the restorations going on at the frontier zones.[107] Libanius' role in this respect already has been explored, as he declared news, often straight out of correspondence reaching him from the frontier itself. The panegyricists gave a wide range of information on Roman frontiers. In panegyric, the frontiers become a crucial indicator of the strength of the Empire. News from frontiers become major themes in the Latin panegyrics of Late Antiquity, expressing the variety of ways of viewing Roman interaction along borders. By all these methods, panegyrics served to communicate news about the frontier to Roman audiences, even if it was embedded in epideictic oratory. These, along

with rumor, suggest a wide and active network of information sharing at the interpersonal level as well.

Panegyrics themselves could be circulated widely. Libanius notes one by Themistius making the rounds in the East, far from the place of its initial delivery.[108] Panegyricists realized their role as newsmen. In one particularly overblown piece of self-congratulation, the orator Pacatus imagined "distant cities" flocking to him to get information to pass on to subsequent generations.[109]

Orators, understandably, often were accused of overreaching. But they, like historians, were concerned with the accuracy of their accounts and how they would be received by their audiences. Julian, no mean orator himself, describes the heroic deeds of Constantius II in florid, poetic language. He pauses at one point, however, assuring the audience, "if there be anyone who declines to heed either the opinion expressed in my narrative or those admirably written verses, but prefers to consider the actual facts, let him judge from those." In the litany of facts to follow, the pride of place is given to an account of Constantius' defense of Nisibis. In one oration, Libanius records events from the battle of Singara, near the eastern frontier: "And let no one distrust the hyperbole before he hears anything." "Our scouts who personally watched the maneuver brought back news which was based on observation and not on guesswork using other sources."[110] Libanius is diffusing tactical information here in a popular format.

From the same oration, one can also get a sense that orators, like historians, were also concerned about appealing to the needs and range of belief of their audiences. Libanius, at one point even gets in a jab at historians, some of whom considered historical writing superior in truth quality to panegyrics. Panegyrics could relate contemporary and thus relevant and true material, he implies. Referring to the capture of a "not unimportant" Persian city, he writes, "For we are not recounting an action which has been blotted out by time, as antiquity fights on the side of falsehood, but I think that everyone bears before his eyes."[111]

The public delivery of edicts, a key element of Roman control and propaganda, was likewise a verbal mode of communication, and it reached large audiences. Before they were made into inscriptions or deposited in the public record houses, all imperial letters would have been read aloud to the people in major cities and carefully and publicly acknowledged.[112] Libanius records in a few epistles how he intended to include letters from the emperor in his panegyrics, thus allowing more information from the frontiers to be passed on to the public.[113]

Due to the way news spreads orally, it was generally more complete among the people near where the action took place, even news of empirewide

importance.[114] Libanius writes that although the "whole empire" was in grief at the news of Julian's death, the greater grief was probably among the areas "where the Greeks live, for they have greater knowledge of the disaster."[115] The proliferation of news in close proximity to events generally comes from word of mouth.

Divine Modes

In addition to Rumor's active role, divination was also an important source of news. It will be recalled that Julian claimed a divine source for Constantius II's knowledge of the "limits and bounds of the whole Empire."[116] The advantage of divination, of course, is that it can relay news exactly as or even before something is happening. This type of news was, at least in the minds of those receiving it, the most accurate of all news, provided it was interpreted correctly. As argued throughout this study, the later Roman Empire saw a decided rise in forms of popular belief, *superstitio*, at all levels.[117] Thus, divination was more of a crucial factor in the later Empire even than in the earlier.

Libanius records many such examples. Julian, he claims, heard the news in Gaul of Constantius II's death in Cilicia even before those in Cilicia had heard about it. He proclaimed that Julian had learned this news through divination: "there resulted the strangest paradox of all, that [Julian] announced the tidings to the bearers of it, and they departed after hearing the news they had come to deliver."[118] The gods, of course, fly more quickly than the fastest of messengers.

Ammianus corroborates Libanius' account, recording that Julian had "inferred from prophetic signs (in which he was adept) and from dreams, that Constantius would shortly depart from life."[119] Ammianus later records that, through liver divination, Julian understood what would soon happen; doubting the sincerity of the soothsayer, Julian learned by another sign the very moment that Constantius died.[120]

When the news arrived by normal means (that is, official envoys) from Cilicia, Ammianus claims that Julian was merely confirmed in his mind of the prophecies he had already experienced. When the news, traveling swiftly as if being "drawn through the air by winged dragons," entered Constantinople, Ammianus records that "all sexes and ages poured forth, as if to look upon someone sent down from heaven."[121] This is, of course, standard panegyric hyperbole buttressed by Ammianus' own love for Julian, but it nonetheless gives a rare glimpse of news affecting the whole of the population.

Much less encouraging for Libanius and Ammianus, news of the death of Julian also came via the gods. About Julian's death, Libanius records,

> But we in Antioch discovered it through no human agency: earthquakes were the harbingers of woe. . . . [W]e were sure that by these afflictions heaven gave us a sign of some great disaster. . . . The bitter news reached our ears that our great Julian was dead.[122]

Before it had reached him through word of mouth, then, Libanius already knew of the tragedy. Of course, he is interpreting signs in retrospect (*ex eventu*), but divine methods of news flow allowed for this.

Christians worked out their own way of getting news from divine channels. As will be seen in chapter 6, they did this through Christianizing sibylline and other oracles as well as by searching the Scripture for up-to-the-minute news on what was happening in the Empire. Often, these searches focused on the empire's violated frontier zones. Claiming a form of "general revelation," some held that the pagan sibyls were declaring the truth for all to hear and in fact confirmed rather than challenged the gospel. As will be seen, such prophetic and then apocalyptic readings of current events further emphasized the frontiers.

News gained through supernatural means must be placed on par with rumor and other sources of information in a late Roman worldview. Although the news relayed by divine sources theoretically should have been superior and flawless (that is, as descended from gods), its interpretation of course remained an issue. To answer skeptics (most likely Christians) of pagan divination, Ammianus quotes Cicero: "'The gods,' says he, 'show signs of coming events. With regard to these if one err, it is not the nature of the gods that is at fault, but man's interpretation.'"[123]

5

Getting the Word Around

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> The roads are reopened. . . . [T]he traveling stations and inns revived and they are again reinforced with their old ease: the entire empire shares the same breath and the same feeling like a single organism and is no longer split in two and pulled apart everywhere.
>
> —Themistius, *Oration* 16.212

These words, delivered in 382, described one aspect of Roman recovery after the infamous Battle of Adrianople in 378. A true sign of recovery was the restoration of communication.[1] Communication held the empire together, as Themistius expresses in evocative organic terms. The loss of these communication avenues, often taken for granted by any people who enjoy such a vast network, was seen as disastrous to the empire itself and to its people. Loss, in fact, often makes one eloquent about structures that ordinarily go unmentioned. Such moments can be helpful in revealing the ideological context of Roman communication.

Whenever the sharing of news involved human contact, *pace Fama et portenta,* it traveled through a massive and diffused human network often appearing only implicitly in the sources.[2] The Romans are famous for imposing their will on a wide and varied landscape by their constructing and maintaining of that context to meet their administrative and other needs. Since the spreading and sharing of news is a "process fundamental to all societies,"[3] it is useful to trace the context within which it moved in a Roman setting.

Holding together a vast empire presumed a system within which information could move as quickly and efficiently as possible. Crucial here is both the intentional construction of that system and the unintentional result that news moved about freely, keeping a wide variety of people informed. Themistius gives glimpses of this dynamic and hints at the role that news could play in the life of the Roman Empire at large. Roman highways, like our own interstate highways, were designed first of all for the movement of troops and military equipment. But also like our own highways, such avenues of communication served a wide range of additional purposes.

In her analysis of news in the Greek polis, S. Lewis contrasts at a critical level the role of news in the Greek and Roman worlds. In the Greek world of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., she argues, "news for news' sake . . . was entirely absent from communication between ancient *poleis*. Individual citizens exhibited a great appetite for news, but the regular and official passage of news between *poleis* was entirely absent."[4] In the Roman world, however, she suggests that the same was not true because Romans developed road networks and institutions that allowed for the conception of the Empire as a unity. It was not until the emergence of the Roman Empire, in fact, that the Greek *poleis* collectively saw themselves as parts of a single unity. The structure of news institutions in the Empire demonstrates the ideology of unity, holding, at some level, the Empire together and serving to facilitate the modes of communication explored earlier.

Roads

Communication of any kind from frontier regions or even within the Empire presumed the existence of roads, and passable ones.[5] When Libanius remarks that Julian sent him a last letter from the frontier after which Libanius had to speculate about his doings, the implication is that news could no longer be regular because the Roman road system had ended at the frontier. There were "no messengers to tell us," but "we rejoiced as if we saw them."[6] This is not to say that the road suddenly stopped at some arbitrary point. It clearly did not. Rather, it suggests a limit to Roman maintenance of the road and says something about the activity of letter carriers and free movement of peoples and hence the movement of news in such areas.[7] The initial meaning of *limes* as a road that penetrated into enemy territory preserves the sense of making an inroad into foreign territory. Later, *limes* came to refer to a series of roads that seemed to mark the boundary of empire itself.[8]

The role of roads in the "*limes* debate" is well known and shows the difficulty of interpreting the primary functions of frontier roads. At issue is

whether *limes* roads were intended primarily for the sake of communication or to separate empires or peoples. All agree, obviously, that roads at frontiers served a crucial supply and communication function. Isaac and others have suggested that often "*limes*" means only a garrisoned road in a frontier zone rather than a boundary or barrier.[9] In fact, Isaac claims, *limes* roads, like rivers, served to enhance travel and communication between the Roman Empire and the Persian Empire, or *barbaricum*, rather than to demarcate or separate space. The actual role of roads as necessary ingredients in the spread of information, particularly about frontiers, has been analyzed less.

Anatolia and points eastward had an excellent and reliable system of communication maintained into the later Roman Empire, much of which we learn about for the later period in the writings of the church fathers. Roads to the active eastern frontier, in particular, were especially important and well maintained. The location and importance of various roads throughout Asia Minor have been well explored through studies both of the roads themselves and of the milestones found along them.[10]

One of the results of having roads in an area is that they facilitated what A. D. Lee calls the "imageability" of a region.[11] Imageability served as a form of background knowledge against which information proliferated and suggests the role that roads themselves played in shaping a Roman worldview. The ability to imagine a region requires that communication move from it in sufficient quantity and verifiable quality. Regions not traversed by roads could not, in fact, be well imagined by the Roman mind, because information could not move quickly or effectively across them.

Although the general trend in Late Antiquity was toward ruralization, the fourth century saw a growth in the status of those cities of Asia lying along the roads connecting Constantinople and the eastern frontier. C. S. Lightfoot sees this growth as consequent to the creation of the "New Rome" and traces its effects on sites such as Amorium, located on one such major route.[12] The connection of these cities to the eastern frontier was facilitated by the continued and essential maintenance of the roads.

That roads connected the frontier of the empire to points inland is made clear both by archaeological work and by written sources. For Late Antiquity, one of the crucial written sources, again, is the *Itinerarium* of Egeria. Her account indicates that persons of Late Antiquity imagined a fairly clear frontier line along the roads that led into the Persian Empire. Her detailed descriptions reveal stops along the way as well as the extent to which certain areas were guarded by imperial troops.

The difficulties of passing into Persian territory are further illustrated by a highly hyperbolic passage in a letter by St. Basil in 357. Trying to convey the

difficulties he would surmount in order to be with his friend, an itinerant philosopher named Eustathius, Basil presents himself advancing into and even beyond Persia.

> Nay, so love-sick was I that I was compelled either to take the road to Persia and go with you as you advanced to the uttermost limit [*mekiston*] of the land of the barbarians—for indeed you even went thither, so obstinate was the demon who kept us apart . . . for if I had not grown weary of following you as a lamb follows the shepherd's staff held out before it, I really think that you would have driven on and on even beyond the Indian Nyssa, or, if there is an uttermost spot [*eschaton*] of our world, that you would have wandered even there.[13]

That it was even a metaphorical option to walk into the land of the Persians suggests that active roads connected the two empires and information and news could travel along those routes. And the juxtaposition of two words for outermost limits shows the necessity of distinguishing the boundary of both empires with the somewhat extreme image of the boundary even beyond the Persian Empire itself.

St. John Chrysostom describes in more detail the journey to Babylon, mentioning paved roads, regular road stations, towns, and villas along the way.[14] Ammianus records that when a certain Ursicinus was called to travel from Nisibis westward, he encountered "abundant transportation facilities" for his trip to Milan.[15] Although it is fairly certain that he got most of the information from archives, Eusebius records in some detail the roads and features of Roman Palestine, Arabia, and Syria, attesting to an active and well-maintained road system up to the Roman frontiers in some of these areas.[16] So, roads connected the frontiers to interior regions, although it was not always easy or convenient to travel past their limits, which often were marked out by guard posts.

Information coming from or going to peripheral areas relied on these road networks and, of course, persons traveling on them to reach more central locations. The absence of such roads could prevent a flow of information and thereby keep certain regions out of the news circuit. Basil would write to Euphronius, bishop of Colonia in Armenia,

> Because Colonia, which the Lord has handed over to you for guidance, has been settled far from the highway, frequently even if we write to the other brothers in Lesser Armenia, we hesitate to send a letter to your Reverence, since we do not suppose that there is any carrier going that far.[17]

The implication, of course, is that news of any kind would not be able to reach this area often, even if it originated relatively close by. Such areas may be presumed, to follow K. Lynch's/Lee's "imageability theory," to have been cut off from the rest of the Empire for certain periods.

Even when roads did connect more and less peripheral areas, news flow was restricted in certain seasons. St. Basil records that the road between Cappadocia and Rome was entirely impassable in the winter[18]—that, coupled with the presence of enemies along the road, made it necessary to travel by sea, a concession for Romans of this period.[19] One especially harsh winter (374–75) saw the roads closed until Easter and, according to Basil, there was no one in Cappadocia with the courage to face the difficulties of the journey. Basil complains that the clergy in his area had taken up sedentary crafts and did not go abroad in the winter—so the letters pile up. Basil also notes a general lack of traffic, not necessarily seasonally related, that could stop the flow of news to his area at unexpected intervals.[20]

The danger of travel during invasions made news flow particularly erratic. St. Basil writes of communication problems during the Gothic revolt of 378: "Because I have heard that all the roads are filled with brigands and deserters, I was afraid to entrust something into the hands of our brother lest I should become complicit in his death too."[21]

Ancyra as a Case Study

One way of assessing the significance of news along the roads of the later Empire is to analyze the importance of certain nodal points of communication and the role they played. Ancyra is a prime example of one such place. Hardly a world-class Roman city, Ancyra shows the taken-for-grantedness of news and communication centers. Its actual importance, only implicit in the sources, is a testimony to the unheralded and tacit significance of news. Its rise in status in the later Roman Empire further underscores the growing importance of news from and about the frontiers during this period.[22] Culturally, it always lagged behind the upper tier of cities of the Roman East, such as Athens, Antioch, Alexandria, and Constantinople. And yet some extremely important and newsworthy events took place here.

At Ancyra, seven roads converged, more than for any other city in Anatolia and more than almost any other city except Rome. Of the four major communication routes through Anatolia, Ancyra is central to three.[23] In the words of D. French, Ancyra was thus important as a communication center, a "nodal point of a road network designed for a static frontier."[24] Clues to its importance come from a wide variety of sources. Ancyra is one of only

six fortified cities presented on the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, suggesting an unexpected level of importance.[25] Conversely, it did not get a personification on the *Tabula*, as did Antioch, Rome, and Constantinople, suggesting that as a symbolic or cultural center it did not loom very large. In fact, it does not even have its name on the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, a fact that caused S. Mitchell to note its "unrecognized potential."[26]

Anatolian road networks were crucial for communication between the eastern periphery and sites inward. As throughout most of antiquity, Anatolia was the great highway of major armies. Much earlier, Herodotus had recorded how the Persians had worked out a very sophisticated system of roads with lodging houses and stations throughout the peninsula.[27] Ancyra became, in the later Empire, the central node of the ancient network of roads throughout this highway peninsula.

Sources from the crucial years of the later fourth century give hints of the importance of Ancyra. It seems that Ancyra was specifically chosen as a site for newsworthy events. The first general synod after Constantine's conversion was held here in 314, probably because of the road networks, which provided easy access. According to one account, it was also Constantine's choice as the site for the council, which, due to extenuating circumstances, met at Nicaea instead in 325.[28] The importance of Ancyra may also be seen in the fact that emperors on eastern campaigns usually stopped here to conduct important business. Their very arrival in places like Ancyra would be a media event in and of itself, proclaiming that something of importance was pending on the eastern frontier and giving rise to intense proliferation of news and/or speculation. Constantius II stopped here to great acclaim on his eastern campaign; Themistius, in fact, delivered his first oration here during Constantius' visit.[29] Julian visited here on his way to the eastern frontier and held court before proceeding "by usual roads" to Antioch.[30]

It was probably Julian who left a memorial here in the form of a large column that stands today in downtown Ancyra (usually with a stork's nest on top). It seems that Julian was very concerned about spreading news about his campaign. Incidentally, and appropriately, Julian passed legislation concerning the *cursus publicus* during his stay here.[31] An inscription praising Julian as the "lord of the whole earth," from the Ocean to the Tigris, was erected in Ancyra to proclaim news of the emperor's campaign.[32] When Julian departed for his ill-fated eastern campaign, he left Valentinian in Ancyra "to follow later according to orders." Such a placement assumes that Ancyra was excellently located for getting the news quickly to him and for allowing him to follow along or take other appropriate action at a moment's notice. In this light, the strategic importance of Ancyra is fairly obvious.

Fig. 9. Column of Julian at Ancyra.

Jovian and his son, Varronianus, assumed the consulship at Ancyra after Jovian had marched back from Persian territory following his disastrous campaign. After Jovian's death, Valentinian, still waiting at Ancyra, was chosen emperor at Bithynia, near the site of Jovian's death. Valentinian was informed there of his rise to the purple very quickly, Ammianus notes. Finally, Valens heard of eastern forces arriving after he returned to Ancyra by rapid march. During the contentions between the usurper Procopius and Valens in 365, Valens had proceeded by "rapid march to Ancyra," just the type of place where he himself could gather and spread news to combat the claims of Procopius. By using news networks effectively, Ammianus implies, Procopius had just saved himself from possible destruction.[33] In the battles over the throne, places like Ancyra were helpful for diffusing news quickly and effectively. All of these examples show the potential of such sites as news centers.

The fact that these highly newsworthy events occurred at Ancyra suggests that the participants could have news of their doings proclaimed widely throughout an information network of which Ancyra was the center for Anatolia if not the whole East. No other city in Asia was so poised for handling news and information. Later, when Justinian significantly decreased the public post, he actually repaired the highway linking Ancyra with the eastern frontier.[34]

Ancyra did not produce literary luminaries of the likes of Libanius and Ammianus. It could not boast an important philosophical school. In fact, Ancyran students who wanted a first-rate education went to Athens or Antioch. At Antioch in particular, an overflow of rhetoric would praise that city and all that went on there. Thus we have an abundance of information on the happenings of the city, much of it flowing from the stylus or golden tongue of Libanius.[35] Antioch is usually accorded the status of the "city from which the defense of the Eastern Empire was organized."[36] But when viewed from a communication standpoint, the comparative status of Ancyra rises considerably.[37] It was certainly important for more reasons than the fact that, as the *Expositio Totius Mundi* baldly states, "its inhabitants eat the best and finest bread."[38]

Ancyra serves to remind us of the importance of news and yet also the way it was taken for granted and so rarely recorded. Ancyra's importance, it seems, arose from its position at so many major road intersections and by its consequent connection to crucial news from the eastern frontier. The case of Ancyra suggests something of an inverse to Lynch's/Lee's "imageability theory"—the greater number of roads converging on a city, the more important that city was for imagining the outside world, especially if those roads connected to frontiers.

Imperial Post

The *cursus publicus,* set up by Augustus, was one of many innovations that made the maintenance of such a widespread Empire possible. Our most explicit piece of information about the Imperial post, however, comes from sixth-century Byzantium, although it purports to summarize earlier conditions. Procopius here blasts Justinian for damaging the welfare of the state:

> The Roman emperors of earlier days took precautions to ensure that everything should be reported to them instantly. . . . Secondly, they were anxious that those who conveyed the yearly revenue to the capital should arrive there safely without delay or danger. With these two objects in view they organized a speedy postal service in all directions. The method was this. Within the distance that a man lightly equipped might be expected to cover in a day they established stations, on some roads eight, on others fewer, but very rarely less than five. As many as forty horses stood ready at each station, and grooms corresponding to the number of horses were installed at every station. Always as they rode the professional couriers changed their horses—which were most carefully chosen—at frequent intervals; and covering, if occasion required, a ten days journey in a single day, they performed all the services I have just described.

Although the point of this passage is to show how Justinian damaged the whole postal system, Procopius gives us insight into how it had functioned ideally in past times. Although Justinian "allowed for postal service to continue" on "the road leading to Persia," he drastically decreased the number and quality of the stations along the way. The result, Procopius goes on to relate in the passage, "has been that events happening in any region are reported with difficulty, too late to be of any use and long after they happened, so that naturally no useful action can be taken."[39] Although constructed for official strategic reasons, the post played a role in disseminating news more widely.

Late Roman references to this system in use appear in a variety of sources. An organized corps of *agentes-in-rebus* is first attested in 319, although some think that it arose during the tetrarchy to replace the *frumentarii,* who had become disliked by provincials.[40] Libanius kept up on news of Julian through functionaries of the imperial post. As noted earlier, Libanius was very interested in passing along this type of information in public oration. He records that rumor continues to inform him, and yet he still could keep up on some news about Julian through "the men who spend their lives on the flying camels—for

may their speed be honored by the title of 'wings.'" Libanius mentions one such *agens-in-rebus*, Aristophanes, who "traversed the world on horseback" and from whom "no information that required prompt delivery ever came slowly."[41]

Couriers, *frumentarii*, and *agentes-in-rebus* regularly appear as bearers of information, although it remains uncertain how much of their actual reports would have been classified as news. They were generally special agents of the emperor, and at times it is said they were even hated by the general populace, who gave them names such as *curiosi* on account of their ostensible nosiness.[42] With such a reputation and the importance of the speed of their missions, it is doubtful that couriers mingled with the public much or announced news from the frontier. Yet their very presence would have aroused curiosity and rumor. Seeing men on "flying camels" rushing through town would give rise to speculation, especially in civic centers.

Officially, only persons with a warrant (*evictio*) for official government business issued by the governor or emperor were permitted to use the lodging and stable facilities of the *cursus publicus*, although the road itself could not be so restricted. However, during the later Empire, wealthy persons and those with connections to officials readily received *evictiones* for private travel without much trouble. The repeated prohibitions of personal travel on the *cursus* suggest that the rule was broken continually and that private persons continued to use it. Bishops as well were permitted to use the post to attend councils or to conduct other ecclesiastical business. The pilgrim Melania the Younger was allowed to use the *cursus publicus*, as well, on her trip eastward in 436.[43] It appears that she was able to get a pass on the road because of a connection with her uncle, summoned to Constantinople. Even when *evictiones* could not be given, travelers could still wait in line, so to speak, behind official travelers for lodging and for animals.[44]

Markets and Fairs

The importance of markets, fairs, and festivals as points of communication is as certain for the ancient world as for the contemporary age. Here, people from dispersed communities would gather, trade, mingle, and share news. These gatherings consisted of a few different types—annual, occasional, or periodic events.[45] A study of fairs in preindustrial societies notes that possibly the most important noneconomic function of fairs is communication:

> the assemblage of such relatively large groupings of population make the market-place one of the most important nodes in the communication network of a peasant society. . . . The presence of professional

> traders traveling constantly from market to market in a circuit of market towns bring the latest information to each of the market-places.[46]

Generally, our knowledge of the ancient fairs comes only from literary sources, since fairs were periodical events that did not leave permanent structures. But Mitchell proposes that the circulation patterns of civic bronze coins might also show market patterns.[47] Often markets could attract people from far distances, giving news a chance to enter local communities. Menander Rhetor, in a late-third-century treatise on epideictic oratory, "judges a festival on the number and status of visitors, as well as distances traveled by them." Theodoret of Cyrrhus writes circa 440 of a fair in a town of Cilicia (Aegae) that attracted "a large number of merchants from the West." At this same site, a pilgrim's guidebook from the sixth century records a period of "tax-free trade for forty days."[48] Such long-distance trade was a crucial means for spreading information around.

The importance of fairs for disseminating frontier information comes across in the number of fairs located in or near Roman frontier regions. The description of Nisibis and Edessa in the *Expositio Totius Mundi* singles out Roman/Persian trade as the fairs' most distinguished characteristic.[49] The purpose of the fairs at these locations was to facilitate trade with foreign merchants. But in the process, Romans from more central regions, such as the traders from western provinces, would have been exposed to frontier life and peoples. But the information function was a double-edged sword. These fairs long were seen as potential points for passage of sensitive information between the Romans and their adversaries as well. The suspicion of merchants as spies is something of a commonplace in the sources. Procopius continues a long tradition when he records that merchants were seen as potential spies, guides, and envoys.[50] After Galerius' defeat of the Persians in 298, one of the treaty stipulations was that all trade became restricted to Nisibis as an obligatory "trading post." But to what was this restriction responding?[51] Legislation from a century later gives perhaps some hints. It seems that a tense situation along the eastern frontier caused the tightening of control on traveling merchants on the grounds that they could sometimes pass along too much news. In 408–9, legislation was passed for controlling sensitive information near the frontier zone:

> Merchants subject to our power or that of the King of Persia's should not hold fairs [*nundinas exercere*] beyond those places which we agreed upon . . . lest the secrets of another kingdom be probed into contrary to agreement.[52]

The places "agreed upon" usually are interpreted as the fairs at the border towns of Nisibis, Callinicum, and Artaxata.[53] Although the actual meaning of the passage has been debated, it does underscore the potential of information gathering and dissemination concurrent with trading—and, all would agree, the fair provided an excellent context for that.

The most important of these centers was Nisibis, which explains the restriction of all trade to this city in 298; it remained an important channel of trade and information until its inglorious delivery into Persian hands in 363. After 363, Nisibis continued to be a potential trading center, as we see from the statutes of the school of Nisibis. These forbade inhabitants from going into Roman territory to buy or sell.[54]

Other trade centers included Batnae, very close to the Euphrates, which Ammianus describes as trading in products in great abundance even from as far away as India and China. At its yearly festival in September, "a great crowd of every condition gathers for the fair." These fairs had a strong military presence to keep the peace and to keep an eye on a place of intense information exchange and the ubiquitous possibility of espionage. The Amida fair, near the Tigris River, was also a site of exchange of goods and news. We catch a glimpse of this fair because of an incidental reference in Ammianus. The annual fair was being held here at the time of a Persian attack, and so Ammianus mentions it, explaining that there was a "throng of country folk in addition to the foreign traders here at the time.[55] Procopius describes another frontier market near Erzerum and located right on the Roman-Persian frontier. Locals traded here and even crossed the frontiers to help in each others' fields, Roman and non-Roman.[56]

The importance of fairs as "nodal points" of communication is clear in some North African evidence as well. In the late fourth century an anti-Donatist writes how Donatists were using the medium of fairs to spread their message—they were sending "criers [*praecones*] to all nearby places and to the markets [*nundinae*]."[57] In North Africa, as in the East, fairs provided a milieu for spreading information widely, quickly, and effectively in a way not possible just within local communities. Other references point to how the rural markets of southern Numidia served as effective sites from which to rally support for various religious causes as well.[58] In North Africa, the information diffusion function was specifically a method whereby rural areas were brought into contact with the rest of the Roman world.[59] Lacking frontier cities as such, rural Romans and confederated non-Romans relied on these fairs for news of the outside world.

The *Tabula Peutingeriana* also refers to a frontier fair. Near an indication of what some consider the eastern frontier of the Empire (*fines Romanorum*),

and *fines exercitus Syriaticae*, the words *commercium barbarorum* appear, designating a frontier fair here between Romans and Persians. We also know of a customs officer nearby at Zeugma.[60] Such customs posts were also present in North Africa.[61]

Functioning in a similar way to these markets were athletic contests, although their role is probably in decline in the period here. L. Casson notes that one of the things that made travelers of an unprecedented number of Romans of the first three centuries A.D. was the games that "drew spectators from everywhere."[62] Their function in integrating rural folk in particular into Roman civic and communication networks is elusive but is just beginning to get some attention from historians of the games.[63]

Urbanization

M. Kearney, in his many recent studies of worldview, notes that mental conceptions of geographic space and the cosmos are shaped by such tangible factors as settlement patterns, mobility, and means of communication.[64] As a human structure, demographics shaped the rate and speed of news flow. Urbanization as a phenomenon in Late Antiquity has been getting increased attention lately, especially with the expansion of the archaeological record for this period. Urbanization forms part of the demographic context of news travel from and to the frontier. As with roads, as Lee has pointed out, the presence of cities in a region likewise facilitated their "imageability" in the Roman mind.[65] Part of this imageability was related to the fact that cities also allowed for wider and quicker diffusion of news. Like roads, cities were thus essential to the workings of empire. The cities on the eastern frontier, especially through the increased diffusion of information from and about them, enhanced the imageability of the eastern frontier in a way not possible with the North African.

Lee further analyzes the relationship between dynamic news flow and settlement density with reference to a disease model, which appears to work fairly well. In the work *Germs and Ideas: Routes of Epidemics and Ideologies*, A. Siegfried argues that germs need urban centers to spread, just as ideas do.[66] Just as the spread of disease generally assumes some type of human contact, and the more intense the contact in cities, the more widespread the disease will be, so can it be said about the spread of news. The more urbanized a region, the more profound would be the news flow; the more rural, the less so.

Such broad generalizations demand some explanation. The terms *urban* and *rural* are not easy to pin down, nor are they static. And observations about the urbanness or rurality of certain areas usually are not standard. An

overview of what is meant by urban for the Republic and earlier Roman Empire, for instance, would simply not do for the later Empire. And it is very difficult not to impose modern assumptions about rurality and urbanity onto the ancient world.[67] To begin with, urban and rural were never completely separate entities, especially for the later Roman Empire. The later Empire was, in general, more rural than the earlier. For all stages of the Empire, however, our choice of terms and perspectives is often all that separates the city from the countryside.

From an economic perspective, for instance, the city usually cannot be separated from the countryside. As A. H. M. Jones put it in his monumental work on the period, "the great majority of the cities were, however, essentially rural. They drew the greater part of their wealth from agriculture, and their urban centres were of minor economic importance."[68] Likewise, the countryside could depend on the city and its markets for a livelihood.

Socially, demographically, and administratively, however, there could be vast distances between a city and a countryside.[69] Certain types of buildings, landscapes, and administrative statuses were the distinguishing features of cities and towns and defined a specific type of civic culture, whereas their absence designated countrysides.[70] The countrysides, most beginning just outside of a city, contained over 80 percent of the population at the height of the Empire, working in agricultural settings. For the later periods the percentage gets even higher.[71]

If the presence of cities does indeed facilitate the imageability of regions, then the eastern frontier would have been much easier to imagine than the North African. The mythological descriptions of the African frontier and its peoples are a testimony to the lack of news coming from there and the lack of imageability. The cities of the East "on our frontier" and "facing the barbarians" were seen as forming a bulwark against the Persians as well as marking the boundary of empire itself in some places. The defense of these cities, Libanius writes, is of utmost importance in guarding the East. In another passage, Julian orders his men to take twenty days' rations with them, "that being the distance to the fine city [Bezabde] that marks the boundary of the Roman Empire." Libanius writes how these frontier cities were seen as crucial to the "fabric of the world" itself and that their wasting is a disgrace: "news of a city not retaken would make our people despondent and paralyze them."[72] News from such areas was crucial to Romans.

North Africa did not have such cities occupying strategic sites on the frontier that could act as major communication nodes. There, the keys to controlling surrounding territory were series of fortlets.[73] Since probably only military personnel would have frequented these fortlets near the edges of the

Sahara, little if any news would have proliferated from and about these areas. The relative absence of references to the North African frontier in late Roman sources can be understood in the context of this lack of news flow and lack of urbanization.

Ecclesiastical Contexts

During the fourth and fifth centuries, monasteries, church complexes, and holy sites began to spring up with more frequency. These complexes could take on the appearance of small towns and served to facilitate the contact of peoples from all around them, especially at major church festivals, which could attract crowds of pilgrims from far and wide.[74] In some cases, these sites provided a framework for the spread of information in rural eastern areas. In this way, ecclesiastical networks provided a more rigorous and unifying interchange of information than seen before in the Roman world, replacing, it seems, a similar role played by the gatherings at athletic contests in the first three centuries. And they especially complemented the communication network of cities that did exist along the eastern frontier.[75]

Their importance in an ancient context is clear in that "in all accounts of ancient travel religion is accorded the largest role as a motive for travel, even among the poor."[76] Christianity did not initiate pilgrimage, but it did focus it on points east and it did diversify the travelers. With the growth in eastern pilgrimage during the fourth century, the role of monasteries as lodging houses became that much more important.[77] Drawn primarily by the associations of charismatic power, the number of pilgrims expanded enormously during the fourth century.[78] Often, monasteries sprang up near roads so that they could supply travelers, thus also serving as an excellent context for news exchange.[79] The monasteries on or near the eastern frontier tended to be located by east-west roads, specifically for the purpose of provisioning and servicing travelers in these regions.[80] The ones located near the frontiers became centers of refuge during border conflicts.[81]

The *Itineraria* of Egeria presents some of these characteristics of monasteries. Throughout her journey, she records how she was the beneficiary of the hospitality of monks in monasteries or church complexes. In these venues she hears about current situations along the eastern frontier. Although she also stays at *mansiones* and inns as well, she often mentions staying in monastic houses. And although her interest is more in the biblical geography of the regions to which she travels, she also records enough contemporary circumstances to suggest that she is sharing news with the locals and with the monks, and vice versa. Having heard of the holy reputation of the monks of

Mesopotamia, for example, "long before she got there," she is eager to mingle with those monks. She happens to arrive at Carrhae on a feast day on which the monks have gathered from far and wide. She finds that they all live on the outskirts of the cities of Mesopotamia. At Carrhae itself she records that there were no Christians. The feast day pulls together all the monks from Mesopotamia, she assures us; even the far-scattered ascetics, "the great monks," came to town on such days. Such gatherings held much potential for intense news and information exchange, and Egeria was clearly informed thereby.[82]

The monastery of St. Theodore of Sykeon, located right near an Imperial post road, became a crucial stop-off point for eastern travelers.[83] Carrying on something of a family tradition—minus the preconversion prostitution by his mother and sister—St. Theodore welcomed pilgrims and others into his monastery.[84] The descriptions in his *Life* give a good sense of travel in central Anatolia toward the end of Antiquity.

As places of congregation and lodging, monasteries became ideal for the spread of information. Letters could be passed from monastery to monastery, as is readily seen in the letters of Basil the Great and Gregory of Nazianzus. And monks passed from monastery to monastery or to churches, keeping up a lively information connection, albeit often centered on doctrinal controversies. Lodging areas could also spring up around holy men, as one did for Daniel the Stylite, whom the Emperor Leo (r. 457–74), with some effort, persuaded to provide lodging for brothers and strangers.[85]

The potential for news spreading at such locales is clear in a passage just before this one in which the emperor, having heard of insurrections in the East, went to Daniel the Stylite for advice. The emperor, the *Life* records, told Daniel of all the problems in the East; Daniel then gave much advice, as the source specifically records, in the presence of the emperor and all who were with him. The next book records how the emperor, having heard of a Vandal plot to attack, also informed Daniel and sent for his advice.[86] All of these episodes show the potential of the holy man and the holy site as a way to draw and diffuse news. Disaster news especially demanded the aid of a holy man.

The sites of some monasteries have been excavated, but too few yet to generalize about information networks. One of the difficulties of assessing the archaeological survey of eastern sites is distinguishing between forts and monasteries. Monasteries could be heavily fortified, as for example the basilical church near Seleucia connected with the cult of St. Thecla.[87] Egeria describes it thus:

> There are many cells all over the hill, and in the middle there is a large wall which encloses the church where the shrine is. It is a very beautiful shrine. The wall is set there to guard against the Isaurians, who

> are evil men, who frequently rob and who might try to do something against the monastery which is established there.[88]

Abandoned forts, especially near the eastern frontier, could be reestablished as monasteries, as S. Gregory claims, because the internal architecture would be similar.[89] Such fort buildings would meet the two paradoxical criteria for many types of monasteries in the East. First, they were to be found "on the outskirts of the world," separated from the world, especially the civic world of the Empire. As St. Basil exults, "we have quietude on the outskirts of the world, so that we may speak with God himself who provided it for us."[90] Second, monasteries tended to be near roads so they could be of service to travelers, especially traveling churchmen and -women.[91] Forts and fortlets could meet both of these criteria. Archaeology has unearthed only a small number of these monasteries, so, as Mitchell warns, it is dangerous to generalize about them as a system,[92] but it is clear that they began to serve as an important network of communication.

With the change in culture concurrent with Christianity, the character of information as well as the context for carrying it underwent some significant changes. Networks of bishops and other church officials existed well before Constantine, but their role came to be much more important with the Christianization of the Empire. The change to a church-centered information network altered the content and character of information flow in addition to providing new opportunities. And information about frontiers was to be put to new uses.

As early as St. Cyprian in North Africa (mid-third century), we can identify important conduits of information along the channels set by church organization and hierarchy. Such growth is a remarkable accomplishment, seeing that it occurred even before bishops were granted access to the *cursus publicus*. Cyprian's intelligence-gathering mechanism was superb, as can be seen in the types of information available to him—and not just church related. At one point, for example, he appears to have known of Valerian's orders even before the provincial governor.[93] Valerian had issued his commands from the Danube frontier while campaigning against the Goths.

After Constantine, the already-established networks take on more official functions. The letters of church fathers demonstrate the importance of this system of communication. St. Basil the Great sheds much light on letter carriers and networks among church officials—he also gives valuable insight into the limitations of the system. Traveling clerics were expected to deliver news of church controversies and councils as well as other human-interest events of the time. The number of times Basil refers to letter carriers is instructive,

as are his references to the gaps in the system. In a letter to Amphilochius, bishop of Iconium, Basil writes, "but it is impossible for me to write because of the lack of persons traveling from here to your country."[94] The exchange of information presumed the existence of already-functioning channels. And the number of extant letters suggests a vibrant and active exchange of information. For all of Basil's complaints about problems in the system, we can probably conclude that he at least had in his mind an efficient and well-working system. Basil thought that the clerics should be available to spread news, whether by word of mouth or otherwise. The fact that he complains that they are not fulfilling such duties suggests that it was expected that the church should spread information.

Epilogue: Romanization and the Triumph of the Frontier

With the expansion and proliferation of news from the frontiers in the later Roman Empire, it is hardly surprising that the sources begin gradually to present a clearer picture of the late Roman view of their frontiers. Indeed, media suggest that there was something beyond Roman *limites*, foreign territory and not just peoples. The ideology of *imperium sine fine* continues in rhetorical texts, as expected. But by the fourth century, the very concept of frontiers had changed, due in part to the expanded proliferation of news in an environment long provided by the Roman administrative machinery. The message received in part from that bureaucracy often was not necessarily exactly that sent out by the Roman propaganda machine. At times, it was more; at times, less. Certainly "it was largely thanks to the Roman government that the vast majority of the population of the Mediterranean world received information about their world" with better "quantity and quality than it ever had before, or would again before the dawn of the modern era."[95] But to square equally the intentionality of the Roman government with the news the Roman public received denies Roman individuals a great deal of agency. The Romans were not merely passive to the dissemination of Roman news along with concurrent ideology and value systems. I am not imagining here the manufacturing of consent as a means of consensus building by the imperial regime. Propaganda can be packaged and distributed; rumor cannot. Various informal channels of news played a key role in the formation of the late Roman frontier consciousness as well.

Romanization has been defined as "the series of social, cultural and economic changes which drew together the centre and periphery of the empire."[96] If this definition succeeds—and I think it does to the extent that modern concepts can encapsulate ancient conditions—then news flow between center

and periphery should certainly take its place as a social and cultural factor of Romanization. As Themistius makes clear, communication structures were crucial to holding the Empire together. Yet in another sense, this definition of *Romanization* also fails in its ambiguity. It does not account for the difference between early Imperial and late Imperial conditions. Romanization for the early Empire was bringing center and periphery together by taking Rome to the peripheries—on roads, by sea, by letter, by word, through symbols. By the later Roman Empire, the center was not so self-absorbed. Late Antique Romanization, if such it can now be called, is the taking of those peripheries back to the center.

The growing importance of the frontiers, highlighted and furthered by the steady flow of frontier information to centers, was one of many changes of Late Antiquity and led to what I am calling here the triumph of the frontiers. This news flow shaped late Roman frontier consciousness, a fact that has been implied before, albeit not in these terms. C. Wells speaks concerning the frontiers of the great "change from the early Empire to later, despite the continuity of the rhetoric used about barbarians, frontiers, and expansion."[97] His comment invites exploration of what the change in terms of frontiers might be. Whittaker has contended that the shift was not one within Romanization (call it reverse Romanization), as I am proposing, but rather one of "barbarization"—frontiers collapsing and thus allowing the blurring of the ideological distinctions between Romans and barbarians. Taking the focus off of Western Europe, as I have done here, allows for some decidedly different conclusions. For one, it frees us from focusing so strongly on the Germanic settlers who would soon violate Roman frontiers. We can read texts without reading into them our own expectations that the barbarians are coming and that they are going to stay. Related to this, I think it makes teleological readings of the Roman mind a bit less of a hazard.

Rather than frontiers decreasing in importance in the later Roman Empire, heightened news about them solidified them as a major topic of discussion and a major indicator of the coherence of the Empire. Frontiers were important in the later Roman worldview as a result of the news that proliferated about them. Even as political boundaries of the empire shifted or even collapsed, the frontier consciousness reached its zenith. Rumor can fly anytime, but, as Hegel's famous adage goes, "The owl of Minerva flies only at dusk."

PART 3

Pagans, Christians, and Frontiers

6

Prophecy, Divination, and Frontiers

❧ ❧ ❧

> For without altering the boundaries of the empire [*imperii finibus*], Jesus Christ has proved himself able to drive [Terminus et al.] not only from their temples, but from the hearts of their worshippers.
>
> —St. Augustine, *City of God* 4.29

Such triumphalist language is typical of fourth- and early-fifth-century Christian writing. Christianity had defeated its foes and revealed to pagan and Christian alike the emptiness of classical pagan culture. To take Christian sources at face value, the overthrow is complete. Even Terminus, the Roman god of boundaries, has been driven from his position as establisher and maintainer of Roman boundaries and frontiers.[1] In the context of speaking about a shifting eastern frontier, Augustine further challenges his audience: "It was thus signified, they say, that the people of Mars, that is the Roman people, would never surrender to anyone a place which they held; also that no one would disturb the Roman boundaries, on account of the god Terminus."[2] As Augustine goes on to reveal that the eastern frontier in fact had been altered on several occasions throughout Roman history, the meaning of his polemic is clear. Terminus was not supposed to yield even to Jupiter, yet Terminus had yielded, and not to the *gentes externae* but, in effect, to Hadrian and, more recently, to Julian and Jovian. The reversal of Terminus' role in Augustine's rhetoric—Terminus should have yielded only to Persians

or Germans, not Roman emperors—further underscores the foolhardiness of the pagans. Augustine's choice of the frontier as a site of the glorious battle between Christ and the classical gods is one of many ways he portrays the poverty of the pagan system.

The victory of Christianity complete, the classical world, "rustling with the presence of many divine beings," was now "under new management," to borrow metaphors from P. Brown.[3] The loss of the pagan gods, of course, did not make the Roman world any less "holy." The extent to which the loss challenged or altered existing worldviews is a bit more difficult to discern. Augustine's rhetoric aside, worldviews are not so simple to dispose of, even as some external religious trappings might be. This interaction between pagan and Christian, two thought worlds, is one of enduring interest.[4] Few historians now see Christianization as a one-way triumph such as that which supposedly drove Terminus from his sacred position. Explanations of what did happen when pagan and Christian worldviews met tend now to be more complex—and more interesting.

Analyses of the interaction of paganism and Christianity have differed considerably. It might help to visit, briefly, recent developments in order to situate this project's treatment of the categories of "pagan" and "Christian" as well as the concept of Christianization. Until fairly recently, many historians have followed the enthusiasm of the Christian witnesses in imagining a "Grand Event" in which Christianity drove out all viable vestiges of paganism from the late Roman world. Such accounts essentially affirm the rhetoric expressed by Christian writers of the fourth century and beyond. They also place a particular emphasis on the growing corpus of antipagan legislation that proliferated from the late fourth century onward. Others have simply taken the message of pagans at face value as well. The historiographical distortions have been manifold because the opposite sides of debate often agree in exaggerating the extent of Christianity's victory. Pagans can just as well overstate the victory in their morose dejection—they conveyed only scarce and weak bits of paganism clinging stalwartly to classical institutions after the Christian onslaught.[5]

Such pagans often presented themselves as a dying breed, nostalgically contemplating the "good old days" when they could have encountered other living, breathing pagans. One of many such pagans, a North African senator and correspondent of Augustine, sees his late-fourth-century world as devoid of coreligionists. Volusianus looks back wistfully at the good old days when he could have dined and discoursed with pagan friends; now he encounters them only in books.[6] The motives behind both of these ancient pictures are, in retrospect, fairly obvious—Christians exaggerating their victory and pagans exaggerating their woes.

Recent writers have tried to see through the imagined drastic and distinct boundary separating the two. Such works have highlighted the accommodations of these two thought worlds. R. MacMullen, for example, recently extended his long-term quest to explain Christianization by arguing that Christianity gradually embraced paganism and incorporated it. The battle metaphor used by pagan and Christian writers to describe this conflict conceals, in MacMullen's view, a long-term accommodation behind the scenes, as one thought system achieved its final conquest by gradually incorporating the other.[7] But how did this accommodation play out at the peripheries, the frontiers of the empire? Was there anything to the "defeat" of Terminus except a rhetorical trope concocted by a converted rhetorician?

Christianity was a vital intellectual and cultural force that did play a significant part in the changing thought world of Late Antiquity. This is not to say that all intellectual and cultural changes of Late Antiquity must be traced to Christianization. In fact, a general popularization of belief shaped the way pagans and Christians alike viewed their world. But Christianity approached perennial classical questions with some decidedly new, if multifaceted or even contradictory, answers. Christians, intentionally or not, answered these questions using established, classical methods. But at the same time, they proposed a new textual authority for intellectual culture, a new soteriological and eschatological meaning to life and history, a modified cosmology, and even new perspectives on geography and topography. In each of these ways, Christianity would reconstruct old structures, albeit on classical foundations.

And all of these structures contributed to Roman thinking on frontiers. For example, prophecy and panegyric, two of the major media of Late Antiquity, have long classical histories in terms of form and content. In a Christian context, however, the old forms are imbued with new content and meaning. The resulting configurations would have been, at some levels, foreign to the pagan mind. The question of belief in the worldview of the ancients is, of course, crucial to late Roman frontier consciousness. Christianity and paganism, comparatively, related to that consciousness. Did Christianization, however construed, cause a change in the way the Romans viewed or imagined their imperial frontiers?

The few variables used to test this question give hints to both change and continuity in Roman frontier consciousness. First, pagan and Christian prophecies and divination involving frontiers, in attempting to make sense of the present moment vis à vis a divine plan and to relay that sense to others, provide a crucial window into Roman worldviews. As media of mass communication, prophecy and divination provide news that is open to interpretation and

is often limited by historical factors surrounding its proliferation. At times, Romans viewed the placement or stability of frontiers as historical and tangible indicators of the stability of the empire, if not the cosmos itself.

Second, Christians and pagans alike saw the hand of God (or gods) actively engaged at their frontiers. The formats for communicating divine activity reveal much about frontier consciousness because they demonstrate that military might was hardly imagined as the sole defender of frontiers.

Finally, the ideology of a universal empire influenced and/or reflected Roman thinking about frontiers. Constantine himself was well aware of fellow Christians beyond his frontiers, even as he championed the ideology of a universal empire. How did the ideology of a universal Christian empire, beginning with Constantine, relate to the age-old ideology of world mastery, *imperium sine fine*?

Working within long-standing Near Eastern and Mediterranean thought structures, the Romans relied on prophecy or related phenomena such as oracles, portents, and later apocalypses, particularly at times of intense threat or instability.[8] By means of these phenomena, Romans were able to interpret their present moment or period of crisis, often reading the will or mind of divinity into history. In Late Antiquity, making sense of the present and past by means of the future became increasingly prevalent.[9] As D. Potter has put it, "prophecies could describe and validate current conditions—the current state of affairs as part of a divine plan."[10]

The relationship between prophetic elements and the frontiers is fairly clear in available sources, giving us clues about frontier consciousness. Prophecies, portents, and the like often dealt with the violation of frontier zones or the disastrous price of doing so. Historical circumstances served as indicators of problems or of the will or anger of deity. In effect, the frontier became a tangible site for prophetic speculation.

Pagans and Christians alike relied on prophecy as they sought to understand their place in the world. Moments of prophetic insight thus give clues to generally held beliefs. As such, prophecy is useful for understanding Roman thought even outside of the context of crisis. Prophecy can make explicit what Romans held implicitly. It can also show us Romans responding to news about problems, both by the format of the communication and in interpretation. A chief virtue of prophecy is its very flexibility in interpretation, reinventing itself as historical circumstances change. Nearly all Roman historians include material on oracles and prophecy; few reject common methods of divination outright, and most use them as legitimate historical proof within certain limits.[11]

One of the key elements of prophecy is cosmological, as it served to connect the present moment with an eternal plan encompassing the whole of the universe. As Potter explains, "prophecy of all sorts enabled people to understand their relationship with the immanent powers of the universe."[12] These glimpses into the perspective of deity can give insight into tacit dimensions of worldview. Reliance on divination often became much more pronounced and probably more central to the worldview of Romans of the late Empire. Historians writing during the late Empire consistently recorded examples of prophetic utterances and/or divination; and they do so even more approvingly than did their early Imperial predecessors.[13] A. Momigliano notes that the intervention of gods as such was once confined in Roman historiography to "digressions and excursuses," the upshot being that they were not central to the historian's real business. Earlier Roman historians, like their modern counterparts, consistently distanced themselves objectively from the miraculous as much as possible. Writers of the later empire, however, began to put religious beliefs and practices at the center of their historiography. The change is apparent both in the pagan and the newly emerging Christian historiography.

The trend was thus to locate divination in a more central place in historical writing. If prophecy and divination formed a crucial part of Late Roman historiography, it was not, then, at the fringes of learned discourse, pagan or Christian. To ultimately understand the meaning and significance of history to the Late Antique person, one could not ignore the perceived role of the gods in historical causation. The trend was part of what Momigliano and MacMullen call a "popularization of belief."[14] Prophecy thus becomes a convenient tool for reading worldview at a time of marked change.

Another key factor in understanding prophecy is to appreciate the assumptions it makes about nature, or Nature. To the late Roman mind, nature was intrinsically related to divinity. In the earlier Empire, many studious, elite Romans sought to study nature in a way hardly or at least only distantly connected to divinity. Pliny, for example, could pursue his naturalism with a view that the gods existed on the outer fringes of earth, generally unconnected with or disinterested in the natural realm. In fact, he mocked beliefs that by rejecting "rational" modes of explanation strove instead to see divinity behind all natural occurrences.[15] Earthquakes and volcanoes (one of which he explored to his own demise) could be understood as phenomena of nature rather than the deliberate actions of the gods. This was not so for the educated elite in the later empire. "Habits of mind discoverable in the empire's elite of Pliny's day, even of Plotinus', were thus overwhelmed and lost among others quite different, more 'popular.' The spectrum of belief lost its sceptical and empirical-thinking extreme."[16]

This retreat from empirical thinking is clearly discernable in Ammianus, for whom prophecy and divination often are connected to observable reality.

> There is an essence of life present within all the elements which, surely because they are eternal bodies, is always in motion between them and everywhere strong in its capacity to indicate future events. When we bring knowledge from various sources to the task of analyzing these elements, this spirit shares with us the gifts of divination. And the powers of natural substances, when men please them with various rituals, bear prophetic words as if along ever flowing streams. The divine being which presides over these powers is called Themis, for she publishes beforehand those decrees fixed by the law of Fate.[17]

This passage reveals, first of all, that the function of prophecy was news communication—in this case, news from divinity. The gods pull together the "eternal elements" while "dispersing a network of communication."[18] They reveal this news through the natural elements. Thus, when Ammianus describes portents, he is giving insight into this divine world, a world that communicates to humans through nature.

This is a foundational element of his worldview, and one no doubt shared by many of his fellow Romans. Unlike Pliny, Ammianus argues that only "silly commoners [*vanities plebeia*]" can possibly doubt, in their ignorance, that the gods are actively revealing themselves through prophetic signs in nature.[19] In a sense, learned culture has reversed its early imperial stance here. At one time, the *vanities plebeia* would have been those who looked for divine explanations for everything.

Ammianus defends his views against skeptics as well. Against accusations that prophecies have been wrong in the past, Ammianus appeals to the "exception that proves the rule" argument: grammarians sometimes speak ungrammatically, and even musicians sometimes play out of tune. He then quotes Cicero to show that incorrectness comes from faults in interpretation rather than faults with the gods. Ammianus points to the pronouncement of the Sibyls as "the means of knowing the future; and courses of action, what will happen." Such sibylline pronouncements extended to keeping emperors within their own frontiers.[20]

St. Augustine likewise discusses frontiers while connecting nature and divinity. In spite of polemical language, he reveals a worldview similar to that of Ammianus. Augustine claims that the "more intelligent and responsible Romans"[21] saw the weakness of Terminus and especially the vanity of the "augur" when he yielded to Roman emperors. Augustine rebukes those, even

Christians, who, unable to resist the customs of the day, still offered up their worship to Nature. But Nature, he implies, now lies instead under the rule and governance of the one true God. The *termini* of the empire were related to nature—and the crucial mistake of Julian and his type is that they had developed nature worship as a religion rather than submitting to the Almighty God. It is this connection that makes frontiers relevant to prophecy and all types of divination.

Such analyses of prophecy have been made for other historical contexts. In a study of prophecy in Renaissance Italy, O. Niccoli argues that prophecy constituted a "unifying sign" connecting nature to religion and religion to politics.[22] A key point in her argument is that prophecy can connect the natural order and even geography to the religious and political orders. Particularly, prophecy can be linked to political stability in very specific times of perceived crisis. Furthermore, prophecy links a divinely controlled nature, however construed, to the events of the day. It reveals the ways in which people viewed the integral connection between their own world and nature itself. "Boundariness" was a part of the natural order and so related to the control of divinity over the cosmos. Late Roman prophecy likewise connected nature to religion. To disturb, violate, or even cross frontiers at the wrong moment was to disturb the cosmic order.

In a medieval context, R. Lerner traces mentalities revealed by medieval prophecies. Unlike Niccoli, who studies the moment of a novel prophecy as a reflection of contemporary concerns, Lerner looks at persistencies expressed in one prophecy as it transformed over time. Lerner's work exhibits the possibilities of prophecies as a rich source of information that reveals some "deeply imprinted mental patterns."[23]

Prophetic utterances did not just serve as divine media for relaying messages from God or the gods. Prophesies also served as a human media, connecting individuals with information. As such, it was one of the important communication tools in the late Roman world. It had the advantage of being able to report on sensitive political events in a less direct and thus less incriminating and dangerous way. It could relay news that might not otherwise have seen the light of day. Potter has noted in his studies of the phenomenon of prophecy that the importance of oracular books "stems from the fact that they provided a format for the communication of difficult, interesting, and, at times, dangerous ideas in such a way that people who lived in a world where the constant intervention of divine powers was taken as a fact of life could relate to them." Prophetic books and commentaries served a significant and sometimes vital task of communicating news as well as providing a consistent format for the interpretation of present events within larger patterns or

schemes.[24] At other times, prophesies could be used to interpret current events with reference to long-term perceived realities. Prophecy could refer to events or historical arrangements long anticipated or assumed in an effort to ground a certain piece of news in the historical consciousness of the receptors.[25] As sociologist D. McQuail has argued, a key element of effective media is that it corresponds to rather than challenges the realities of a given society.[26]

Prophecy was caught up in the general shift in modes and methods of communication in Late Antiquity. Political, cultural, and intellectual changes from the mid-third century onward put prophecy to the fore as a mode of communication. In the later Empire, a more popular media format came to predominate across the board. Part of this shift was due to the rise in status of a nonsenatorial military elite over the traditional landed aristocracy, a shift that affected even ways of communicating. "Modes of popular communication replaced at every level the more literary, philosophical debates about freedom and political rights which, within a much narrower milieu, had characterized these relations in the early empire."[27] Military news and news about frontiers assumed a new format, appearing more often in prophetic texts of a popular nature or referring to prophetic texts in getting their messages across.

The question of the audience for the prophecies is an intriguing one as well. Who was actually reading or hearing these prophecies? At best, probably not much more than 10 percent of the Roman population could read, by recent estimations.[28] However, this number does not mean that the majority of the inhabitants of the Empire were completely untouched by the elite circle of the literate. The Roman Empire was an "empire of the written word," and the influence of that written word was felt far outside of the ranks of the literate 10 percent.[29] Furthermore, with the intellectual distinctions between the elite modes of communication and others being eroded with the aforementioned popularizing of belief, the notion that prophecies mattered only to a small circle is untenable and unlikely.

Sibyls and Oracles

Oracles had long played a critical role of self-definition and reassurance in the classical world. By the late Empire, they were more prevalent among the Greek-speaking areas of the Empire, a testimony to a strong continuity of a "native" Greek tradition.[30] By the third century, a veritable "industry grew up in oracles."[31] In the fourth century, the emperor Julian even directly connected the existence and action of the Sibyls to the formation and maintenance of the empire itself; they "made it easier for the world to be governed by Romans."[32] Official sibylline books continued to be consulted well after

Constantine.[33] Ammianus records that the books were consulted in 363 at the order of Julian. They revealed, incidentally, that "the emperor must not that year leave his frontiers,"[34] suggesting the fate of one who would violate frontier zones. A loose collection of the sibylline pronouncements, of which fourteen survive, played a crucial role in interpreting and disseminating information at moments of crisis, when news was craved.

The long history of copying out, modifying, and inventing things sibylline continues well into the "Christian Empire," under the auspices of Christians and Jews.[35] Pagans, such as the emperor Julian, knew that the sibylline books were still around and where to find them, but even Christians were working with them as well, albeit in a different way. A series of the books was revised by Christian and/or Jewish writers to take account of history as it unfolded, specifically in relation to biblical prophecy. Current events were read into biblical texts and presented in a sibylline format.

The interaction between pagan and Christian thought on the oracles provides a fascinating window into Late Antique thought. Although opinion was divided, many Christian writers were eager to use pagan oracles to "prove" the truth and superiority of Christianity.[36] Especially with the development of the apologetic tradition, the sibylline oracles, even those not edited by Jewish or Christian thinkers, became a ready repository of polemical material. The church fathers often embraced their use, so long as they established the truth of Christianity.[37] Lactantius, a strong Christian polemicists, puts this type of defense succinctly.

> Since all these things are true and certain, foretold by the harmonious prediction of the prophets, since Trismegistus, Hystaspes and the Sibyl all uttered the same things, it is impossible to doubt that hope of all life and salvation resides in the one religion of God.[38]

St. Augustine even defends the Erythraen Sibyl who "wrote some things concerning Christ which are quite manifest." He claims that she actually speaks against the worship of false gods; as such, "we might even think she ought to be reckoned among those who belong to the city of God."[39] Other collections of prophetic pronouncements proliferated as well, suggesting a strong and unbroken continuity of prophetic thought into Late Antiquity and beyond.[40]

The defense of the Sibyls was voiced most strongly in Late Antiquity by pagans. Zosimus, a stalwart pagan, gives stories of divination throughout his history—so much so that most recent evaluations of him as a historian have been somewhat unjustly negative.[41] Earlier analyses of Zosimus downplayed religious aspects. Divine intervention was alive and well as a belief in Zosimus'

own day, although the intensity of stories had died down, "because our generation has rejected belief in any divine benevolence." In one reference to the sibylline oracle, Zosimus gives a decidedly pagan view of a failing empire. He quotes the Sibyl to prove that as long as Rome maintained a certain pagan ceremony, the "Empire was safe and Rome remained in control of virtually all of the inhabited world."[42]

For pagans as well as many Christians, the solvency of the Roman world required a relationship with deity. Fourth-century Christian writers in particular made this connection explicit, Eusebius foremost among them. The culmination of Eusebius' thought on this occurs in book 10 of his *Ecclesiastical History*. The last chapter crescendoes into a proclamation of how Constantine's rule has brought an abundance of blessings to the Roman Empire. St. Augustine dismisses these notions throughout his *City of God* as simplistic but nonetheless sees a great deal of significance in weakened frontiers.

During the later Roman Empire especially, the connection of divinity and imperial stability was, moreover, directly related to the Roman frontiers. In one of his more famous passages, Zosimus accuses Constantine, the desecrater of "his ancestral religion," of creating a specific frontier policy that weakened and eventually destroyed the Roman frontiers.

> And Constantine did something else which gave the barbarians unhindered access to the Roman empire. By the forethought of Diocletian, the frontiers of the empire everywhere were covered, as I have stated, with cities, garrisons and fortifications which housed the whole army. Consequently it was impossible for the barbarians to cross the frontier because they were confronted at every point by forces capable of resisting their attacks. Constantine destroyed this security by removing most of the troops from the frontiers and stationing them in cities which did not need assistance, thus both stripping of protection those being molested by the barbarians and subjecting the cities left alone by them to the outrages of the soldiers, so that thenceforth most have become deserted. Moreover, he enervated the troops by allowing them to devote themselves to shows and luxuries. In plain terms, Constantine was the origin and beginning of the present destruction of the empire.[43]

I quote this passage at length not to enter the familiar and heated debates over Constantine's versus Diocletian's frontier policies but rather to highlight that, in Zosimus' mind, the will of the gods, revealed specifically through sibylline prophecy, determined the outcome of political and military decisions.

Constantine's "failure" as a military strategist, according to the whole of Zosimus' account, cannot be separated from the prophesied wrath of the gods, who played out their fated anger at his crucial frontier zones; Constantine's "frontier policies" were part of the gods' vengeance. The statement that Constantine's frontier policies were "the origin of the destruction of the empire" should be read in light of the Sibyl's proclamation—a specific indication of divine wrath. The solvency of the empire, especially its crucial frontiers, is here strongly connected to pagan ceremony. To ignore this aspect is to miss a valuable connection between frontiers and divinity. By his conversion to Christianity, Constantine, to Zosimus' mind, destroyed the pagan ceremony that put the gods in favor of the Roman project. His "frontier policies" and their subsequent failures were a tangible way of enacting and/or making concrete sense of his violation of the will of the gods, clearly revealed through prophecy. Thus, problems at the frontiers became the means by which the gods would visit the Roman world with calamities and destruction.

Portents and Prodigies

Portents and prodigies, found in many writings from the premodern world, are a conspicuous feature in the works of Ammianus, Zosimus, and Libanius as well as Christian writers. Within the Roman Empire, they are more characteristically an indigenous Roman tradition, as opposed to Sibyls and oracles, which tended to be more Greek. Ammianus writes as a Roman, showing much more propensity toward portents and prodigies than toward oracles. Like other types of divination, these also reveal a connection between nature and divinity.[44] Divine judgment could be read into physical occurrences or events, particularly those that went against the normal patterns or cycles of nature. Their "occurrence signified to the Roman mind a rupture of the *pax deorum*."[45] Often, portents were visible signs that indicated the future. Although often interchangeable with *portent* (*portentium*), a more ambivalent concept, the term *prodigy* (*prodigium*) specifically indicates divine wrath.

Portents have long been recognized, for various periods, as a venue for studying how anxieties and stresses register within a populace. During the Roman Republic, portents were signs of internal problems, and their occurrence naturally intensified around periods of crisis. Reportage of portents had died down during the late Republic, though, and had become relatively rare by the first century B.C. Thereafter they appear during the early and high Empire solely at moments of intense crisis, such as in A.D. 69, the so-called Year of the Four Emperors.[46] The problems of the later Empire provoked,

it seems, a reassertion of the prodigy as a mode of divine communication. While modern historians have long disagreed on whether primarily to read portents as signs of imperial control (subtle or not-so-subtle messages being sent out by the central government) or of hysteria in the Roman populace, the portents recorded for the later Empire are a bit more difficult to interpret in terms of the former.[47]

At one time in Roman historical writing, portents were more often than not confined to "digressions and excursuses," almost as curiosity pieces, far from the central concern of early and high Imperial historians, designed often to demonstrate the author's literary or stylistic elements.[48] This is not to deny that Tacitus, Suetonius, and Plutarch were religiously minded but rather to affirm that they imagined practical limits in their observations of things historical.

There is a distinct change in late Roman writings, revealing late Roman worldview. Failure to acknowledge this shift has caused many to overlook the centrality of portents to later Roman historical writings. Historians like Ammianus were more reluctant to "draw a sharp distinction between religion and superstition," *religio* and *superstitio*.[49] At one time, more skeptical historians would have imagined a rather clear demarcation between these two. Ammianus has already been shown to have put full stock in miraculous and portentous elements, even those of a popular nature.[50] In one particular episode, he reveals much about Roman frontier consciousness in a way that is completely missed if he were read as one would read Tacitus, for example. The contestation of the late Roman frontiers provides just such an opportunity for the prodigy to reemerge in the historiography. This particular episode is worth exploring at length.

In A.D. 363, Jovian was traveling back from his disastrous concession of Nisibis and other eastern frontier cities. As the newly proclaimed emperor made his way toward Ancyra, Antioch witnessed a series of prodigies. Ammianus, not the only Roman to speak of divine signs following from this ill-fated campaign, records that, "for successive days," these prodigies seemed to indicate "the wrath of divinity."[51] Among generic signs such as creaking beams in a council hall and comets "in broad daylight," one stands out for its specificity: "The statue of the Caesar Maximianus [Galerius], which is located in the vestibule of the palace, suddenly lost the brazen ball, in the form of a sphere of heaven it was holding."[52] All these prodigies seem to have followed, in Ammianus' presentation, from Jovian's abandonment of "the barrier [*murus*] of the provinces whose bulwarks had remained unharmed even from earliest times."[53] The statue prodigy in particular holds potential insight into Late Antique frontier consciousness. Statues of emperors had long been

treated as objects of fear and veneration.[54] In this brief communication, then, Ammianus reveals a late Roman worldview, gives hints of a prevalent Roman cosmology, and imparts news about the importance of frontiers from any perspective, even that of the great beyond.

Ammianus is, moreover, communicating news to his audience, news relating to a shifting eastern frontier. The relaying of such portents points again to the ways in which the whole of the cosmos was seen as interrelated, the natural visible world as well as the invisible.[55] His narration of the Nisibis episode gives subtle hints of this "cosmic" and celestial dimension to Roman frontiers. Ammianus implies that even as the bronze sphere, symbolic of a stable cosmos and universal dominion, fell from Galerius' steady hand, so the order that he had established during his campaign of 298 on the eastern frontier was now overturned. Jovian's withdrawal from frontier cities such as Nisibis upset an order once established through the Caesar Galerius—a political order, yet inseparable from the cosmic order, as the globe prodigy suggests.

It is also crucial to Ammianus' prodigy passage that the statue is of Galerius. Sprinkled throughout Ammianus' narrative of the disastrous Persian campaign of 363 are references to the successful campaigns of Galerius beyond Rome's eastern frontier sixty-five years earlier. Many of these references throughout the *Res Gestae* and elsewhere contrast Galerius' successful campaign and the disastrous one now facing the Romans.[56] Galerius was the one who, according to Ammianus and others, defended against the attack of the Persian king Narses, the "first" to make an "inroad into Armenia, a country under Roman jurisdiction." This same Persian king "forgot that destruction was portended to the one who invades another's dominions."[57] In many other passages, Galerius is further directly connected to frontier maintenance, defense, or expansion.[58] He was responsible for the reestablishment of the Roman *limes* beyond the Tigris and the creation of the five *gentes* across the Tigris.[59]

Galerius thus officially had established the Roman frontier at the Tigris. The importance of his action is reflected in the fact that his treaty "defined Roman-Persian relations for the next 60 years."[60] Galerius is applauded for "trampling the bows and quivers of the Persians beneath [his] feet." In a famous panegyric, an orator praises Galerius by presumably pointing to a map of some sort and saying, "now, now at last it is a delight to see a picture of the world, since we see nothing in it which is not ours."[61] This all-encompassing Roman world, *sine fine*, had now been overturned by the death of Julian and the surrender of eastern frontier cities by Jovian. Thus the significance of the sphere falling from the hands of Galerius' statue.[62]

Fig. 10. Standing emperor (Valentinian?) with globe. (Courtesy of Richard Delbrueck, *Spätantike Kaiserporträts von Constantinus Magnus bis zum Ende des Westreichs* [Berlin: Verlag von Walter de Gruyter, 1933].)

Ammianus, in the same context, records a set of prodigies that not only further connects the campaigns of Galerius and Julian but also underscores the cosmic dimension of Roman frontiers. Ammianus reveals that the series of calamities had been foreshadowed by omens and portents. For example, as Julian was on his way to Dura, a frontier town (deserted at this time, Ammianus tells us), the emperor met a troop of soldiers who presented him with a "lion of immense size." The soldiers related how they had killed the beast when it attacked their line. Julian interpreted the omen to mean that he would kill the Persian king—"for the death of a king was foretold." Making a direct comparison to the famous Delphic oracle that told Croesus that he "would overthrow a mighty kingdom," Ammianus tells how Julian misread the prodigy; for, in fact, Julian was the lion who was pierced with arrows.[63]

In another instance, in spite of the direct and persistent warnings of Etruscan diviners to call off the campaign to avoid "invading another's territory," the campaign continued. Others, meanwhile, provided Julian with a different interpretation of the prodigy, arguing that in the earlier campaign, Galerius was just about to attack Narses when a lion and a large boar were delivered to him in the same manner as Julian had received the lion. They argued that Galerius had come back safely and had in fact "made an inroad into Persian territory." A group of "philosophers," Ammianus records, denied that, in Julian's case "the portent threatened destruction to the invader of another's territory." Here one may detect in Ammianus' tone a dislike for these types, who were opposed to popular divination. A further lightning prodigy was also misinterpreted and ignored, and the campaign continued.[64]

Libanius, an Antiochene rhetorician and perhaps even the teacher of Ammianus, likewise records prodigies during the eastern campaign. He connects events surrounding the death of Julian and the subsequent redrawing of the eastern frontier—Earth (Terra) sent earthquakes and the like to show that Fate had begun afflicting the Roman Empire. Even before the death of Julian, the famous earthquakes of 363 were portents of the disaster of Julian's death, according to Libanius.[65]

Another form of portent was the birth at critical historical moments of misshapen humans or animals.[66] Ammianus records one such prodigy, from a few years before Julian's expedition.

> At that same time in Daphne, that charming and magnificent suburb of Antioch, a portent was born, horrible to see and to report: an infant, namely, with two heads, two sets of teeth, a beard, four eyes and two very small ears; and this misshapen birth foretold that the state was turning into a deformed condition. Portents of this kind often see

> the light, as indicators of the outcome of various affairs; but as they are not expiated by public rites, as they were in the time of our forefathers, they pass by unheard of and unknown.[67]

It is difficult to interpret such a revelation as pure metaphor, for the shape of the empire was changing for the worse, according to Ammianus and others. There is a strong connection between the misshapen infant and the shrinking state. To Ammianus, anyway, Christianity had brought about a change in the culture of portents. Perhaps he overstates. Portents did continue to be observed, but Ammianus' statement does coincide with a reduction of their number in available sources.

The Christian approach to portents could differ little from the pagan in substance despite differing in form. References to portents decrease somewhat with Christian writings, yet when such references do appear, they exhibit some of the same characteristics. Toward the end of antiquity in Anatolia, the *vita* of St. Theodore of Sykeon (fl. mid-sixth century) records an episode in which a procession became troubled by portentous signs.

> While the folk of the towns and villages round about went in procession singing their litanies the little crosses that they carried in the procession began to jump about and make a rattle; it was a terrible and piteous sight to see.

When immediately asked for an explanation, Theodore responds, "Pray, my children, since great afflictions and disasters are threatening the world." When begged later by the local patriarch what those might be, Theodore blends in his explanation apostasy from the faith, inroads of barbarians, captivity, the destruction of churches, "the fall and perturbation of the Empire and perplexity and critical times for the State," and even the "coming of the Adversary."[68] The threat to frontiers, just as much as the desecration of churches, was tantamount to a threat to the cosmic order in this view. Again, nature, natural order, religion, and the divine order of the cosmos are all blended together by the portent itself, which constitutes "a unifying sign connecting nature to religion and religion to politics."[69]

The decline in references to portents in Christian writings reveals a definite shift in focus and energies for communicating news through divine channels. This was not a real transition in frontier consciousness so much as a shift in format of communicating news. Much of the energy of interpreting Christian portents seems to have gone into apocalyptic, a media format initially foreign to the classical Roman mind.

Biblical Prophecies

In a Christian context, another prevalent way of making sense of the current circumstances was to interpret them in light of biblical prophecies. Many writers used current news and information, especially from the peripheries, to make sense of biblical prophecies, and vice versa. The Hebrew and Christian Scriptures gradually came to be seen as a ready repository of prophecies to be mined for answers to current problems or outstanding questions. The transition from a pagan to a Christian basis for interpreting the various types of prophecies is a fascinating one. And the threats to frontiers from the third century onward provided just the type of current problem to inspire age-old prophetic imaginings, now imbued with eschatological meaning.[70]

One perennial favorite was the reference to Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38:14–15. Ezekiel had prophesied that "Gog" would come out of the north "riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army." The third century crisis and invasions (coupled with a bit of folk etymology) clearly convinced some Romans that the Goths, who consistently challenged frontier zones in the north and east, were, in fact, "Gog." Connecting Gog—as Goth—with other prophecies in Ezekiel and Daniel in a long mystical poem, Commodianus, probably in the late third century, predicted the complete annihilation of the Empire in the seventh year of the emperors Valerian and Gallienus.[71] Roman imperialism was waning, and with its passing was coming what Christ predicted as the "abomination of desolations spoken of by Daniel the Prophet."[72] And the frontiers were an indicator, ready at hand, for reading the dissolution of the cosmos.

Many fourth-century writers continued to make this same type of connection. St. Ambrose, responding to the Battle of Adrianople, quotes Ezekiel 38 in the midst of an exposition written in the winter of 378–9—"For Ezechiel already prophesied in that time both our future destruction and the wars of the Goths. . . . That wretched Gog is the Goth whom we now see to have come forth."[73] St. Augustine criticizes such explicit connections of history to scriptural prophecy in his exposition on Gog and Magog in the *City of God:* "For these nations which he names Gog and Magog are not to be understood of some barbarous nations in some part of the world, whether the Getae [Goths] or the Massagetae, as some conclude from the initial letters, or some foreign nations not under the Roman government."[74] His reference here suggests that this identification was prevalent among Christians of his day. St. Jerome likewise objected to such a specific eschatology, again showing that he was opposing a popular viewpoint.[75] That Augustine and Jerome were not ultimately successful in eliminating this connection is demonstrated by

the ethnography of Isidore of Seville's "Historia Gothorum," which continues to pass it on.[76] The "fulfillment" of the Gog and Magog prophecy continued on into the following centuries as Huns, Alans, Khazars, Magyars, Turks, and Mongols all took their turn playing the prophesied part.[77]

Apocalypticism

The tradition of apocalyptic literature began in the Near East well before the Roman period and culminated in Judaic literature, especially of the Hellenistic and diaspora periods.[78] Apocalyptic literature explores God's dealings within history, particularly as he brings about the end or consummation of the age, and as such it has had a decided impact on Christian historical thought. There are no Roman or Greek pagan parallels in form to apocalyptic, although the content and message can at times reflect age-old classical themes connecting deity to human history.[79] J. J. Collins, a leading scholar of apocalypticism, provides the following definition:

> a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.[80]

Common features of Jewish and Christian apocalyptic writing include a claim to be esoteric, with its substance revealed to a noteworthy person from the Jewish past, such as Enoch or Elijah; pseudonymity; the use of Old Testament or, increasingly among Christian writers, New Testament prophetic literature as its base; and a concern with the end or consummation of history.[81]

Apocalyptic literature assumed a definite plan to history that would culminate in the telos—the end or suspension of the present cosmos and the establishment of the eternal kingdom of the Messiah.[82] It also presented its "prophecies" *ex eventu,* "predicting" events that had already happened from the standpoint of one seeing future visions of them, often from a celestial or planetary vantage point. Classical pagan theories of history did not ascribe such an all-encompassing, realizable plan to the diverse will of the gods.[83]

Problems along the eastern frontier during the third century aroused apocalyptic imaginations or at least expressions. In many historical contexts, apocalypticism has arisen when a political entity is threatened; issues of territoriality or threats to claims on space form a critical part of this discourse. Real or perceived threats to imperial and community stability inspired Christians and

Jews to make sense of them in terms of their own eschatological systems.[84] Apocalypticism thrives in times of perceived crisis because it offers a decided resolution. "Apocalyptic is literature of despair. . . . [W]ith equal appropriateness it can be described as a literature of hope. God would vindicate his people once and for all and bring to its consummation his purpose and plan for all the ages."[85] During the third century, Christians clearly detailed their views of political crisis. In response to political and social upheaval, some Christians saw universal chaos and the impending suspension of the cosmos that many thought would precede the establishment of an eternal kingdom. This Christian response to disaster news was channeled in specific directions with apocalyptic literature. In substance and content, the Christian response differed little from the pagan, although it did in form.[86]

Much of these apocalyptic associations with the Roman eastern frontier borrow images directly from Revelation of St. John (The Apocalypse) and apocalyptic references in the Gospels (especially St. Matthew) as well as the Old Testament books of Daniel and Ezekiel and intertestamental Jewish apocalyptic literature. They increase, not surprisingly, during the infamous third century and reveal how Christian minds, heavily steeped in Judaic thought, encountered historical problems and disasters. Apocalypticism worked well in the cultural context of Late Antiquity because it helped make sense of rapid change. In the context of perceived catastrophe, it captured the spirit of the age and helped express deeply entrenched worldviews, giving crucial insight into the Christian mind of the Late Antique world. Its primary concern is the end of history, the time when ultimately the righteous would be vindicated and the wicked judged. This moment imparts meaning to the historical events it describes or explains. Meaning in history, then, comes from an understanding of the telos and the human's relationship to it. Although apocalypticism often reacts at some level to success or failure of the ubiquitous military campaigns, it points out, again, that the military/political world and the divine cosmos past, present, and future are part of an inseparable continuum. Hippolytus of Rome (ca. 170–236) was one of the first extrabiblical writers to directly relate the Roman Empire to visions in apocalyptic literature. He ties the Roman Empire into one of the visions recorded in the Old Testament book of Daniel, attempting to explain the decline of the Empire.[87]

One of the earliest systems of Roman apocalyptic thought appears in the writings of St. Cyprian. Writing from Carthage, far from any frontiers endangered in the mid-third century, he saw the challenge to and collapse of certain frontiers as a sign of apocalyptic catastrophe.[88] Much of his apocalyptic speculation is inspired by news coming from frontiers. His surviving letters provide insight into his news-gathering methods. For example, in the

mid-third century, he had gathered news on Decius' defeat by the Goths on the northern frontier as well as some secret orders for persecution by the emperor Valerian—the latter he knew about even before the provincial governor, he implies.[89] To Cyprian, the moment of Gothic invasions in the north was a sure sign of catastrophe and cataclysm. News from distant frontiers could be constructed as apocalyptic indicators, and apocalypse signaled the suspension of cosmos, a distinct element of worldview. Apocalyptic thought was behind both the reception and dissemination of disaster news. Current news demonstrated all too clearly that the world "has begun to fail"; in fact, it was "already in decline and at its end."[90]

In one treatise to a Roman official, Cyprian reflects that one does not even need to point to the "oft-repeated vengeances in behalf of the worshippers of God"; recent news shows the impending end of the world. News of a "recent event" is enough to reveal a host of problems, including a "decrease of forts."[91] The anger of God, in effect, was behind the problems of the state, even the decline of frontier defense. In a series of his letters, Cyprian specifically ties together the defeat of Decius, a dying earth, famine, barren fields, a lack of rain, and the imminent end of the world. Although his letters include details of problems at the center and not just the peripheries, news of problems on distant Roman frontiers could portend, in part, the end of the Roman Empire and with it the end of the world.[92]

Cyprian's own eschatological views vacillated over his tenure as bishop of Carthage—at times the telos was imminent and thus apocalyptic; at times it was far off and more gradual.[93] However, he consistently interpreted news, ever changing, in terms of his own view of the decaying or ending cosmos. The crucial point of contact between the cosmos and the forces of disruption was the Roman frontier. To a Roman mind, this demarcated the civilized Roman from the uncivilized barbarian. A full-fledged Roman, Cyprian accepted tout court the classical perception of the Other.

Later problems and disasters continued to provoke apocalyptic imaginations. One such key moment was the battle of Adrianople in 378. About a decade after the infamous battle, St. Ambrose used the apocalyptic passage in Luke (21:9) to suggest that not only was the end of the Roman Empire coming quickly but so was the end of the world itself. His exposition also echoes apocalyptic passages in the Gospels of Matthew (24:6) and Mark (13:7):

> None are witnesses to the heavenly words more than we, whom the end of the world has found. Indeed, how great the battles and what rumors of battles have we heard! The Huns rose against the Alans, the Alans against the Goths, the Goths against the Taifals and Sarmatians,

> and the exile of the Goths made us even in Illyricum exiles from our fatherland and there is not yet an end. . . . Therefore, since we are at the end of the age, certain sicknesses of the world must go before us.[94]

Such language occurs elsewhere in Ambrose's writings. In reference to the same event, he notes that "with the whole world having fallen, it is the end of the universe."[95] The barbarian invasions across Roman frontiers are a sign of the coming end. Not all of Ambrose's contemporaries shared such apocalyptic readings of the invasions, but many, no doubt, did.[96]

The invasions of the early fifth century provoked similar reactions and again reveal deeply embedded worldviews. One of the many apocalyptic accounts referring to imperial frontiers is the *Chronicle* of Hydatius, a little-known bishop from Gallaecia in northwestern Spain, who continued a history of the world begun by St. Jerome. Hydatius was not nearly as cautious as Jerome in his eschatology. Hydatius' history, notable for its apocalyptical and eschatological language, refers specifically to the "frontiers of the narrowly-confined Roman Empire that are doomed to collapse."[97] In short, the collapse of the earthly frontiers of the Roman Empire signaled not only the end of its imperial power but also the *consummatio mundi*, the end of the present world itself and the beginning of a new.

Like his Christian brothers of the third century, Hydatius mined the books of Ezekiel and Daniel as well as the Revelation of St. John for up-to-the-minute commentary on that collapse. He points, for example, to four plagues of his day as the fulfillment of Ezekiel 5:17, 14:21, and 33:27–29 and the first four seals in Revelation; the marriage of two prominent barbarian nobles becomes that of the king of the North and daughter of the South mentioned in Revelation 6:8; and the handing over of churches to Arian barbarians as a fulfillment of Daniel 9:27, 11:31, and 12:11.[98] But all of these prophecies are contingent on the collapse and transgression of Roman frontier zones, which to Hydatius set into motion a process that signaled not only the end of Roman Imperial power but ultimately the end of the present world.

Part of apocalypticism's place in the currency of Late Antique ideas can be seen in a series of apocalypses loosely based on Hellenistic and Roman oracles. Two of the most fascinating collections are the revised Sibylline Oracles and the Oracle of Baalbek. The Sibylline Oracles were legitimized in Christian discourse by the writing or rewriting of a series of books, thirteen or fourteen in number, that became known simply as the Sibylline Oracles. Written or rewritten during the third century or later—the textual tradition of the works is extremely tenuous—some of these books present distinctively Christian viewpoints regarding the problems facing the empire. Books 1 and 2, for example,

give a history of the world from Creation to the Last Judgment, and other books provide eschatological explanations of the crisis of the third century and later.[99] The actual form of the sibylline books is difficult if not impossible to ascertain today since they underwent heavy Christian and Jewish emendations and additions during the fourth and fifth centuries. As such, they actually reflect the change in form of worldview even while dealing with the same types of concerns.

These texts were pseudonymous and widely circulating, composed from the perspective of the person on the street.[100] As a format of communication, the sibylline books were crucial for relaying information that was difficult, interesting, and dangerous "in such a way that people who lived in a world where the constant intervention of divine powers was taken as a fact of life could relate to them."[101] Their role as media and as a vehicle of reporting on the frontiers give rare glimpses into the context of center-periphery information interchange in Late Antiquity. An important aspect of apocalyptic is that it tended toward a universal or universalizing language; rulers and peasants alike participated in apocalyptic discourse in understanding the meaning of history.

Furthermore, some of them were written by inhabitants of frontier zones. The Thirteenth Sibylline Oracle, for example—one of the crucial sources for third-century history of the eastern Roman Empire—was written near that frontier. As such, it gives valuable insight into perceptions of the frontier from the periphery.

As media of news, the Sibylline Oracles also give helpful insight. They were continually revised and circulated in response to changing historical circumstances. Thus, in them one can see how new developments shaped the presentation of older historical material. Their textual emendations reflected both changing historical circumstances and audience demand. "Audience reaction and expectation are therefore points of central importance for evaluating the information given by the oracles about historical events."[102]

The content of the oracles was almost limitless, shaped by the events of the times. Potter claims that "the only control on the content of the oracles was the learning of the reading public, and this varied greatly depending on geographic proximity to the location of events, and the chronological relationship of the compilers and the extant texts to the material they included." The occurrences recorded in the Sibylline Oracles thus give clues to the ways that inhabitants of the "Greek world interpreted the messages they were receiving from the central government."[103]

The Oracle of Baalbek was written, presumably, at Heliopolis, and its focus is on the eastern frontier. One of the sites it focuses on is Hierapolis,

located about fifteen miles west of the Euphrates and a crucial frontier city during the Persian Wars of the fourth century and beyond[104] since it served as a gathering point for Roman troops.[105] The oracle's perspective and view is that of an inhabitant of the particularly active eastern frontier zone. Its chief textual scholar, P. J. Alexander, dates the autograph (not extant) between 378 and 390. Alexander claims that it was translated into Latin (from Greek) before 390. Later the text was heavily emended, but most agree that there was a fourth-century text underlying it.[106] As with the Sibylline Books, its content was rewritten or reinterpreted in light of news of changing historical circumstances.[107]

The author of the Oracle of Baalbek focuses on "Romania" and particularly on the "*pars Orientis*." He appears very familiar with "Anatole," which he defines as western and central Asia Minor.[108] As background material, the author uses a variety of apocalyptic literature including the Apocalypse of Elijah, the Apocalypse of John, and the Seventh Vision of Daniel. The oracle gives a rare glimpse of information flow both from Anatolia and points further eastward along the Euphrates. Focusing on Anatolia, the oracle predicts the coming of the Antichrist along with a host of other problems.

Apocalyptic language infuses the Oracle of Baalbek's explanations of the invasions from the East. For example, echoing concepts from the Revelation of St. John 14:19–20 ("And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles"), the oracle records, "And there will be much shedding of blood, so that the blood will reach the chest of horses . . . and they will capture and set on fire the cities and despoil the east."[109]

Some of this material could well have been borrowed from the Revelation of St. John via other writings as well. The Third Sibylline Oracle, for example, also records blood reaching a certain height on a horse during such a siege. Other Jewish apocalyptic writings contain comparable images.[110] Also, the Baalbek formula, "Woe to women with child and to those who suckle [their babes] in those days!" is borrowed from apocalyptic language of the Gospel of St. Matthew (24:19) to show the problems of the times when the "cities of the East will become deserts."[111]

Apocalyptic language links distinct historical circumstances such as ruined eastern cities with the cosmos, which the apocalypse would suspend or end. In attempting to interpret current circumstances with venerated texts, the oracle reveals much about the thought of the people writing, reading, and hearing these "prophecies." The emphasis on the eastern frontier cities is highlighted here by the way that scriptural passages are decontextualized. The city spoiled in most of the biblical passages is explicitly identified by the biblical writers as

Jerusalem. But readers of the third century and beyond freely read into such passages any frontier city for which they had news of problems and that seemed to fit at the moment.

The theme of civic desecration is important, since eastern cities, to a large degree, were seen as holding together the Roman frontier zone shared with Persia. Recent historians, such as B. Isaac, challenging views that the *limes* roads functioned as the frontier, see these networks of cities as the real setting of the eastern frontier.[112] The topos of civic destruction in the East is almost exclusively linked to the destruction of important frontier cities. One of the apocalyptic signs comes after the destruction of the East, when the people are left asking, "Was there ever a city here?" At this point in the oracle, Enoch and Elijah, familiar figures in Jewish apocalyptic literature because they are recorded as never tasting death, return to herald the coming end. Along with foretelling other calamities, they declare, "The Persians will arise . . . and will overturn with the sword the cities of the East together with the multitudes of the soldiers of the Roman Empire."[113] Looking beyond the scope of this study, conflict at the Persian frontier continued to provoke apocalyptic speculation. The political relationship between Byzantium and Persia at the time of Heraclius (r. 610–41) was likewise read in terms of the Parousia.[114]

The focus of apocalyptic speculation in the East contrasts interestingly with that in North Africa. In the east, cities symbolized cosmos and were the basis of defense and communication. Certain strategic cities were seen as making up the frontier zone, and their loss was etched deeply into Roman memory. The control of them was key to holding the frontier zone. It thus comes as little surprise that the predominant apocalyptic image near this frontier zone is the overthrow or destruction of cities. Their loss, as argued by Augustine, Cyprian, and others far away from the site of action, was tantamount to disaster at the frontier. And that could signal the actual apocalypse or at least the direst of apocalyptic imaginings about the end of the *saeculum* and/or cosmos. In North Africa, conversely, the writings of St. Cyprian suggest that a crucial indicator of apocalypse was a decrease in the number of forts. This view seems to be specifically North African and fits in well with the archaeological situation in North Africa. There, forts and fortlets, rather than cities, made up the frontier.[115] The communication format in each area fits in well with its particular archaeological situation and suggests one way in which the human topography could inform both worldview and news.

7

Divine Protection of Frontiers

The protection of martyrs secures this postern gate
The martyrs Clement and Vincentius guard this entrance
—Inscription from North Africa

Romans had long imagined that their frontiers were secured by supernatural forces. Like the Greeks before them, Romans had ascribed to various gods the protection of city walls as well as of the people as a whole. A worldview that attributes the divine maintenance of boundaries and frontiers is unmistakable in available sources. The protection of the world was basic to the cosmology of Late Antique peoples. In this vein, the emperor Julian writes glowing panegyric prose about how the "divine and wholly beautiful cosmos, from the highest vault of heaven to the lowest *eschates* of the earth, is held together by the continued providence of the gods." His friend Libanius expresses a similar belief, arguing that the adoration of the gods will provide the ideal military defense, and that the communion of the Romans with the gods is the wall (*teichos*) of the Roman Empire.[1]

The cosmologic continuity in this regard from the pagan past into the Christian era is pronounced. Many Christians of the late Empire, especially during the fifth century, began to imagine that God, along with a host of martyrs, defended cities at center and periphery alike. The gods' protection of cities had become God's protection of the *murus* of the empire, the frontier

imagined as a wall around it. The Christian belief that God rather than Terminus was the guardian of frontiers, far from supplanting the pagan belief, insured the direct continuity of such divine protection.

An episode recorded by Olympiodorus gives hints to a way a pagan mind imagined such divine protection. During the reign of Constantius III (early fifth century), a treasure was unearthed in Thrace. When the governor of Thrace, a certain Valerius, visited the area, he learned from the locals that it was a sacred site and that it contained statues consecrated by "an ancient rite." After reporting to the emperor that the area contained "silver statues which had been consecrated to ward off barbarians," Constantius gave Valerius permission to excavate them. He found three solid silver statues, in the form of bound barbarians, inclining toward the North,

> that is toward the land of the barbarians. As soon as the statues were removed, a few days later the whole Gothic nation poured over Thrace and shortly afterwards the Huns and the Sarmatians were to invade Illyricum and Thrace also. For the site of the consecration lay between Thrace and Illyricum and to judge from the number of statues, they had been consecrated against the whole of barbary.[2]

This brief episode shows the persistence of the memory, if not practice, of a pagan version of divine frontier protection. The locals were well aware of the sacredness of the site and of the presence of statues. Whether or not they knew that the sacred site was specifically dedicated to warding off of the barbarians is not clear from the passage, but the interpretation of the objects and subsequent historical analysis of Olympiodorus makes this certain once they were removed from the ground: they were placed in a liminal place as a way of warding off barbarians at the frontier. Olympiodorus imagines here the proverbial line separating Roman from barbarian, against which barbarians were constantly pressing.

The placement of the statues is crucial—between Thrace and Illyricum. The ceremony was carried out at the "frontier" between two provinces or regions of the Roman world. And yet, as Olympiodorus makes clear, their power was enough to solidify the frontier between the Roman Empire and *barbaricum*. The analogy between liminal sites is clear in the passage, again suggesting a persistence in the belief in the cosmic dimension of frontiers. The power of the sacred objects was not confined to any one frontier either, but was a general talisman against all barbarians. The type of ceremony described here parallels the Terminus cult, in which offerings to the gods would be placed in a hole. The site of the hole, once filled in, would then serve as the *terminus*,

generally between pieces of property. Such practices clearly were not forgotten in the late Empire.

Certainly Olympiodorus, himself a Neoplatonist pagan, was attuned to this type of story. His belief in the sacred power focused on these images is clearly strong since he argued that the removal of the statues was the reason that the barbarians were allowed, by the gods, to pour into Roman territory. Providing insight into a late Roman proliferation of popular belief, *superstitio*, Olympiodorus is not reporting this supernatural incident in Tacitean fashion (that is, "some people believe that . . .") but rather as naturalistic historical causation. Olympiodorus is relating near-contemporary history, for he heard the story from the excavator himself, Valerius, the governor of Thrace. As with other historians of the later Empire, Olympiodorus is relaying news to his audience. He evidently still saw the power of pagan deities as maintaining Roman frontiers. At least, his audience would have understood this type of historical explanation. The transitions to explicitly Christian language in explaining the divine defense of frontiers need not distract us from the fact that Christians were very similar to pagans in the way they connected deity with the frontiers of empire.

Pagan notions of divine defense of cities continued into the Christian era as well. As late as 396, four years after Theodosius' famous antipagan legislation, the traditional gods were invoked for protection. When Alaric and the Goths descended on Athens, the traditional deities Athena and Achilles were called on to save the city from destruction, according to the pagan Zosimus.[3] Gradually the role of protector of cities would be transferred to martyrs and saints. Of particular note will be their special defense of frontier cities or fortresses, a vital function of defense that extended beyond just the city itself to the whole of the frontier.[4] Libanius speaks of the need to restore frontier cities with strong language: it is more glorious than having "the fabric [*soma*] of the *oikoumene* . . . increased."[5]

Saints and martyrs would assume a crucial role of frontier protection. Paulinus of Nola, for example, records how the translation of relics to Constantinople was a critical part of its defense.[6] Fortresses with saints' names were also fairly common in the eastern part of the empire.[7] Theodoret of Cyrrhus, writing in the early fifth century, clearly articulates the role of these saints and martyrs in defense:

> The noble souls of the victorious traverse the heavens and join in the dance of the immaterial beings. Their bodies are not hidden away each in its single grave, but the cities and villages that have divided them among themselves call them saviors of souls and bodies and doctors

> and honor them as protectors of cities and guardians and treat them as ambassadors before the master of the universe and through them receive divine gifts.[8]

Divine defense was a real and important part of the defense of the frontier, especially but not exclusively the eastern one. Theodoret further states that Nisibis was saved from the Persian armies at one point by the prayer of its bishop.[9] The growth and proliferation of martyr and saint cults and the subsequent protection they afforded have been well traced now for parts of the eastern frontier. Examination of the role of divinity along the eastern frontier reveals very clearly that "divine defense went hand in hand with arms and walls, a fact often overlooked."[10] To what extent this notion of divine defense was altered, in substance and form, by the Christianization of the Roman Empire, or at least its visible Imperial manifestations, is often difficult to assess. Some continuity may be seen in a widespread pagan cult centered at important eastern cities such as Heliopolis, not far from the Euphrates.

Zosimus, as mentioned earlier, believed that Constantine's failed frontier policy resulted from the anger of the gods. In placing the blame for the "present destruction of the empire" squarely on the shoulders of Constantine, Zosimus connects failed frontier policy to divine wrath. That anger encouraged the gods to weaken the frontier zones to allow for punishment of the Christian Romans who now controlled the empire and had forgotten the gods who had made it strong.[11]

A Christian parallel to some of Zosimus' basic images may be found in the writings of Orosius, a student of and at times dissenter from St. Augustine. Orosius sees God's will in the placement and defense of the frontiers and also in the clear punishment of the Roman Empire in his own recent lifetime. God protected the frontiers, but he also removed that protection for his own divine purposes. Orosius describes, in language strangely reminiscent of that of Zosimus and Olympiodorus, the violation of Roman frontiers during the reign of Valens:

> Suddenly, from all sides by the will of God, the peoples located on the boundaries of the Empire and left there for this purpose are loosed and, with the reins relaxed, rushed into the territory of the Romans.[12]

Orosius was writing near-contemporary history in this passage, and his account was as much a medium for relaying news as similar accounts by Ammianus were. Orosius is reporting on the situation to Christians, who were struggling to comprehend how God could allow such calamities, and to pagans, who

believed the blame belonged to the Christians who had thrown out the gods who once had made Rome strong. To Romans, pagan and Christian alike, divine force was in control of the placement and maintenance of frontiers.

Orosius' language here clearly depicts a definite frontier beyond which the hordes of barbarians were waiting. His language also recalls images from Olympiodorus—without divine protection of boundaries, the barbarians suddenly "pour" in. Although recent scholarship no longer paints a picture of hairy, uncouth barbarians itching for their chance to pour over the borders, what matters here is how Romans of the time viewed this incursion. Their lives were structured by their beliefs and by their basic worldview.

Christians at the peripheries in Late Antiquity became acutely aware of, or at least more expressive about, the role of frontier cities in the defense of the Empire. Especially through the martyr literature and other ecclesiastical writings from the eastern frontier, they expressed their need for divine protection. James of Edessa, for example, records how the "festival of the holy martyrs is the joy and pleasure of all churches, a strong wall for all the inhabited earth, and the victory of kings, and the glory of priests.[13] Coming from Edessa, a crucial site for communication and transportation at the eastern frontier, James clearly would have been aware of the need for divine protection there. Like Ammianus and others, he uses the metaphor of a wall to communicate his perceptions of frontiers in the East. Theodoret of Cyrrhus wrote that feasts to saints—some of them frontier saints—had replaced the old festivals in frontier areas. Mayperqat, near the Tigris River, would become filled with relics and renamed Martyroplis, as the cult of frontier saints became more pronounced there. And Resafa, an important eastern monitoring station near the Euphrates, saw the growth of the martyr cult focused on divine defense.[14]

Theodoret of Cyrrhus, comparing in the fifth century the pagan past to the new Christian era, "proclaimed that the old festivals had been superseded by feasts in honor of Peter, Paul, and a company of Syrian martyrs, Thomas of Edessa, Sergius of Resafa, Marcellinus, Antoninus, Mauricius of Apamea, Leontius of Tripoli." Dara, near Nisibis, was fortified both with walls and with the relics of St. Bartholemew.[15] During fortification of this frontier city in the fifth century, St. Bartholemew had come to the emperor Anastasius in a dream, "offering to protect the city." His relics were deposited in a church there and were thought to protect the frontier city.[16] John Lydus would write of this protection of Dara: "[U]nless God by [Anastasius'] hand had heavily fortified it at the throats of the Persians, long ago the Persians would have seized the domains of the Romans inasmuch as these are adjacent to them."[17] On another section of the eastern frontier, the martyr cult was centered on the shrines of St. Sergius and St. Bacchus. These two Roman soldiers had

been sent as punishment for conversion to Christianity to the empire's edge, "in the frontier zones near where the race of the Saracen dwells."[18] Their martyrdom at the peripheries of the empire during the Great Persecution gave rise to the martyr cult, which to Romans naturally became connected to frontier protection.

One particular reference from North Africa shows a similar dynamic at work there. An inscription from Calama commemorates the work of humans, saintly and secular.

> Twelve and one towers altogether rose up in a row;
> It seems a work of wonder, constructed so swiftly.
> The postern gate behind the baths is fastened with iron.
> No enemy could raise a hand against it.
> No one could take by storm the work of Patricius Solomon.
> The protection of martyrs secures this postern gate.
> The martyrs Clement and Vincentius guard this entrance.[19]

The Solomon mentioned is Belisarius' commander, a fortifier of the North African frontier. His efforts to secure this North African stronghold were bolstered by the martyrs, who thereby imparted saintly and divine power to the establishment of this frontier. Here, as elsewhere, the saints work as God's agents in protecting frontiers.

8

A Christian Imperium sine Fine?

There is no vestal altar, no capitoline stone, but the one true God.
"He does set no limit of time or space
But gives there *imperium sine fine*"
—St. Augustine, *City of God,* quoting Vergil, *Aeneid*[1]

Here, amid yet another indictment of the pagan gods, Augustine encourages his fellow Romans to "lay hold now on the celestial country, which is easily won, and in which you will reign truly and forever."[2] His message is clear—replace your empty longing for a universal "earthly" empire, a so-called *imperium sine fine,* for citizenship in the City of God, the true *imperium sine fine*. Such calls, fairly clear in church writers after Augustine, struck a chord among the civic-minded Romans.[3] They echo a Vergilian worldview/ideology that lay at the heart of Roman expansion and subsequent identity throughout the Roman world. Yet Augustine was also suggesting a new meaning for this foundational Roman ideology. This passage hints at the role of Christianization in the transformation of Roman frontier consciousness. And yet alongside these calls to search for a "city beyond," the dream for the Roman Empire (albeit now officially Christianized) to realize its eternal victory in the here and now persisted. There was a constant push by Christians to lay claim on the "sacred space" of the Roman Empire and even to extend its frontiers. M. McCormick has argued

that this dream lay behind the dynamic of Late Antiquity as well as rulership in the medieval and Byzantine worlds.[4]

What was the effect of Christianization on official frontier ideology and with it frontier consciousness? Or, to put it another way, could a universal Christian empire really have frontiers? It powerfully has been argued that *the* defining characteristic of Late Antiquity is the conviction that the knowledge of one God both justified the exercise of imperial power and made it more effective. The Late Antique monotheisms of both Christianity and Islam were used by monarchies and empires in support of their aspirations to universal status. Monotheism, in effect, supplied the underpinnings for a universal empire.[5] If there was a continued striving for universal empire, an "ideology of world mastery," did frontiers then become irrelevant in Christian imperial ideology? The question is thorny but crucial to elucidating pagan and Christian frontier consciousness in Late Antiquity, a period animated by such tensions.

The dream of eternal victory, has, in fact, been well termed "the most potent of Roman myths,"[6] considering its long-term influence on the subsequent history of medieval Europe. Rome's rather swift rise to power had engendered this ideology, powerfully presented in Vergil's *Aeneid*. The Roman Empire's rule was, at one level, one of *aeternitas*, with no spatial or temporal limits.

This dream did not go away with the Christianization of the Empire. Rather, it seemingly became an intrinsic element of civic and Christian religious ceremony, especially as the two blended inextricably in Late Antiquity. It became couched in sermons, liturgy, and ecclesiastical art and architecture as well as games, imperial ceremonies, panegyric, and even legal depositions.[7] If Christianity justified the dream of empire, then it follows that it also became attached at some level to this age-old and potent myth; so much is already evident in the works of St. Cyprian, as noted in chapter 7.

At tension with the ideology of world mastery was the theme of *senectus mundi*, or the idea that the earth, and with it the Roman Empire, was growing old and decaying. Ammianus, although he most consistently defends the ideology of *aeternitas*, occasionally seems to explain some major problems in the Empire in terms of the language of *senectus mundi*. In a passage shot through with these tensions Ammianus writes,

> At the time when Rome first began to rise into a position of world-wide splendor, destined to live so long as men shall exist, in order that she might grow to a towering stature, Virtue and Fortune, ordinarily at variance, formed a pact of eternal peace; for if either one of them had failed her, Rome had not come to complete supremacy. Her people, from the very cradle to the end of their childhood, a period of

> about 300 years, carried on wars about her walls. Then, entering upon adult life, after many toilsome wars, they crossed the Alps and the sea. Grown to youth and manhood, from every region which the vast globe includes, they brought back laurels and triumphs. And now, declining into old age, and often owing victory to its name alone, it has come to a quieter period of life.[8]

Ammianus read many of the problems in his own era in light of this model. Glory in his time was in name only, not in deeds. Rome would "live as long as men shall exist," yet the empire was in decline. J. Matthews reads this passage as showing that Ammianus truly believed in the eternity of Rome.[9] The *senectus mundi* theme was perhaps a topological reference to be understood more metaphorically.

The topos that the world and/or empire was growing old had an established history in Roman Imperial thought. Often, the imagery is idiosyncratic to the author. Florus, for example, in the early to mid-second century A.D., saw the Roman Empire "grown old and losing its potency," at a time that most historians now consider its height. Some have argued that such references in the earlier Empire were mere commonplaces.[10] In the later Empire, however, such references become more prevalent as many Romans begin to imagine the end.[11] Zosimus and pagans before him, even as early as the third century, put the blame for this decline on the Christians. This was the very type of accusation that Cyprian had claimed inspired "oft-repeated vengeances in behalf of the worshippers of God."[12] Under accusations that Christians had disturbed the relationship of the gods to the cosmos, the *pax deorum,* Christians had more incentive to "rediscover" the ideology of a senile earth—Cyprian could write "the world grows old, it rests not on the same strength as of yore nor has it the same robustness with which it once prevailed."[13] Augustine would likewise write about the aging earth, assuming that he lived in the sixth and last age of the world.[14]

The idea that the history of the world unfolded in a series of biological stages was given new life by Christian writers. One of the more popular images is that the history of the world unfolded as a series of kingdoms, usually four or five.[15] Identification of the final kingdom could reveal the coming end. The imagery here often blends, as seen with Cyprian, apocalypticism and *senectus mundi;* these, at one level, seem opposed to each other. Much of this thought was based on speculation regarding the meaning of the four kingdoms in the apocalyptic work ascribed to Daniel.

Assumptions of an organic model of the Roman Empire were prevalent among many writers of the later Roman Empire, pagan and Christian alike. If a vibrant empire assumed strong frontiers, then an old and feeble empire

should entail weak frontiers. Yet often it is difficult to distinguish imagery of an aging empire from that of an aging world. The ideology of world mastery often caused the two entities to blend inextricably. It also could lead to seeming contradictions—for in spite of what Ammianus says about the feebleness of the Empire, other passages suggest that Ammianus strongly believed in its *aeternitas*.[16] Some even have suggested that he intended his more depressing passages as a corrective, to promote Roman recovery after losses like Adrianople rather than to present affairs as he really saw them.[17] Therefore, he was borrowing images with which to inspire a return to the "good old days"—that is, his political commentary was a cover for a social agenda.

The later Empire also saw the emergence of a new topos, that of restoration or restitution of the world. This theme, prevalent from the middle of the third century onward, was commonplace on coinage by the late third century.[18] The historical facts of the third century crisis were behind the proliferation of this theme. Even if the effects of the third century perhaps have been exaggerated, its part in giving rise to an ideology of the restoration of the world in official media is unmistakable. But authors were not in any particular agreement as to how the process would work out or whether it was irresistibly fated. Behind such an ideology is the notion that Rome should be in control of the entire world, and if it is not, then it needs to be restored to its rightful position so that peace and harmony may predominate once again. Imperial pronouncements as well as abundant numismatic evidence attest clearly to the claims of emperors to have restored the Roman world to the glories that abounded in days of yore, essentially before the tumultuous third century. Historians used Trajan, for example, as a model in order to encourage emperors to restore the Roman world to its furthest limits.[19]

Amid the praise of these restorations one can see the manifold expressions of frontier ideologies, shaped subsequently, no doubt, by Christianization and its claims to universal empire.[20] Emperors who restored or pushed forward frontiers were particularly singled out for the title of "restorer of the world," thus again pointing out the late Roman connection of frontiers to overall stability.

Our key sources on the question of imperial and frontier ideology from the late third century onward are the panegyrics. Panegyric gives insight into the mind of Romans at many levels, but it does so by considering the past, *res gestae*, as opposed to the presentistic or sometimes futuristic emphasis of prophecy. For prophecy, the present moment often is revealed as the worst of all in the history of the empire if not of the world itself; the present moment of panegyric is seen as superior to all others. Hence, prophecy and panegyric, considered together, provide something of a rough balance. As might

be expected, the imagery referring to the solidification, defense, and/or eternal extension of the frontiers plays a major role in the rhetoric of pagan and Christian emperors. In prophetic texts and commentary as much as in panegyric, the frontiers could serve as a site of speculation for pagan and Christian, writer and receptor. The theme of indefinite expansion continues in this and subsequent panegyrics as emperors, pagan and Christian alike, are praised for extending or defending the frontiers.

After the so-called Christianization of the imperial structures, such presentations begin to fuse with the language of the universal Christian empire, championed by Constantine and many of his fellow Romans. He and later emperors such as Theodosius have, according to panegyricists, "extended the realms of the East beyond the limits of things and the boundaries of Nature."[21] By the end of the fourth century, references to frontiers fused with the rhetoric of a universal Christian empire—an empire in which, at least on one ideological level, frontiers were meaningless.[22] At an earlier period, Tertullian, the self-proclaimed Christian "citizen of the cosmos," could rejoice that there were places "inaccessible to the Romans but subject to Christ"—that is, outside of the Empire. But that was in the early third century, at a time when Roman imperial ideology had not yet melded with Christian imagery.[23]

The Christianization of the Roman Imperial structure likewise infused the ideology of expansion with an unprecedented missionary vigor. D. Potter recently has argued that even a new sense of "Roman-ness" emerged with the spread of Christianity beyond the imperial frontiers. He writes,

> for if we allow that a definition of Roman-ness is the transformation of behaviors through contact with the institutions of the Roman Empire, then the church was gradually creating a new category of extraimperial "Roman" in cases where the local authorities were willing to accede to the message of the church.[24]

Specifically, Constantine's efforts at encouraging peoples outside of his frontiers—Goths, Armenians, Aksumites, Iberians—but in the faith formed perhaps a part of his efforts to expand Roman hegemony beyond established frontiers. It also serves as an interesting lesson in contrast to the restraint that Constantine showed among the pagan aristocracy within the Empire, of whose traditions he was more respectful.[25] Constantine was more eager, it appears, to convert *gentes externae* than to force the hearts and minds of a deeply rooted pagan establishment within his own realm. Or perhaps he was just being realistic: displacing Rome's pagan aristocracy would be a task for his descendants, and a fairly difficult one at that.

Beyond the eastern frontier in particular, Christians were well aware of coreligionists. Persian bishops had appeared at the Council of Nicaea, and Constantine even had declared himself "bishop of the Christians of Persia."[26] In a later century, Cosmas Indicopleustes would note "innumerable Churches" among the Persians.[27] Considering himself "a divinely ordained protector of Christians everywhere, with a duty to convert pagans to the truth," Constantine connected himself with these Christians of Persia, a group that had been growing since the second century, even though they were beyond his own imperial frontiers.[28] Their presence was known there, and thus late Romans knew that even if the frontier was the ultimate line of demarcation, for many it did not cut religious ties.[29]

This knowledge of Christians beyond Roman imperial frontiers did have some influence on the way that Constantine, at least, shaped frontier policy and perhaps even on the way that Christians would view frontiers. Yet whereas Constantine's apparent goal to spread the Gospel by advancing the frontiers was apparently successful in some instances, it simply fell flat in Persia, beyond Rome's eastern frontier.[30] Constantine appealed to this group of Christians during his warfare with Sapor II of Persia. To T. Barnes, this move was in tune with Constantine's earlier efforts to appeal to the Christians under his rivals, Maxentius in 312 and Licinius in 324.[31] But as with basically everything else Constantine did, his motives are far from clear to us. A passage records approximately Constantine's own words:

> on one occasion, when entertaining bishops to dinner, [Constantine] let slip the remark that he was perhaps himself a bishop too, using some such words as these in our hearing: "You are bishops of those within the Church, but I am perhaps a bishop appointed by God over those outside."[32]

Although the title "bishop of those outside" itself is a subject of much debate, some have argued that Constantine saw it as his license to "spread Christianity beyond as well as within his own frontiers—an entirely new understanding of the Roman Emperor's role, inconceivable except within the context of allegiance to a universalist religion."[33] Whatever interpretation one takes of this particular phrase, his title "bishop of the Christians of Persia" provides a useful corroboration. Constantine's expansion beyond his frontiers was thus to be through piety as well as conquest; as the fourth-century monastic writer Rufinus put it, "the more he subjected himself to God, the more God subjected to him the whole world [*universa*]."[34] And yet his possible notion of a clear border separating the Christians of Rome from those of Persia is but

another indication of the way a late Roman frontier consciousness informed his thought. Attempts to connect with Christian Persia would continue in subsequent centuries, as emperors brought together hostilities with Persia and efforts to Christianize the Persian Empire.[35]

In his famous letter to Sapor II, Constantine references these Christians across the frontier, exhorting Sapor at the letter's closing,

> With this class of persons—I mean of course the Christians, my whole concern being for them—how pleasing it is for me to hear that the most important parts of Persia too are richly adorned! May the very best come to you therefore, and at the same time the best for them, since they also are yours. For so you will keep the sovereign Lord of the Universe kind, merciful, and benevolent. These therefore, since you are so great, I entrust to you, putting their very persons in your hands, because you too are renowned for piety. Love them in accordance with your own humanity. For you will give enormous satisfaction both to yourself and to us by keeping faith.[36]

Clearly, Constantine is emphasizing his patronage over the Christians of Persia: to what extent that entailed dreams of political hegemony is a topic of much discussion. It is, though, doubtful that a Roman leader could ultimately separate religious and political patronage. Dreams of political hegemony through religious patronage, at all events, died soon after Constantine; Persia, after all, under Sapor II was making its own share of expansive moves against which Rome was having difficulty defending.

Eusebius expands on this letter as an example of Constantine's world mastery. Eusebius' language hints at the attitude behind Constantine's letter to Sapor.

> Thus finally, all nations of the world being steered by a single pilot and welcoming government by the Servant of God, with none any longer obstructing Roman rule, all men passed their life in undisturbed tranquility.[37]

Eusebius had no problem identifying the Roman Empire as God's kingdom, and, as he claims elsewhere, it "already united most of the various peoples, and is further destined to obtain all those not yet united, right up to the very limits of the inhabited world."[38] This aspect of Eusebian thought has been well explored, as have similar notions in the writing of such churchmen as Lactantius, Jerome, Ambrose, and Orosius. The variety of Christian analyses

of the phenomenon of Christianization, however, need not distract us from the fact that all share some basic imperial ideologies highlighting frontiers as symbols, if not literal *eschata,* held in place by God himself. Through Christianity and the Christian God, therefore, the frontiers of the Roman Empire could be pushed forward indefinitely.

North Africa provides some interesting contrasts to the eastern frontier. In general, here there is a more stringent attitude of inherent difference toward those on the other side of the frontier. In St. Augustine's letter written concerning "the end of the world [*de fine saeculi*]," we get a glimpse of such frontier consciousness. When arguing for the absence of any Christians beyond North Africa's frontiers in his own day, he writes of the evidence he gets from seeing actual captives from there regularly.[39] Interestingly, he does so in a letter answering questions about the end of the world. In the process, he tells us that there were no Christians beyond North Africa's frontier. But, Augustine writes, this does not mean that "the promise of God does not extend to them." One of the chief indicators of the end would be that all of the world had heard the Gospel.[40] However, there were no organized missionary efforts to reach beyond the frontiers of North Africa. Thus, the Roman Imperial frontier also served as a frontier of Christianity there. North African Romans, then, did not experience the tensions of knowing that coreligionists were beyond their frontiers.[41] Perhaps Constantine and others had no ulterior motives that would cause them to claim "subjects" beyond North African frontiers. Perhaps this also shows the limits of universalism—did Romans really care to put distant desert tribes under their sway? It seems that Constantine and others were willing to incorporate the Goths and even make attempts at the Persians in this way, but the perceived cultural contrast with those beyond the North African frontiers was perhaps too much for them.

The further expansion of Christianity, particularly in Western Europe, beyond the scope of this study, might hold some additional clues to an ideology of universalism. The famous mission of Ulfila, the "bishop of the Christians in Getic lands," might well have been initiated during Constantine's own lifetime or at least following imperial ideologies that may be traced to Constantine's Christian universalism.[42] Whether such a move was a political strategy simply to co-opt the Goths or a sincere desire to spread the Christian faith will probably be debated as long as the conversion of Constantine himself. It does, to be sure, highlight the strong tension between Christian universalism and a bounded territory, a tension central to political thought in subsequent centuries.

Glancing back at the classical world, J. M. Wallace-Hadrill writes about the western barbarian conversions,

> The conversion of the Germanic peoples bordering the Frankish world is something that could never have happened in Antiquity. The concept of a barbarian hinterland, so essential to the thinking of the Later Empire, was gone; and in its place was born the conviction that those outside should be inside. The Christian world should be one, its frontiers bounded only by the reach of missionaries.[43]

Perhaps what medievalists like Wallace-Hadrill miss is that these ideologies were born in a Christian Roman Empire, not the Frankish. A universal Christian empire had already begun to imagine that those outside—or at least some of them—should, in fact, be inside, united under one God, one empire, and one emperor. Ideology, especially that which combines such potent forces as political and Christian universalism, is neither static nor monolithic. What is defined here as medieval is, in a sense, late Roman—the idea Wallace-Hadrill describes is one that arose with the Christianization of the Roman Empire; it is, in fact, a baptized version of *imperium sine fine*. It produced, in time, a creative tension between a religiously inspired universalism and frontier consciousness that thought in terms of literal boundaries.

The hope of universal imperial hegemony, though, died soon in the West. Although ideas and images of eternal victory certainly persisted, Roman power did meet its finis. A power vacuum was filled by multiple "barbarian aristocracies" as well as by Christian bishops. The collapse of power probably surprised few—Romans, at least those in tune to the discourse reflected by prophecy and apocalyptic, had been well prepared. In the end, the medium of prophecy did, in a sense, give a true report. Its use of frontier information struck a chord among Romans, who saw their frontiers and their imperial power rendered meaningless. But inhabitants of what was once the western Roman Empire were not left hopeless—their prophets had unwittingly prepared them for their new world, a catholic or universal world lacking a frontier even with heaven itself. The best possible situation for humans was seen as an *imperium* not limited by time or space—those eminent Romans Vergil and St. Augustine could, in a certain sense, at least agree on that.

Conclusion

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> From the conditions of frontier life came intellectual traits of profound importance.
>
> —Frederick Jackson Turner,
> "The Significance of the Frontier in American History"

It is de rigueur in frontier studies, at least for those in English, to invoke Frederick Jackson Turner, explicitly absent from this study thus far. Recently, the invocation often is to rebuke him as essentialist, imperialist, or even "orientalist."[1] But Turner might well have been one of my muses all along. While my foci and conclusions are very different from his—I am not concerned much here with the actual character of life on the Roman frontier, and I am interested in a static frontier as opposed to his "outer edge of the wave"—I do likewise see the frontier as a "vital force" in shaping a society.[2] The frontier is a site where identities of whole societies can be negotiated. Turner can still remind us that the frontier has cultural and intellectual significance.

Above all else, perhaps, Turner continues to teach us that the history of the frontier is about change. There was, I have argued, a distinct frontier consciousness that arose with the heightened proliferation between the third and fifth centuries of news from and about the peripheries. By the end of our period, that news had come to shape the center's image of itself and its frontiers. The perceptions did shape and thereby change the Roman reality. As the Roman Empire decreased in relative power, the consciousness of its

frontiers increased. The later Empire did not merely freeze in place or replicate previous conditions.

I have argued this basic point from a variety of angles. A major goal has been to view the late Roman frontiers, as much as possible, on late Roman terms. If this picture succeeds, it is because we defensibly have come to see the world through the eyes of the folks who have been our primary guides along the journey—a "Spanish" pilgrim nun, a group of North African church fathers, a set of pagan Antiochene intellectuals, several panegyricists from the East and West, and anonymous apocalyptic speculators. Compositely, these guides, with help from fellow Romans, have revealed a certain image of frontiers in the late Roman Empire.

The simple fact that news proliferated from and about frontiers, thereby shaping perceptions, often is only implicit in the writings of our guides. These folks generally were not policymakers or government functionaries, although some were not divorced from centers of political power. They came from a variety of social and cultural backgrounds. Yet it is certain that they shared assumptions about the world with Romans of all types. In the main, then, their writings reveal a generally held Roman worldview. Most were not writing in any strictly official capacity, and hence they give a picture of news sharing that cannot be analyzed merely as propaganda. Emperors and their functionaries were loath to admit that frontiers had shifted when that meant the actual loss of territory. Yet news of shifts in late Roman frontiers did proliferate widely. It found its way into philosophical treatises, orations, personal letter exchanges, historical writings, apocalypses, scriptural commentary, and the like.

The comparative element here underscores the generalized "Roman" nature of this frontier consciousness. There is, to be sure, a difference in volume and character of material for each region. Those writing on the eastern frontier produced far more material, partly because of more newsworthy events along it and partly because of civic culture located near them—more people lived along, visited, and wrote about this frontier. Firm comparisons are difficult, and pushing the evidence further might risk simply comparing silence to eloquence. Occasionally, though, we do get glimpses of ways in which Romans expressed frontiers differently. Accounts of the North African frontier, as we have seen, do use a different idiom at times than those presenting the eastern frontier. Yet there does appear to be a sense in which late Roman frontier consciousness was unitary.

The argument here is in tune with historiographical trends that emphasize a Roman imperial identity that supersedes local identities and cultural expressions. This need not imply that local and regional identities were nonexistent or that they lacked significance. Our diverse group of guides to late Roman

frontier consciousness hail from all over the Roman Empire—it is, then, not a localized picture that emerges from this study. From the anonymous author of the Thirteenth Sibylline Oracles, arguably a Christian "person on the street," to the pagan emperor Julian, scattered and subtle hints point to a worldview shared by millions throughout the Roman world. To raise a different set of questions and issues might well suggest ways in which the Roman Empire was intellectually and culturally heterogeneous. Yet this study does not conclude that this homogeneity was merely a function of the dissemination and internalization of Roman ideology and values as put forth by the central regime. Worldview analysis and media studies have helped prepare a picture that allows individuals more agency—the Romans were not merely passive regarding value systems trickling down from a political center.

Late Roman frontier consciousness did not disappear with the western Roman Empire. Long after the political structures around it had collapsed or transformed, this powerful ideological model would continue to be invoked in changing historical contexts. There are curious homologies in the Mediterranean, European, and Middle Eastern worlds in subsequent centuries, as empires and kingdoms expressed territoriality in both spiritual and political terms. For each of them, the highest political ideals were universalist ones; yet each recognized, voluntarily or involuntarily, that there were limits, frontiers. When expansion stops, discourse highlighting frontiers gets more intense. As these polities shaped their own systems vis à vis unique historical circumstances, similar patterns emerge across space and time. Wherever the model is appropriated (or at least echoed), familiar dynamics and ambiguities emerge, the type of which make Late Antiquity such an interesting and, dare I say, relevant period. The universal rise of the modern state has presented a whole new set of variables, to be sure, yet it has not ultimately erased the late Roman frontier consciousness. For even in our modern world of barbed-wire borders and mapped nations, the tensions inherent within a bounded state housing a universalist ideology are still very much alive.

Notes

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INTRODUCTION

1. *De Civ. D.* 4.29, 5.21; see also 4.23. For the narrative of events leading up to the loss of Nisibis, see most recently Potter, *Roman Empire,* 467–522.

2. Hadrian's concessions, interestingly, were "forgotten" by Ammianus Marcellinus, the foremost historian of the later Roman Empire and a contemporary of St. Augustine. See Amm. Marc. 25.9.9.

3. *De Civ. D.* 4.29.

4. Very few events in imperial Roman history provoked such responses. See Amm. Marc. 25.8–9; Orosius, *Historiarum Adversus Paganos Libri VII* 7.31; Eutropius 10.7; Festus 29; Socrates Scholasticus 3.22; Gregory Nazianzus, *or.* 5.8–13; Libanius, *or.* 19.49, 23.278, 24.9; Malalas 13; *Artemii Passio* 69–70; *Cedrenus* I, pp. 538, 16–23, 539, 16–21; *Chronicon ad A.D. 724 (Liber Calipharum)*, CSCO 6, p. 133; *Chronicon Ps.-Dionysianum,* CSCO 91, pp. 179, 23–180, 8; Ephrem Syrus, *Hymni contra Julianum* 2:15–22, 27, vol. 3; CSCO 174, pp. 78, 23–82, 14; CSCO 83, 11–85, 8; *Epitome de Caesaribus* 43; Jerome, *Chronicon s. aa.* 363–64; John Chrysostom, *De S. Babyla contra Julianum et Gentiles* XXII, in *Patrologia Graeca,* ed. J. P. Migne (Paris: Migne, 1857–66), 569–70; Ps. Joshua the Stylite, *Chronicle* 7; Zonaras 13.1–14.6. For a brief study, see R. Turcan, "Abandon."

5. Zosimus, 3.32; Agathias, *Historiarum Libri Quinque* 4.25.6–7: μέχρι καὶ νῦν τῇ Ρωμαίων λυμαίνεσθαι πολιτείᾳ, περιστέλλων ἐστὰ ὀπίσω καινοῖς ὁρίοις καὶ ὑποτεμνόμενος τῆς οἰκείας ἀρχῆς τὸ περαιτέρω ἐκβαῖνον.

6. Lee, in his work on late Roman foreign relations, defines "background knowledge" as "long-term stocks of information (and assumptions) about the geography, environment, and socio-political character of neighboring states and peoples" (*Information,* 2).

7. On images of frontiers and imperial strategy held by Romans of the Principate, see S. Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy: Imperial Strategy in the Principate* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

8. Cherry, *Frontier and Society,* 28. The idea is reflected from Isaac, *Limits*.

9. See Frezouls, "Fluctuations."

10. Previous studies that compare North Africa and the East include Chapot, *Frontière;* Rushworth, "North African Deserts"; Shaw, *Rulers,* 19.

11. There is much debate here. For the view that the Roman Empire should be viewed as a cultural unity, see Ando, *Imperial Ideology;* G. Woolf, *Becoming Roman: The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). For the other side of the debate, see Mattingly, *Dialogues.*

12. Ando, *Imperial Ideology,* xiii.

13. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony,* 272.

14. Brown, *World of Late Antiquity,* 13.

15. Some historians of Late Antiquity begin it as early as the second century, some extend it into the eighth century, and some consider it only the fifth and sixth centuries. See the introduction to Clover and Humphreys, *Tradition.*

16. See Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy,* 122.

CHAPTER 1

1. Wells traces Roman frontier studies back to the sixteenth century in "*Profuit Invitis,*" 436.

2. For a complete listing of *Limeskongress* publications, published at various places, see Whittaker, *Frontiers,* 320–21. Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity volumes to date are Ellis and Kidner, *Travel, Communication, and Geography;* Burns and Eadie, *Urban Centers;* Mathisen and Sivan, *Shifting.* See also Rousselle, *Frontières.*

3. Works on Ammianus include Barnes, *Ammianus Marcellinus;* Austin, *Ammianus on Warfare;* T. D. Barnes, "Ammianus Marcellinus and His World," *Classical Philology* 88 (1993): 55–70; Blockley, *Ammianus Marcellinus;* B. Croke and A. M. Emmett, eds., *History and Historians in Late Antiquity* (Sydney: Pergamon, 1983); J. Matthews, *Roman Empire;* Rike, Apex Omnium; Drijvers and Hunt, *Late Roman World.*

4. See Sack, *Conceptions,* 95; D. Gregory and D. Urry, *Social Relations and Spatial Structures* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985), 3.

5. Lee, *Information.*

6. See Shaw's critique of Fentress, *Numidia,* in "Soldiers and Society: The Army in Numidia," in Shaw, *Rulers,* 133–59.

7. M. Kearney, "Worldview," in *Encyclopedia of Cultural Anthropology,* ed. D. Levinson and M. Ember (New York: Holt, 1996), 4:1381. See also H. Lefevre, *The Production of Space,* trans. D. Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

8. Millar, "Emperors."

9. Nicolet, *Space,* esp. 2.

10. Nicolet, *Space,* 3.

11. See D. Braund, "Coping"; D. Braund, "Caucasian Frontier."

12. Whittaker, *Frontiers.*

13. Cherry, *Frontier and Society,* 32.

14. Ibid., 28.

15. Isaac, *Limits.* See also Isaac, "Eusebius."

16. See discussion of Luttwak, who popularized the Grand Strategy idea, later in this chapter.

17. Mann, "Power," a critique of Luttwak's Grand Strategy.

18. Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy*.

19. Febvre, *Terre,* proposed that rather than serving as natural frontiers, rivers in fact link groups together for common activities such as trade and communication.

20. See Hitchner, "Image and Reality"; Alföldi, "Moral Barrier"; Whittaker, *Frontiers,* 11.

21. See Kennedy and Riley, *Rome's Desert Frontier;* Riley "Archaeological Air Photography." See Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy,* 105, for a presentation that employs modern methods while not ignoring ancient ideology and value systems.

22. Wells, *German Policy;* Isaac, *Limits,* 410–13; Whittaker, *Frontiers,* 27, 61; Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy,* 110.

23. Nicasie, *Twilight of Empire,* 121–25; D. Braund "River Frontiers."

24. "River Frontiers," in Kennedy, *Roman Army,* 43–47.

25. *Empire to Commonwealth: Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

26. See the contrasting conclusions, for example, in Millar, "Emperors," and Lee, *Information*. Cherry, *Frontier and Society,* aligns with Millar.

27. A crucial exception is Achard, *Communication*.

28. Initial positive reviews include P. A. Brunt, "Power and the Pax Romana," *Times Literary Supplement,* 10 February 1978, 154–55; G. D. P. Jones, "Concept and Development."

29. Mann, "Power."

30. Millar, "Emperors," 1, 2.

31. Austin and Rankov, *Exploratio*.

32. Ellis and Kidner, *Travel, Communication, and Geography*. Publishing constraints have prevented me from giving this work the consideration it deserves.

33. Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy*.

34. Summarized by A. Cameron, *The Later Roman Empire,* A.D. *284–430* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 128. Cameron acknowledges, somewhat tongue in cheek, the danger of Late Antiquity being seen as the abode only of "wild monks and excitable virgins."

35. Mathisen and Sivan, *Shifting,* 2. They refer in this instance to a similar critique made by Isaac in "Meaning."

36. See Rousselle, *Frontières;* Whittaker, *Frontiers,* 8; D. Braund, "River Frontiers."

37. E. K. Fowden, *Barbarian Plain,* 3.

38. Stephens, *History of News,* 9.

39. See McQuail, *Media Performance;* McQuail, *Mass Communication Theory;* McLuhan, *Understanding Media*.

40. See, for example, the use of such models for the ancient Greek world in Lewis, *News*. Lewis criticizes modern writing on ancient news, which tends to be preoccupied "with the military, and the consequent overvaluing of certain visible institutions" (6). See also Lee, *Information;* Mendels, *Media Revolution*.

41. Lewis, *News,* 2, 5.

42. Ando, *Imperial Ideology,* 122. Cf. Augustine's description of the surrender of Nisibis as "almost in living memory." *De Civ. D.* 4.29.

43. Kearney, "Worldview," 4:1380–84.

44. Bourdieu, *Outline,* 80, 83.

45. See Naugle, *Worldview,* for the best recent exploration of the concept.

46. See Dilthey, *Introduction,* 28–29.

47. See Kearney, *World View;* and Kearney's helpful overview at "Worldview," 4:1380–84.

48. For previous application of this concept to Late Antique studies, see Enßlin, *Zur Geschichtschreibung,* 83–96. Ridley, "Zosimus," uses the concept as a way of analyzing the thought world of Zosimus, a late-fifth-century historian. D. Braund, "River Frontiers," has argued that in frontier studies it is helpful to look at psychology and worldview. E. Jeffreys proposes the concept as a way to study a sixth-century world chronicle in E. Jeffreys, B. Croke, and R. Scott, *Studies in John Malalas,* preface.

49. Whittaker, *Frontiers,* 195, referencing Kopytoff, *African Frontier,* 13. For an anthropological analysis, see Geertz, "Ethos."

50. Mattern recently supplies an answer for the Principate in terms of the "image of Rome," an image of force it was eager to wield far and wide (*Rome and the Enemy,* 108).

51. Bourdieu, *Outline,* 167.

52. Ober analyzes the emergence of a "democratic political culture" in Greece by combining the *Annales* vision of mentality of ordinary people and literary theory, which views texts as "symbol systems that must be understood in relationship to their receptors" (*Mass and Elite,* xiv). His approach, which presents community as assuming a "minimal level of shared values," is not perfectly applicable to the Roman Empire, but it is instructive here in that it suggests a reading of shared meaning even in highly rhetorical texts.

53. D. Braund, "River Frontiers," 43–47.

54. Cameron, "Remaking the Past," 4.

55. References to the Euphrates as a frontier or boundary include Genesis 15:18, Deuteronomy 11:24, II Samuel 8:3, I Chronicles 5:9. See chap. 3.

56. Popular belief, such as in portents and divination often associated with prophecy, was on the rise across the board in the later Roman Empire. Chapter 6 explores this phenomenon and the connection it had to frontiers. My guides for the historical use of prophecy write on other contexts. Chief among them are Niccoli, *Prophecy;* Lerner, *Powers;* P. J. Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition;* and a much-neglected older work, Anderson, *Alexander's Gate.*

CHAPTER 2

1. Whittaker, *Frontiers,* 12–18, provides a helpful introduction to cosmology for the Republic and early Empire. For a useful definition of *cosmology,* see Martin, *Hellenistic Religions,* 13. See also Sambursky, *Physical World,* chap. 6, "The Unity of Heaven and Earth."

2. Nicolet, *Space,* 189. See also Kong, "Geography and Religion." Kong analyzes the overlap between geography and religion, briefly addressing ancient cosmology and assessing trends in geographical study that have tended to ignore or highlight "religious geography" or "the geography of religion." She writes that "among other questions that merit attention, there is certainly a need to try and understand the processes through which specific environmental objects . . . are invested with meaning of a religious kind" (367).

3. On the sacralization and desacralization of space in Late Antiquity, comparing pagan and Christian processes, see B. Caseau, "Sacred Landscapes," in *LA*, 21–59.

4. Kearney, *World View*, 92.

5. See Beagon, *Roman Nature*, 53; Pliny, *Natural History* 7.1; Gospel of St. John 1:10, 3:17, 7:7, 12:13, 14:17, 22, 15:18, 19, 17:4, 21.

6. Beagon, *Roman Nature*, 189, in reference to Pliny, *Natural History* 27.2–5.

7. Ptolemy's is the formal expression of changes in thought long preceding him. See Martin, *Hellenistic Religions*.

8. On the centrality of the Ptolemaic cosmology to the Hellenistic world, see M. P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der Griechischen Religion*, 2nd ed. (Munich: Beck, 1961–67), 2:702–11; E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (New York: Norton, 1970); Martin, *Hellenistic Religion*. Among commonly cited New Testament examples is Colossians 1:17, where St. Paul presents Christ in terminology powerfully reminiscent of the Ptolemaic cosmic system. Christian thought was neither cosmologically innovative nor highbrow—such references point to a wide and popular diffusion of the Ptolemaic cosmology.

9. Isidore, *Etymologies* 3.30.1. Isidore, *Etymologies* 13.5.2, presents the *sphaero caelo* as a globe surrounding the seven planets, with earth at its center. For further analysis of the cosmological thought of Isidore, see Brandt, *Shape*, 2–11. On the classical background of the idea of Ocean surrounding Earth, see Romm, *Edges*. See Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy*, chap. 2, "The Image of the World," for more discussion of early Imperial thinking about these matters.

10. For depictions of the sphere on coins and statuary, see Nicolet, *Space*, figs. 5–10, 12. In the later Empire, visual and verbal sources associate emperors with the sphere. Numerous coins depict emperors (Valentinian, Valens, Gratian, Maximian) holding onto or associated with a globe. See MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony*, 128–29, 166, 174, 177. Maguire, *Earth*, also notes the connection of the globe with imperial power and universal dominion on coinage and elsewhere. See also Grabar, *Empereur*, 204, for a discussion of the globe-shaped throne of Christ and its relation to imperial imagery in the apse mosaic at San Vitale. For analysis of the connection between the temporal and celestial realms as pictured by spheres, see Bakhouche, "Limites."

11. Amm. Marc. 21.14.1.

12. Procopius, *De Aedificiis* 1.10.16–19, quoted in MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony*. See also chap. 6.

13. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony*, 166, 174. For further discussion of the connection of the globe to imperial power on coinage, see Maguire, *Earth*, 64.

14. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony*, 128–29. For a description of the mosaic, see Grabar, *Empereur*, 204; see also Maguire, *Earth*, 78.

15. Potter, *Prophets*, 97.

16. Cosmas Indicopleustes, *The Christian Topography of Cosmas, an Egyptian Monk*, ed. E. O. Winstedt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1909), 12:345.

17. Julian, *or* 4.132C (Loeb trans., throughout); Amm. Marc. 25.9–10. See chap. 6 for a much more detailed analysis of this episode as it relates to Roman cosmology and divination.

18. Yet note the debate about Roman "map consciousness" laid out in Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy*, 41, n. 61. I tend to side with Nicolet, *Space*, here in seeing the Romans as more sophisticated in their imagining of space.

19. R. M. Downs, "Geographic Space Perception: Past Approaches and Future Prospects," *Progress in Geography: International Reviews of Current Research* 2 (1970): 84–85 (with a visual of this process).

20. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony,* 70–71, note on plate 22; see also plates 20–21.

21. See Sack, *Conceptions,* 95; D. Gregory and Urry, *Social Relations,* 3. Whittaker introduces these same divisions in *Frontiers,* 11–12. Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy,* 77, presents a moderate behaviorist view.

22. Isaac, "Eusebius," 153–54.

23. Roman traditions of geography have been well explored, especially for the early Empire. Nicolet, *Space,* is now the starting point, with some significant additions in Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy.* Other works include Janni, *Mappa,* 58–65, 79–90, 147–58; Purcell, "Creation"; E. Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 250–66; F. Cordano, *La Geografia degli Antichi* (Rome: Laterza, 1993); M. Sordi, ed., *Geografia e Storiografia nel Mondo Classico* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1988); Harley and Woodward, *History of Cartography;* Dilke, *Greek and Roman Maps;* Lee, *Information,* 81–90; Whittaker, *Frontiers,* 10–30. See also Isaac, "Eusebius," 153–54, 157; Dilke, "Culmination"; Nicolet, *Space,* 71.

24. See in particular Sherk, "Roman Geographical Exploration." See also Isaac, "Eusebius," 154; Lee, *Information,* 83–84; Whittaker, *Frontiers,* chap. 1, p. 63.

25. Libanius, *or.* 18.246 (Loeb trans., throughout). Libanius records that Julian also relied on captives to supplement his knowledge.

26. See Dilke, *Greek and Roman Maps,* 113–20, for descriptions of the *Tabula* and notes to current debates over the date and purpose of it. Some skepticism that there was a Roman original seems now to have been laid aside by the recent discovery of an important new map of Spain from the first century; see Gallazzi and Kramer, "Artemidor im Zeichensaal."

27. See Dilke, "Itineraries and Geographical Maps"; Dilke, "Maps in the Service of the State." Roman *itineraria* from the Christian period are collected in CC 175 along with other geographical works from the later Empire.

28. Nicolet, *Space,* 70–71, 125. He has been challenged here by Mattern, Bekker-Nielsen, Purcell, and Talbert. See Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy,* 41.

29. Gallazi and Kramer, "Artemidor im Zeichensaal."

30. Janni, *Mappa,* 62–64, translated and cited in Lee, *Information,* 87. See also Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy,* 41; Isaac, "Eusebius," 157.

31. Vegetius, *Epitoma Rei Militaris* 3.6, ed. C. Lang (Leipzig: Teubner, 1885). Trans. in Nicasie, *Twilight of Empire,* 163–64.

32. See the detailed description of *Tabula Peutingeriana* in Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy,* 39–40.

33. Pliny, *Natural History* 3.16–17 (Loeb trans., throughout). See Dilke, *Greek and Roman Maps,* 41–53, for a description of this particular map.

34. See Wolska-Conus, "Carte." The translation is from Dilke, *Greek and Roman Maps,* 169–70. For the Latin, see A. Riese, ed., *Geographi Latini Minores* (1878; Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1964). See chap. 3 for more description of these maps in relation to natural frontiers.

35. *Panegyrici* N&R, 9.21.

36. Geography was not recognized as a discrete subject in Roman education but could be a valuable subsidiary to a variety of subjects such as geometry, astronomy,

and literature. For education in antiquity, see H. I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity,* trans. G. Lamb (New York: Mentor, 1956). For a brief discussion of ancient geographical handbooks, see Lee, *Information,* 82–85.

37. Dilke, *Greek and Roman Maps,* 120–21. For further discussion of this map and illustrations of it, see F. Cumont, *Fouilles de Doura Europos, 1922–1923* (Paris: Geuthner, 1926), 323–37, plates 109, 110; R. Uhden, "Bemerkungen zu dem Römischen Kartenfragment von Dura Europos," *Hermes* 67 (1932): 117–25.

38. Gallazzi and Kramer, "Artemidor im Zeichensaal."

39. D. Cherry, *Frontier and Society,* 32.

40. Isaac, "Luttwak's 'Grand Strategy,'" 233.

41. See D. Braund, "Caucasian Frontier," 34, 39.

42. For the change in meaning in *limes,* see Isaac, "Meaning." These examples use *limes* in a way unknown before the fourth century.

43. Malalas, *Chronicon* 139.30 (Jeffreys trans., throughout).

44. *Carus* 9.1: *hanc ego epistulam idcirco indidi quod plerique dicunt vim fati quandam esse, ut Romanus princeps Ctesiphontem transire non possit, ideoque Carum fulmine absumptum quod eos fines transgredi cuperet qui fataliter constituti sunt* (D&L 114).

45. Aurelius Victor, *Liber de Caesaribus* 38.3; Festus, *Breviarium* 24; Eutropius 9.18.1; Jerome, *Chronicon s.a.* 284; *Epitome de Caesaribus* 38.1; Orosius, *Adversos Paganos* 7.24.4; Sidonius Appollinaris, *Carmina* 23.91–96; Jordanes, *Historia Romana* 294; Syncellus 472, all record outright that Carus was killed by lightning, although none of these mention the element of fate. Cedrenus I, p. 464, 6–9, records that he was killed by plague. Zonaras 12.30 records the lightning story but also adds that some accounts say that Carus was killed fighting the Huns.

46. Amm. Marc. 18.1.6.

47. Amm. Marc. 22.9.11.

48. Malalas, *Chronicon* 143, 231.

49. Alternately recorded in the sources as Eutheria, Aetheria, and Silvia, she is from either Spain or Gaul. See E. D. Hunt, "St. Silvia of Aquitaine: The Role of a Theodosian Pilgrim in the Society of East and West," *Journal of Theological Studies,* n.s., 23 (1972): 351–73; H. Sivan, "Who Was Egeria? Piety and Pilgrimage in the Age of Gratian," *Harvard Theological Review* 81 (1988): 59–72; Natalucci, *Egeria.*

50. "The Letter in Praise of the Life of the Most Blessed Egeria Written to His Brethren Monks of the Bierzo by Valerius," 1, in Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels,* 201.

51. See Romm, *Edges,* esp. chap. 1, "The Boundaries of the Earth."

52. Orosius, *Historiae ad Paganos* 6.14 (*The Seven Books of History against the Pagans,* trans. R. J. Deferrari, Fathers of the Church ser., Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1964).

53. "Letter of Valerius," 1, in Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels,* 200. Valerius was a seventh-century Galician monk. On his life, see Maravel and M. Diáz y Diáz, *Égérie.*

54. *Egeria, Itinerarium Egeriae,* trans. J. Wilkinson. 3rd ed. (Warminister: Aris and Phillips, 1999). 19.5.

55. Diodorus Siculus 40.4.

56. For the early Empire, see in particular Dyson, *Creation.*

57. Appian, *Praefatio* 7.25–28 (Loeb trans., throughout).

58. The need for studying the peaceful periods has been hinted at in J. W. Eadie's review of Lee, *Information,* in *American Historical Review* 100 (1995): 883–84.

59. See *Panegyrici* N&R, 34.

60. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony*, esp. 2, 268.

61. *Panegyrici* N&R, 10.7.2–4: *Quod autem maius euenire potuit illa tua in Germaniam transgressione, qua tu primus omnium, imperator, probasti Romani imperii nullum esse terminum nisi qui tuorum esset armorum? Atqui Rhenum antea uidebatur ipsa sic Natura duxisse, ut eo limite Romanae prouincae ab immanitate barbariae uindicarentur. Ecquis umquam ante uos principes non gratulatus est Gallias illo amne muniri?*

62. *Panegyrici* N&R, 10.9.1: *uirtute Romanum limitem uictoria protulit; Panegyrici* N&R, 7.14.1: *te, iuuenis, indefessum ire per limites qua Romanum barbaris gentibus instat imperium; Panegyrici* N&R, 8.1.4: *<tot> prolati limites; Panegyrici* N&R, 8.3.3: *qui Romanae potentiae terminos uirtute protulerunt; Panegyrici* N&R, 7.14.1: *te, iuuenis, indefessum ire per limites qua Romanum barbaris gentibus instat imperium.*

63. *Panegyrici* N&R, 8.13.3: *Tu enim ipse, tu domine Maximiane, imperator aeterne, nouo itineris compendio aduentum diuinitatis tuae accelerare dignatus repente Rheno institisti, omnemque illum limitem non equestribus neque pedestribus copiis des presentiae tuae terrore tutatus es; Panegyrici* N&R, 9.18.4: *Nam quid ego alarum et cohortium castra percenseam toto Rheni et Histri et Eufratae limite restituta; Panegyrici* N&R, 12.2.6: *Rhenum tu quidem toto limite dispositis exercitibus tutum reliqueras.*

64. *Panegyrici* N&R, 11.3.9: *non enim in otiosa aliqua deliciisque corrupta parte terrarum nati institutique estis, sed in his prouinciis quas ad infatigabilem consuetudinem laboris atque patientiae fracto licet oppositus hosti, armis tamen semper instructus limes exercet, in quibus omnis uita militia est, quarum etiam feminae ceterarum gentium uiris fortiores sunt.*

65. *Panegyrici* N&R, 4.4, 6.6.

66. Libanius, *or.* 17.32 (Loeb trans., throughout).

67. See Eadie, "Transformation."

68. *Panegyrici* N&R, 8.11.5, 13.1.

69. Isaac, *Limits*, 395.

70. For the opposing view—that the Romans had a definite sense of the space they occupied and of space that was not theirs—see Nicolet, *Space*.

71. The example here is drawn from Isaac, *Limits*, 396, quoting Appian, *Praefatio* I. Cf. Nicasie, *Twilight of Empire*, 175.

72. See Nicolet, *Space*, 15, for discussion of the semantic links between power and territory.

73. See A. Lintott, *Imperium Romanum: Politics and Administration* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 59–61; W. T. Arnold, *The Roman System of Provincial Administration to the Accession of Constantine the Great* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1914), 8–9.

74. See E. Albertini, *Les Divisions Administratives de l'Espagne Romaine* (Paris: Boccard, 1923); J. J. von Norstrand, "The Reorganization of Spain by Augustus," *University of California Publications in History* 4:1 (1916); A. Tranoy, *La Galice Romaine: Recherches sur le Nord-Ouest de la Péninsule Ibérique dans l'Antiquité* (Paris: Boccard, 1981).

75. Libanius, *or.* 18.300.

76. Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 6.1.9–12: *fore ut brevi exercitum in Romanorum finibus sisteret* (D&L 270).

77. Libanius, *ep.* 334 (Loeb trans., throughout). See also Basil, *ep.* 1, for a reference to the road to Persia (*epi Persas*).

78. 20.12: *Illud etiam requisiui a sancto episcopo, ubinam esset locus ille Chaldeorum ubi habitauerant primo Thara cum suis. Tunc ait mihi ipse sanctus episcopus: "Locus ille,*

filia, quem requiris, decima mansione est hinc intus in Persida. Nam hinc usque ad Nisibin mansiones sunt quinque, et inde usque ad Hur, quae fuit ciuitas Chaldeorum, aliae mansines sunt quinque; sed modo ibi accessus Romanorum non est, totum enim illud Persae tenent. Haec autem pars specialiter orientalis appellatur, quae est in confinium Romanorum et Persarum vel Chaldeorum (trans. Wilkinson, *Itinerarium Egeriae*).

79. *Theodosianae Novellae* 24.1. Trans. in C. Pharr, *Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952).

80. Isaac, "Luttwak's 'Grand Strategy,'" 223; cf. Isaac, *Limits*.

81. Amm. Marc. 25.9.9.

82. *De Civ. D.* 4.29.

83. A similar procedure was followed with the surrender of Dacia under Aurelian. The inhabitants were moved to the other side of the river and a new Dacia, called Cis-Danubian Dacia, was founded.

84. *De Civ. D.* 4.29: *nisi placito pacis illic imperii fines constituerentur, ubi hodieque persistunt;* 5.21: *Romani imperii termini moverentur.* Zosimus 3.32 also mentions the loss of territory, specifically that which was established as the limits of empire, the Tigris and the Euphrates.

85. Agathias, *Historiarum* 4.25.6–7 (D&L 238).

86. Libanius, *or.* 18.205–7, 19.49.

87. Zonaras 12.19 (D&L 47).

88. See Watson, *Aurelian*.

89. Julian, *Satire on the Caesars* 392 (Loeb trans., throughout).

90. Orosius, *Historiarum Adversus Paganos Libri VII* 7.23.

91. See especially *Panegyrici* N&R, 9.1–2, 3.11.5.4, 6.6, 7.1, 4.8.3.

92. Zosimus 1.7, 2.34.

93. Lintott, *Imperium Romanum*, preface.

CHAPTER 3

1. *Panegyrici* N&R, 9.21. For extended commentary on this passage, see the notes at *Panegyrici* N&R, pp. 145–50, 172–77.

2. *Panegyrici* N&R, 9.20.2.

3. The specific historical situations and contexts, all very recent, referred to by Eumenius are Galerius' defeat of the Persian Narses in Mesopotamia (298): "twin rivers of Persia"; Maximian's defeat of the Moors in North Africa (297?): "thirsty fields of Libya"; Constantius I's campaign against Carausius and Allectus (296): "recurved horns of the Rhine"; and Diocletian's quelling of Domitianus in Egypt and resettling of the extreme southern frontier (298): "many-cleft mouth of the Nile." For more specific historical commentary on this panegyric, see Nixon and Rodgers's notes at *Panegyrici* 9.

4. *Panegyrici* N&R, 9.20.2.

5. *Panegyrici* N&R, 9.20.1. On the role of geography in Roman education, see chap. 2.

6. *Panegyrici* N&R, 9.21.2.

7. Herodian 2.11.5 (Loeb trans., throughout).

8. See Augustus, *Res Gestae;* for a geographical analysis of this work, see Nicolet, *Space*.

9. Mann, "Frontiers," 139. V. Maxfield concurs in "The Frontiers: Mainland Europe," 137–97 in *The Roman World*, ed. J. Wacher (London: Routledge, 1987), vol. 1, part 4, 139, as does Wells, *German Policy*, 24: "Historically, rivers are not natural frontiers; they join rather than separate, and serve more readily as highways than as barriers. They are convenient lines of demarcation, if two powers wish to negotiate a frontier."

10. Whittaker, *Frontiers*, 61, 26–27, quoting Febvre, *Terre*, 325–31.

11. Whittaker, *Frontiers*, 61.

12. See in particular the critiques at Austin and Rankov, *Exploratio*, 173–84; Nicasie, *Twilight of Empire*, 121–25.

13. See Isaac, "Luttwak's 'Grand Strategy,'" 233.

14. See Whittaker, *Frontiers*, 73–74.

15. Whittaker, *Frontiers*, 69.

16. Orosius, *Historiarum Adversus Paganos Libri VII* 1.1. The geography section extends throughout 1.2; it describes the world from a late Roman vantage. On Orosius' geography, see Janvier, *Géographie*.

17. See Mendels, *Media Revolution*.

18. Orosius, *Historiarum Adversus Paganos Libri VII* 1.2: *nunc quidquid Danubius a barbarico ad Nostrum secludit, expediam*.

19. Orosius, *Historiarum Adversus Paganos Libri VII* 7.22.

20. See B. Isaac, "The Meaning of *Limes* and *Limitanei* in Ancient Sources," in Isaac, *The Near East under Roman Rule: Selected Papers* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 362.

21. *Suidae Lexicon*, ed. A. Adler, vol. 1, pt. 2, p. 432 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1928–38).

22. For a chronological history of the use of the Greek term from Homer to John Chrysostom, see Casevitz, "Sur *Eschatia*."

23. Cf. Zosimus 34.1–2. See also the reference in Berchem, *Armée*, 115.

24. Herodian 11.2.5.

25. Themistius, *or.* 16.206d–207a, trans., "Initium Mali Romano," Lenski, 143; Amm. Marc. 18.9.2.

26. Procopius, *Gothicus* 8.13.5; see D. Braund, "Coping."

27. Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy*, 170.

28. *Expositio Totius Mundi*, 59.

29. Seneca, *Suasoriae* 1.1–16. See Beagon, *Roman Nature*, 185–87.

30. On imagery of Ocean in Late Antiquity, see "Ocean," in *LA*, 617.

31. Libanius, *or.* 18.205–7.

32. *ILS* 754.

33. *Panegyrici* N&R, 11.6.6.

34. Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, in *Eusebius: Life of Constantine, Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, ed. and trans. A. Cameron and S. G. Hall (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999). See Romm, *Edges*. For further references to emperors and Ocean in Eusebius, see 1.25.1, 4.9, 50.

35. Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* (P. Schaff, trans.; slightly modified).

36. Augustine, *ep.* 199.47 (*Fathers of the Church*, trans., throughout).

37. Isidore, *Etymologies* 14.2.1.

38. Orosius, *Historiarum Adversus Paganos Libri VII* 1.2.

39. See Maguire, *Earth*.

40. Mosaic and text pictured in E. Kitzinger, "Studies on Late Antique and Early Byzantine Floor Mosaics, I: Mosaics at Nikopolis," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 6 (1951): 100.

41. *Panegyrici* N&R, 9.20.2. For other mosaics picturing Ocean, see K. Dunbabin, "*Baiarum Grata Voluptas:* Pleasures and Dangers of the Baths," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 57 (1989): 26–27; Voûte, "Notes."

42. See in particular C. Wells, "The Problem of Desert Frontiers," in *Roman Frontier Studies 1989, 15th International Congress,* ed. V. Maxfield and M. Dobson (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1991), 478–81, with references.

43. Daniels, "Frontiers: Africa," 265. Interestingly, Orosius, *Historiarum Adversus Paganos Libri VII* 1.2 describes the "boundary line of the whole of Africa" without mentioning desert frontiers. He mentions mountains, oceans, and rivers as boundaries throughout the world, but for the desert areas he names only the local peoples.

44. See Wells, "Problem of Desert Frontiers," 24; Maxfield et al., "Frontiers: Mainland Europe," 139.

45. Febvre's thesis on rivers, in fact, recently has been claimed as one of the most enduring contributions of his work. See A. Marwick, *The Nature of History,* 3rd ed. (Chicago: Lyceum, 1989), 78.

46. Trends in frontier studies, thanks in part to the Oklahoma Comparative Frontier Symposia, tend to transcend any given historical context. See Wells, "*Profuit Invitis,*" 438, for a discussion of how comparative studies have shaped his work. The comparative nature of the Oklahoma symposia shows why questions about Hadrian's wall, for example, tend to follow the same trends as questions on the Great Wall of China. On the Great Wall, see P. R. Gaubatz, *Beyond the Great Wall: Urban Form and Transformation on the Chinese Frontiers* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

47. Especially helpful is D. Braund, "River Frontiers."

48. Gregory Nazianzus, *or.* 5.9 (D&L 249).

49. Procopius, *Wars* 2.12.4; Libanius, *or.* 59.103, 114.

50. That rivers do, in fact, constitute divisions (not exactly the focus of this study) receives some support from the modern situation along the Euphrates. The late Toni Cross, former on-site director of the American Research Institute in Turkey at Ankara, shared with me a conversation she had with an epidemiologist in Turkey just before the construction of the Atatürk Dam. This epidemiologist was concerned that the dam would allow peoples separated by the river to come into contact for the first time ever, thereby spreading diseases for which each group had little if any immunity. The multiplication of disease along the Euphrates River today suggests that this fear was well founded. The "swift-flowing" Euphrates has, until very recently, separated some peoples even as it has aided the contact of others.

51. Whittaker, *Frontiers,* 201. Communication presumed only small-scale crossings of rivers by trained experts. This is a different matter from crossing whole armies, the difficulties of which are highlighted in multiple ancient sources.

52. D. Braund, "River Frontiers."

53. Nicasie, *Twilight of Empire,* 123. Although Nicasie argues that rivers and mountains served as boundaries of empire, all of his plethora of examples are drawn from references to *internal* boundaries; his point is well taken but lacks support from references to these as actual or perceived boundaries of empire.

54. Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy,* 110.

55. Isaac, *Limits,* 410–13.

56. Dio, *Roman History* 69.9.6, 60.20; Tacitus, *Annales* 2.8; Tacitus, *Historia* 2.17. One of the swimmers is memorialized in *CIL* 3.3676. See specifically M. P. Speidel,

"Swimming the Danube under Hadrian's Eyes: A Feat of the Emperors' Batavi Horse Guard," *Ancient Society* 22 (1991): 277–82.

57. Note, however, the problems faced by the Goths in settling across the Danube in 376 at Amm. Marc. 31.4.5. Earlier, Valens unsuccessfully tried until late autumn to cross "extensive floods" of the Danube (Amm. Marc. 27.5.5). He tried again the subsequent year with boats and forced "his way into barbarian territory."

58. Isaac, *Limits*, 411, referring to Dio, *Roman History* 71.3, which describes the technique.

59. On the Romans' general reluctance to build bridges, see Austin and Rankov, *Exploratio*, 174–77.

60. For this date, see A. Cameron, "The Date of the Anonymous *De Rebus Bellicis*," in *De Rebus Bellicis*, ed. and trans. R. Ireland (Int. ser. 63, *BAR*, 1979), part 1, 1–7.

61. *De Rebus Bellicis*, ed. and trans. Ireland, part 2, vi, 28.

62. Isaac, *Limits*, 411–12.

63. The very few times barbarians are recorded as building bridges, they are helped by Roman captives; see John of Ephesus, *Historiae Ecclesiasticae Pars Tertia* 6.24 (Avars). Lee (*Information*, 96–97) believes that the Huns' efforts (Priscus frag. 6,2/7) also relied on captive Roman craftsmen. Lee further points out that barbarians are recorded as crossing only tributaries rather than the Danube. He gives a very specific assessment of the difficulties of crossing the Danube as well as some exceptions.

64. References to the Danube freezing over are at Dio, *Roman History* 71.7.1; Philostorgius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 10.6; Claudian, *In Rufinum* 2.26; Agathias, *Historiarum* 5.11.6 (refers to the phenomenon as regular). See Lee, *Information*, 96, for a listing of incursions that occurred in the summer and fall. For the Rhine and Danube, see Ovid, *Tristia* 3.10; *From Pontus* 1.2.79–80, 4.7.9–10, 10.32–34; Pliny, *Panegyric* 12.3, 82.4–5; Herodian 6.7.6–7; Amm. Marc. 19.11.4. For a reference in panegyric to an emperor being so strong that not even a freezing or drying river frontier would be of any consequence, see *Panegyrici* N&R, 10.7.4.

65. Even worse for the barbarians, rivers could thaw unexpectedly, as with the Chatti, who were prevented thus from crossing the Rhine in A.D. 89 (Suetonius, *Domitianus* 6.2), and the "huge multitude of Germans" who were caught in the center of the Rhine on an island, cut off by a sudden thaw (6.6.4).

66. The "*neque enim iam*" suggests that such was the case before this particular glorious emperor appeared.

67. Procopius, *Wars* ii.21.21. Libanius, *or.* 59.103, also speaks of Persian bridge-making skills.

68. See, in particular, Trousset, "Notion." See also Whittaker, *Frontiers*, 201, with references; P. Ørsted, *Roman Imperial Economy and Romanization* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1985), 271–72.

69. Tacitus, *Agricola* 41.2: *nec iam de limite imperii et ripa, sed de hiberniis legionum et possessione dubitatum;* quoted in Isaac, "Meaning," in Isaac, *Near East*, 350. As Isaac points out, Tacitus is distinguishing land and river boundaries here (*limes* versus *ripa*).

70. *In plumiris locis, in quibus barbari non fluminibus sed limitibus dividuntur, stipitibus magnis in modum muralis saepis funditus iactis atque conexis barbaros separavit* (*Scriptores Historiae Augustae, Hadrian*, 12, quoted in Isaac, "Meaning," in Isaac, *Near East*, 351). Again, only the land, not the river boundary, is known as *limes* at this early stage.

71. One must take seriously Whittaker's contention (*Frontiers,* 62) that boundaries were always "ethnically confused" and that we should not accept readily an ancient model that sees divisions as so distinct.

72. The direct association of *limes* with rivers reflects a fourth-century and later usage of the term. See Isaac, "Meaning," in Isaac, *Near East,* 350–51. Earlier sources, as Isaac points out with the Hadrian passage in *Scriptores Historiae Augustae,* distinguish river and land boundaries: "only the latter are called *limites*." Isaac claims that the use of the term for the second century is anachronistic.

73. Amm. Marc. 14.8.5: *Orientis vero limes in longum protentus et rectum, ab Euphratis fluminis ripis ad usque supercilia porrigitur Nili.*

74. *Panegyrici* N&R, 9.18.4: *Nam quid ego alarum et cohortium castra percenseam toto Rheni et Histri et Eufratae limite restituta.*

75. Jerome, *ep.* 123.16: *fracta Danubii limite.*

76. Ausonius, *Gratiarum Actio* 2.7: *Imperatori fortissimo: testis est uno pacatus in anno et Danuvii limes et Rheni.* See Isaac, "Meaning," in Isaac, *Near East,* 358.

77. Festus, *Breviarium* 14: *et per Traianum Armenia, Mesopotamia, Assyria et Arabia provinciae factae sunt ac limes Orientalis supra ripas Tigridis est institutus;* and *Mesopotamia est restituta et supra ripas Tigridis limes est reformatus, ita ut quinque gentium trans Tigridem constituarum dicionem adsequeremur* (Isaac, "Meaning," in Isaac, *Near East,* 360).

78. Propertius 3.4.4; similar formulae at Vergil, *Georgics* 4.560–63; Claudian, *Panegyricus de Sexto Consulatu Honorii Augusti,* ed. M. Dewar (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 295.

79. Plutarch, *Sulla* 5; Appian, *Mithridateios* 1057; Livy, *Periochae* 70 (see Mitchell, *Anatolia,* 1:118); this *limes* was recognized later by Vespasian. See also Nicolet, *Rome,* 796–97.

80. Orosius, *Historiarum Adversus Paganus Libri VII* 6.13. It seems, at least, that the Parthians had a long memory as well of such an arrangement. Orosius implies that Crassus might have been spared had he not angered the Parthians excessively by breaking the agreement.

81. Festus, *Breviarium* 14; also in Eutropius 8.6.2.

82. The fourth-century sources refer to it as such. On the episode, see Festus, *Breviarum* 25; Amm. Marc. 25.7.9; Petros Patricius, frag. 14. See Eadie, "Transformation," 74–75, on the political boundary of the Tigris. See also Winter, "On the Regulation."

83. Julian, *or* 1.23d: *tes choras ekeines pros ten hemeteran.*

84. *Itinerarium Egeriae* 18.1.

85. Libanius, *or.* 18.278.

86. See Herodian 6.4.7.

87. Theodoret, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 25.1: *Nam cum fluvium qui Romanorum Imperium a Persarum regno separat traiecisset* (D&L 271); cf. 3.21: "No sooner had the Persians heard of the death of Constantius than they took heart, proclaimed war, and marched over the frontier of the Roman Empire."

88. Zosimus 3.4, 4.11, 1.55, 3.6.

89. Zosimus 3.14. This passage continues with an example that suggests that the space taken up by rivers themselves formed a sort of no-man's-land unless occupied with a fort on an island. Julian besieges such an island fort in the Euphrates and is then

said to have escorted the people "into Roman territory"—that is, ferried them back across to the Roman side.

90. Suetonius, *Iulius* 3; see also Plutarch, *Caesar* 32. The Rubicon continued to be viewed into Late Antiquity as symbolic of separation; see Claudian, *Panegyricus,* 365.

91. Amm. Marc. 24.3.9. Trajan did bridge the Danube in 105, as pictured on his column in Rome. Cf. Pliny's panegyric to Trajan (in *XII Panegyrici Latini,* ed. R.A.B. Mynors [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964] 16.2): *magnum est, imperator Auguste, magnum est stare in Danubii ripa.*

92. See Galinier, "Colonne Trajan."

93. Libanius, *or.* 16.52 (March–April 363); Libanius *epp.* 367, 49 (D&L 223).

94. *ILS* 754: *domino totius orbis / Iuliano Augusto / ex Oceano Britannico / vis per barbaras gentes / strage resistenti / um patefactis adus / que Tigridem una aestate transvec / to, Saturninus / Secundus v.c. [praef.] praet. [d] / n.m. [q.].* This inscription shows how quickly news could reach Ancyra and how inscriptions served as a form of media, themes to be explored later in this chapter.

95. As already seen, this emphasis can lead to a rhetorical reversal as the emperors of the later Empire are shown protecting the Empire instead of just the rivers (*Panegyrici* N&R, 6.11.1). But when read in terms of worldview, rivers seem to function more strongly as boundaries, which makes them a convenient target for the type of hyperbole on which panegyric thrives.

96. Libanius, *ep.* 1434 (Loeb trans., throughout).

97. Julian, *or.* 1.22C.

98. Libanius, *or.* 18.205–11; D&L 226.

99. Libanius, *or.* 13.73.

100. Libanius, *or.* 13.32.

101. Claudian, *Panegyricus,* 415–19, ed. and trans. M. Dewar (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996).

102. Thirteenth Sibylline Oracle lines 95–102; complete text in Potter, *Prophecy.* This figure presumably captures the frontier city of Hierapolis, which plays an important role in frontier defense and in prophetic and apocalyptic imaginings of the frontier.

103. Jerome, *ep.* 123.16: *olim a Mari Pontico usque ad Alpes Iulias non erant nostra quae nostra sunt, et per annos triginta fracta Danubii limite in mediis Romani imperii regionibus pugnabatur* (Lenski, *"Initium Mali Romano Imperio,"* 158).

104. Themistius, *or.* 16.206d–207a.

105. Much of my research in this section has been prompted by D. Braund, "River Frontiers."

106. See J. Le Gall, *Recherches sur le Culte du Tibre* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1953); G. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer* (Munich: Beck, 1912).

107. For the cult of the Danube, see *CIL* 3.3416, 5863, 10263, 10395, 11894; of the Rhine, see *CIL* 13.5255, 7790–91, 8810–11. References listed in D. Braund, "River Frontiers," 44.

108. D. Braund, "River Frontiers."

109. *Lexicon,* iv.2, *fluvii* 45, 46.

110. See L. Jalabert and R. Mouterde, *Inscriptiones Grecques et Latines de la Syria* vol. 1 (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1929–).

111. *Lexicon, fluvii* 5.

112. For clear panel depictions of this column and description of its presentations of the Roman frontier, see Galinier, "Colonne Trajane." For river gods in a Late Antique text, see Claudian, *Panegyricus*, 164–68.

113. Imhoof-Blumer, "Fluss- und Meergötter"; *Tafel* XVI,16; for river gods in general on coins, see 174–421.

114. Dilke, *Greek and Roman Maps*, 149.

115. See *Thermae Constantini*, in E. Nash, *Pictorial Dictionary of Ancient Rome*, 2 vols. (New York: Praeger, 1961); Sidonius, *Carmina* 22.41–45 presents Bacchus leading the river god Ganges in procession, suggesting that the iconography is alive and well in Late Antiquity.

116. Maguire, *Earth*, fig. 16.

117. For the rivers of paradise on mosaics, see Maguire, *Earth*, esp. 23–28, 45–46, 51–52. These present continuity of the classical image of surrounding waters, now imbued with a Christian significance.

118. I use Pliny throughout this study as a benchmark of early Roman Imperial thought generalized. Although Pliny writes at a seemingly rarefied level, Beagon and others have argued that Pliny in fact presents a common low-level elite knowledge of the natural order of things. He was a nonspecialist, generally writing to nonspecialist aristocrats. See Beagon, *Roman Nature*, esp. v, 195–200. Pliny had previously presented the Euphrates as an untamed natural force fighting the rugged Taurus Mountain range.

119. Julian, *Satire on the Caesars* 326, p. 391 (Loeb trans.). The work often uses river crossing as symbolic of greatness. It is a humorous piece depicting emperors arguing with each other and with Alexander the Great over who is the greatest. Each ruler in turn touts his exploits that qualify him for more glory. One of the key elements is how many times a given ruler can claim to have crossed rivers.

120. *Panegyrici* N&R, 10.7.3. The panegyricist continues with reference to the Euphrates serving as a shelter in the East.

121. This panegyric shows the difficulty of reading this genre, for the orator goes on to claim that because of Maximianus, "all that I see beyond the Rhine is Roman."

122. Basil, *Homily* 4, p. 58.

123. Basil, *Homily* 7.3–4 (*Fathers of the Church*, trans.). Note that both Basil and Julian (*Horos Archaios*) use similar and strong terms to describe natural frontiers, words that root them in the far distant past if not the order of the universe itself.

124. On Cappadocian civic patriotism, see Kopecek, "Cappadocian Fathers."

125. Basil, *Homily* 7, p. 111.

126. A further reference to God being in control of rivers occurs in Basil's *Homily* 4. God, in his creation, gave the signal for rivers to flow. Basil asks his congregation to contemplate them sometime. Theodore of Sykeon, *Life of St. Theodore*, 43, presents God's control over Nature at one point by praying over a violent river, making it safe and easy to cross. And Gregory of Nyssa suggests that their movement could be the cause of human fate (*Patrologia Graeca*, ed. Migne, 45.161a; *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1991], 2:1798).

127. Other scriptural references to the Euphrates as a border include Deuteronomy 11:24, repeating the limits of the promised land at "the river, the river Euphrates"; II Samuel 8:3, where David kills the son of a king as he "went to recover his border at the

Euphrates" (cf. I Chron. 5:9); Psalm 72, which promises that the Kingdom of Messiah "shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River [Euphrates] to the ends of the earth" (verse 8). Augustine, however, takes this river to be the Jordan because of Christ's baptism there.

128. *Itinerarium Egeriae* 18.2–3

129. For the text and notes, see E. O. Winstedt, ed., *Cosmas Indicopleustes: The Christian Topography of Cosmas, an Egyptian Monk* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1909). See Wolska-Conus, *Topographie*.

130. See Mango, *Byzantium*, 176, quoted in Lee, *Information*, 83.

131. *Expositio Totius Mundi* 4.

132. Although the old question of whether Ammianus was a Christian has been long settled (he was not), the question of the extent of Christian influence on him remains open. See Barnes, *Ammianus Marcellinus*, 63, 82. See also Rike, Apex Omnium, 1–7; Hunt, "Christians and Christianity."

133. Amm. Marc. 14.8.5: *Orientis vero limes in longum protentus et rectum, ab Euphratis fluminis ripis ad usque supercilia porrigitur Nili, laeva Saracenis conterminans gentibus, dextra pelagi fragoribus patens*.

134. On biblical geography in general, see Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage*, 83, 88. See also J. Matthews, "Hostages," 44.

135. *Scriptores Historiae Augustae Hadrian* 11.2: *barbaros Romanosque divideret*.

136. For comparison of arguments about Hadrian's Wall with those of the Great Wall of China, see Gaubatz, *Beyond the Great Wall*. For debates about the role of Hadrian's wall, see D. J. Breeze and B. Dobson, *Hadrian's Wall*, (London: Allen Lane, 1976); D. J. Breeze, "Britain," in *The Roman World*, ed. J. Wacher, vol. 1, part 4, *The Frontiers*, 208.

137. See Whittaker, *Frontiers*, esp. 80–81, 91. See also P. Trousset, "Les Bornes du Bled Segui: Nouveau Aperçus sur la Centuriation Romaine du Sud Tunisien," *Antiquités Africaines* 12 (1978): 125–77; Trousset, "Signification"; B. Shaw, "Fear and Loathing: The Nomad Menace and North Africa," in *Roman Africa/L'Afrique Romaine*, ed. C. M. Wells (Ottawa: Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1982), 29–50; Cherry, *Frontier and Society*, 62. See also Euzennat, "Frontière."

138. Procopius, *De Aedificiis* 2.9.3–9, quoted in E. K. Fowden, *Barbarian Plain*, 93.

139. *CT* 7.15.1: *munitionemque limites atque fossati*.

140. Daniels, "Frontiers: Africa," 241–42, 246.

141. Rushworth, "North African Deserts," 309.

142. Rushworth, "North African Deserts," 309.

143. A related question relates to the problem of boundary stones. If, as Whittaker proposes, Roman boundary stones are found beyond the walls and ditches, then how can the walls be considered boundaries of empire? Many have stated outright that no boundary stones separating Roman from barbarian have ever been found. Ammianus records events "in the region called Capillacii or Palas, where boundary stones marked the frontiers of the Alamanni and Burgundians" (Amm. Marc. 18.2.15: *ad regionem (cui Capillacii vel Palas nomen est) ubi terminales lapides Alamannorum et Burgundiorum confinia distinguebant*). At first glance, this does not seem relevant to the discussion, but Potter contends that the best manuscripts record not *Alemannorum* but *Romanorum* and that these boundary stones, although irrelevant in 359, nonetheless marked Roman from barbarian territory ("Empty Areas," 272).

144. Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy*, 114.

145. Amm. Marc. 23.5.2: *cuius moenia Abora et Euphrates ambiunt flumina, velut spatium insulare fingentes . . . muris turribusque circumdedit celsis, cum in ipsis barbarorum confiniis interiores limites ordinaret, documento recenti perterritus, ne vagarentur per Syriam Persae, ita ut paucis ante annis cum magnis provinciarum contigerat damnis* (Loeb trans.).

146. Appian, *Praefatio* 28. See Potter, *Prophecy,* 288–89. Potter writes, "the view of the empire as an area existing within confines provided by a line of fortifications is a radical change from earlier notions that there were *termini imperii* which it was possible to pass beyond. See also Potter, "Empty Areas."

147. Aristides, *Ad Rom.* 81–84. Cited from J. Oliver, "The Ruling Power: A Study of the Roman Empire in the Second Century after Christ through the Roman Oration of Aelius Aristides," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* n.s. 43 (1953), pt. 4, 895–907. See Whittaker, *Frontiers,* 38, for an alternative analysis to what I am proposing with this and other passages. Mattern, in *Rome and the Enemy,* seems to miss the metaphorical wall here as she questions at one point what literal wall is meant by such a reference (110 n. 135).

148. Herodian 2.11.5. For the development of the theme of the wall of the Roman Empire dividing civilized from barbarian, see J. Palm, *Rom, Römertum und Imperium in der Griechischen Literatur der Kaiserzeit* (Lund: Gleerup, 1959). Whittaker, *Frontiers,* 37, specifically rejects the idea that these images hint at a mentality of defensive imperialism. He cites another reference in Aristides: "you [Rome] recognize no fixed boundaries, nor does another dictate to you to what point your control reaches" (*Ad Rom.* 10). Whittaker, however, does not account for the fact that Aristides seems to be holding a new ideology with the wall metaphor and that it is perfectly natural that he should not be using it consistently throughout. The weight of tradition is not necessarily cast completely aside with ideological innovation; surely the elements can exist in tension and even ambivalence. See also Whittaker's refutations in "Where Are the Frontiers Now?" 36–38.

149. Thirteenth Sibylline Oracle line 105. See Potter, *Prophecy,* 288–89n.

150. Seager, "Perceptions."

151. Amm. Marc. 25.9.3.

152. John Chrysostom, *De S. Babyla contra Julianum et Gentiles,* in *Patrologia Graeca* 50, J. P. Migne, ed. (Paris: Migne, 1857–66) , 569–70.

153. Libanius, *or.* 18.278, 12.91.

154. James of Edessa, "Hymns of Severus of Antioch," 216 (*Patrologia Orientalis* 75.676), cited in E. K. Fowden, *Barbarian Plain,* 46.

155. The fact that only Greek easterners refer to the walls of empire might suggest that in the absence of literal walls like the *fossata* or Hadrian's Wall, the Greek writers simply preferred to speak of metaphorical frontiers.

CHAPTER 4

1. Emperors also are depicted using meteorological imagery, moving about quickly and appearing suddenly; see Amm. Marc. 21.9.6 on Julian. Ando, *Imperial Ideology,* 196, cites Pliny, *Panegyric* 80.3 to illustrate the long history of the association. On the altar in Athens, see Aeschines, *Against Ctesiphon* 2.145.

2. See Hesiod, *Works and Days* 763–64: "Rumor which many people spread never dies entirely; Rumor also is some kind of divinity." For references to Rumor's divine status in early Imperial sources, see Ovid, *Epistula ex Ponto* 2.1.19; Vergil, *Aeneid* 4.174;

Lucan 4.574; Martial 7.6.4. On the place of Rumor in classical Greece, see Lewis, *News,* esp. 12–13. See also Ober, *Mass and Elite,* chap. 3. On rumor in Roman sources, see the as-yet-unsurpassed Riepl, *Nachrichtenwesen,* 235–40.

3. Amm. Marc. 18.6.3; see also 26.1.4, 21.9.3, 22.2.3, 22.2.5. For Rumor in Libanius, see *ep.* 1402.

4. On arguments for the popularization of beliefs among late Roman historians—the rise of *superstitio*—see chap. 6 as well as Momigliano, "Popular Beliefs"; MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism,* 74–102; J. Matthews, *Roman Empire,* 249, 424–25. For an attempt to read the Ammianus passages in purely technical and strategic terms, altogether leaving out the religious and belief aspects, see Nicasie, *Twilight of Empire,* 157.

5. Amm. Marc. 19.10.1 characterizes the arena of action near Nisibis and Amida as the "extreme East [*in Orientis extimo*]" from the perspective of the city of Rome (*dum haec per varios turbines in Orientis extimo festinantur, difficultatem adventantis inopiae frumentorum urbs verebatur aeternae*). The association was common. See *De Civ. D.* 4.23, 5.2; John Chrysostom, *De S. Babyla contra Julianum et Gentiles* 22.124, where the city is presented as an "unbreachable wall" at the east of the Empire.

6. Take, for example, the legendary images of peoples beyond the North African frontiers, such as the "outermost Garamantes," the acephalous Blemmyae, and so forth. See Daniels, "Frontiers: Africa," 235. A lack of news flow from the North African frontier in general encouraged such images in the late Republic and the early Empire.

7. *Life of St. Daniel the Stylite,* 56; Julian, *Misopogon* 360, pp. 48, 483 (Loeb trans.); Libanius, *or.* 13.32.

8. As does Whittaker, *Frontiers,* 69. See also the critique of Luttwak in Mann, "Power." The basis for Mann's critique is that the Romans' "poor communication" coupled with "distorted notions" of geography and cartography rendered impossible a Grand Strategy. Millar, "Emperors," addresses the spread of information with a bit more sympathy for Roman perspectives and worldviews.

9. Lewis, *News,* 5, notes two reasons for the lack of studies of ancient news. The first is that our own view of news in the modern world is too rooted in print culture to appreciate or explore its role in more oral societies without hinting at "inadequate media." The second is that for all of the ancient world, military studies have dominated analyses of communication.

10. Eadie, "One Hundred Years," 135.

11. Although Bourdieu, to my knowledge, never uses the term *worldview,* his approach is conducive to this type of study. For Bourdieu, the habitus is a "product of history" that affirms and produces individual and collective practices (*Outline,* 82). The habitus becomes the site of negotiation between the "objective structures" of a society and its practices. Practices become legitimate through a process of "universal mediation which causes an agent's practices to be sensible or reasonable" (75). The product of this mechanism is a "common-sense world endowed with objectivity and secured with a consensus of meaning" (83). New information can challenge and change this system—a heterodoxy challenges doxa, a situation in which there is no dissenting voice. In turn, a defensive orthodoxy emerges that struggles with the heterodoxy.

12. Lewis, *News,* 25.

13. In his analysis of Greek democracy, Ober, *Mass and Elite,* xiii, presents texts as "symbol systems that must be understood in relation to their receptors." His approach, which presents "community" as assuming a "minimal level of shared values," is not

perfectly adaptable to analyses of the later Roman Empire, but it is instructive here in that it suggests that texts are not just personal reflections, however strong their potential idiosyncrasies.

14. Bourdieu, *Outline*, 167.

15. The starting point for time of ancient news travel is Duncan-Jones, *Structure and Scale*. See also Peachin, *Roman Imperial Titulature;* Ando, *Imperial Ideology*, 121–, especially his notes on these pages.

16. For a detailed (and copiously documented) study of Roman intelligence gathering, see Austin and Rankov, *Exploratio*, although the work has a heavy emphasis on the earlier Empire. More specific for Late Antique military intelligence is Austin, *Ammianus on Warfare*. On war news, see Chauvot, "Guerre et Diffusion."

17. McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 84.

18. Potter, *Prophets*, 94–95. For ancient literacy in general see Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 272, 329–31. Many scholars would put the estimate higher. For discussion of Harris, see Beard *Literacy*, 285–322. Harris mentions the great variety throughout the Roman world and presents the general factors of decline, dated to the third century and following. These include the decline of urbanization, the dwindling of the city elites, and weakening of the schools.

19. See "Literacy," in *LA*, 543–44, which provides a helpful list of questions for analyzing literacy in the Roman world. The Roman legal system and tradition of written law presumed a centrality of the written word at all periods of the Empire. Bowman and Woolf, *Literacy and Power*, contains some helpful essays.

20. See G. Sabbah, *La Méthode d' Ammien Marcellin: Recherches sur la Construction du Discours Historique dans les* "Res Gestae" (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1978), pt. 2, pp. 115–239.

21. Ando provides the simple but helpful definition here of *contemporary* as "within living memory" (*Imperial Ideology*, 122).

22. Amm. Marc. 26.1.1.

23. See in particular C. Fornara, *The Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 47–90.

24. Amm. Marc. 16.1.2–4.

25. These writings are not the same as the official written military records common up until 256 in the East, to be revived under the tetrarchy. Their availability to a civilian suggests that they were more popular in nature than the official reports. See Fink, *Roman Military Records;* Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 293. These reports generally consist of name rosters, supply lists, receipts, and the like. They are not narrative accounts but were probably consulted in the construction of historical narratives. From a later context, Vegetius, *Epitoma Rei Militarius* 2.19 records that "since there are many offices in the legions which require educated soldiers [*litteratos milites*], it is appropriate that those who test the recruits should examine the stature, physical strength and mental alertness of all of them; but in some cases skill in note-taking [*notarum peritia*] and practice in arithmetic is selected" (quoted in Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 294). This passage shows that literacy among soldiers was desirable and elevated some above the rest. On the literacy of soldiers, see Bowman, "Roman Imperial Army."

26. Libanius, *ep.* 1434 (Loeb trans., throughout). This Philagrius is recorded in Amm. Marc. 21.4.2 as *comes postea Orientis* and would have been based in Libanius' Antioch. See also J. Matthews, *Roman Empire*, 376; *Prosopography of the Later Roman*

Empire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971–). On the role of the *notarius*, see A. H. M. Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, index entry for "notaries"; "notarii," in *LA*, 611–12; H. C. Teitler, Notarii *and* Exceptores: *An Enquiry into the Role and Significance of Shorthand Writers in the Imperial and Ecclesiastical Bureaucracy of the Roman Empire* (Amsterdam: Gieben, 1985).

27. Libanius, *ep.* 1220.7. A similar passage records Libanius attempting to get information from eyewitnesses (*ep.* 1434).

28. That it was normal for these writings to be dispersed is hinted at by Libanius' frustration at not having access to them this time. His access now was limited because people feared for their lives if they had praised Julian.

29. Libanius records news arriving from the eastern frontier to Antioch in *epp.* 758.4, 802, 1220.8, 1402, 1426, 1434. See Ando, *Imperial Ideology*, 128.

30. On their use in administration in particular, see Kelly, "Later Roman Bureaucracy."

31. Amm. Marc. 16.12.70; see also 28.1.15, 18.1.15.

32. Ando, *Imperial Ideology*, 118, further interprets this information as being a part of an "iconographic language through which they could share their emperor."

33. B. Isaac, "Eusebius and the Geography of Roman Provinces," in Isaac, *Near East*, 284–306.

34. Eunapius, frag. 17 (Blockley trans., throughout).

35. Eunapius, frag. 25.

36. On the piece, see J. Matthews, *Roman Empire*, 161–75, 505. The suggestion that Ammianus and Libanius used it comes from F. Paschoud, "Quand Parut la Première Édition de l'Histoire d'Eunape?" in *Bonner Historia-Augusta-Colloquium 1979/1981* (Bonn: Habelt, 1983), 149–62.

37. See J. Matthews, "Making of the Text," 19.

38. Amm. Marc. 16.12.69–70. Ando, *Imperial Ideology*, 117, notes this reference and further cites *CT*, which refers to texts in imperial archives in cities (118).

39. Theodosius II, *Novellae* 24.5, in *CT*.

40. Theodosius II, *Novellae* 24.5, in *CT*.

41. Potter, *Prophets*, 121, suggests that public inscriptions might have become so commonplace that they were forgotten or disregarded altogether. He thinks that the emperors then turned to other, more attractive media, such as eye-catching pictures with brief inscriptions or inscriptions on statues.

42. R. Hammer, *Sifre: A Tannaitic Commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 62, quoted in S. Lieberman, "Roman Legal Institutions in Early Rabbinics and in the *Acta Martyrum*," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 35 (1944): 6–9; also cited in Potter, *Prophets*, 110–11.

43. For specific examples, see Potter, *Prophets*, 118–19.

44. *ILS* 754.

45. *CIL* 13.8502; J. J. Wilkes, "British Anonymity in the Roman Empire," in *The Saxon Shore*, ed. D. E. Johnston (London: Council for British Archaeology, 1977), 76. See also Millar, "Emperors," 14.

46. Malalas 308 (= 12.40). The text is very difficult to make out here. The Latin translation of Malalas reads *stativa*.

47. Amm. Marc. 18.2.15. The text of this passage is heavily debated. Potter defends "*ubi terminales lapides Romanorum et Bugundiorum* [*sic*] *confinia distinguebant*" on

the basis of what he calls the best manuscripts and other early editions; see his "Empty Areas," which agrees with the reading in the Teubner text. J. Matthews, *Roman Empire*, 524, challenges this reading, supporting the reading that appears in *Res Gestae*, trans. J. C. Rolfe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982). Loeb Classical Library, "*Alemannorum et Burgundiorum*." See also Potter, "*Tabula Siarensis*"; Isaac's challenge in "Meaning," in *Near East*, 382–83.

48. Bradbury, "Libanius' Letters," 74. Bradbury provides a helpful analysis of Libanius and his network of correspondents.

49. Libanius relied on any possible source of information, including military couriers (see *ep.* 1367, to Modestus). Libanius mentions a mixture of truth and falsehood in such reports. Many of Libanius' letters and orations survive because they came to be used as models. Also, he collected and duplicated them himself for publication (*epp.* 88.5, 1218.2, 1307.1–3). Hence, they would continue "broadcasting" for years to come. See Ando, *Imperial Ideology*, 127. See also Libanius, *epp.* 760, 1106.

50. The letter referred to is *ep.* 98. Julian wrote this letter from Hierapolis in mid-May 363, according to accounts of Ammianus (23.2.6) and Zosimus (3.12.1).

51. Libanius, *or.* 1.132–34. The description of what Julian actually did beyond the frontier was pure conjecture, Libanius admits.

52. That Libanius used material from his informants in his orations is almost too obvious to mention, but he does specifically request such information from the *notarius* Philagrius (*ep.* 1434). Libanius did not deliver all of his orations. He himself speaks of some reticence or slowness in speaking or publishing some (*epp.* 33, 283, 916, 877). For the controversy over the date and circumstance of the delivery of *or.* 1, see A. F. Norman's introduction to Libanius, *or.* 1:xvii.

53. Libanius, *ep.* 1367.

54. Whatever the real threat on the North African frontier, it is clear that the Romans in general perceived the threat as less than elsewhere. Only one legion was stationed there permanently. Whereas the eastern frontier garrisoned some seventy-eight to eighty-five thousand troops, North Africa and Egypt combined had a maximum of between forty-three thousand and forty-five thousand. See Rushworth, "North African Deserts," 301. It should also be noted that the North African/Egyptian frontier was the longest one in the Empire, measuring some twenty-five hundred miles as the crow flies. See Daniels, "Frontiers: Africa," 223.

55. Boniface had been disgraced and deposed by a certain Aetius two years before the writing of this letter. Augustine's point throughout is that the barbarians' fear of Boniface is now gone and that he is needed once again.

56. Augustine, *ep.* 220.

57. Augustine, *ep.* 199.46.

58. The North African "nomad threat" was inconsistent and remains difficult to trace. The strengthening of the frontier is recorded in a set of inscriptions honoring Commodus' late-second-century efforts to protect the African provinces. Both record construction of watchtowers near Auzia, on the route between there and Rapidum. *CIL* 8.20816, 22696 record the building of new towers and the repair of old ones "providing for the security of his provincials" (20816; *Imp. Caesar M. Aurel. Commodus . . . securitati provincialum suorum consulens, turres novas instituit et veteres refecit oper[a] militum suorum*). These are commented on at more length in Rushworth, "North African Deserts," 302–3. Later inscriptions continue to speak of the strengthening of the

North African frontier. *CIL* 8.5352 records a series of towers raised to protect the empire and aided in their task by Christian martyrs. For a unique approach to the North African barbarian questions, see Shaw, "Fear and Loathing," 29–50. See also Shaw, "Soldiers and Society," in Shaw, *Rulers*.

59. Augustine, *ep.* 46, *ep.* 47: *neque enim tantummodo limiti, sed universis provinciis pax conciliatur iuratione barbarica*.

60. "Letter of Valerius."

61. *Itinerarium Egeriae* 7, 19, in *CC* 125. Throughout her account, Egeria notes crossing the frontier (*finis*) between provinces and also notes distances from the "frontier of Mesopotamia" (*fines Mesopotamiae*).

62. Egeria, *Itinerarium Egeriae* 20.12. See chap. 2 for complete text.

63. "Letter of Valerius." The compiler of a glossary of the eighth or ninth century also refers to the pilgrimage, "'The Ansileubian': *Liber Glossarum,* either from Spain or France," in *Glossaria latina iussa Academiae britannicae* (Paris, Société anonyme d'édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1926–), ed. Lindsay and Mountford, 1:110 n. 377. Peter the Deacon, a monk of Monte Cassino and the librarian of the abbey, also mentions Egeria's travels in his book on holy places (Petrus Diaconus, *De Locis Sanctis, CC* 175, 93–103).

64. See MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony;* J. Matthews, *Roman Empire,* 248–49. Matthews sees Late Antique ceremonial as one of many ways in which popular modes of communication were replacing "at every level the more literary, philosophical debates about freedom and political rights which, within a much narrower social milieu, had characterised these relations in the early empire." McCormick, *Eternal Victory,* analyzes the phenomenon as well, tracing Late Antique ceremonial into the early Middle Ages.

65. On the connection of the traditional Roman triumph with the Late Antique *adventus* ceremony, see MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony,* 33–35.

66. On captives moving within the Roman world, see Lieu, "Captives, Refugees, and Exiles." For a wider description concerned largely with Roman views of foreign and exotic lands, see J. Matthews, "Hostages."

67. Libanius, *ep.* 1220.

68. Pliny, *Natural History. De Civ. D.* 16.8 also describes an unnamed African people with no heads pictured on a mosaic in the harbor of Carthage. Research on the Blemmyae was carried out in the later Empire, and such images slowly were changed. Olympiodorus 35.2 records how he traveled among the Blemmyae specifically for "purposes of research."

69. *Expositio Totius Mundi* 62.

70. *Scriptores Historiae Augustae, Probus* 17, 1–6.

71. Bell et al., *Abinnaeus Archive,* section 1.

72. Eusebius, *Vita Constantini,* in *Eusebius,* ed. and trans. Cameron and Hall, 4.7.1.

73. Austin and Rankov, *Exploratio,* esp. 206, 210.

74. See Ziegler, "Civic Coins." Ziegler argues that the emperors' presence led to an influx of visitors as well as the proliferation of bronze coinage. His account traces how numismatic evidence relates to the political upheavals in Asia Minor.

75. Libanius, *or.* 12.40.

76. See T. C. Skeat, ed., *Papyri from Panopolis in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin* (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis, 1964), 1, 2.

77. Libanius, *ep.* 331; D&L 223.

78. Other examples are recorded at Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* 3 (Plotinus trying to travel through Persian territory even to India); Amm. Marc. 25.4.23 (Metrodorus' lies breaking down relations between Rome and Persia).

79. Amm. Marc. 17.5.15. The incident, occurring around 358, is recorded in Eunapius, *Vitae Sophistarum* 465–66 as well.

80. On these itinerant intellectuals, see G. Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

81. Eunapius, *Vitae Sophistarum*, 504.

82. Eumenius, *Panegyric* 9.21. Another map appears in a letter from Julian to Alypius (*ep.* 7), referring to both *geographia* and *diagramma*. Vegetius, *Epitoma Rei Militaris* 3.6 records an *itinerarium pictum*. See also Sherk, "Roman Geographical Exploration."

83. See Dilke, *Greek and Roman Maps*, 113–20, for descriptions of the *Tabula* and notes to current debates over the date and purpose of it.

84. Serious difficulties in dating the *Tabula* present many problems. Whittaker, *Frontiers*, 68, suggests that this merely marks a border between a province and a client state. He points to the words *fines exercitus Syriaticae*—or the end of the responsibility of the Syrian legions—to back up this claim. See also Isaac, *Limits*, 398.

85. Potter suggests that these might have been intended to catch the attention of those who had become disinterested in reading honorific inscriptions or history walls. His suggestion is attractive, although it would be difficult to prove (*Prophets*, 121). See also the description in MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony*, 11.

86. Herodian 3.9.12.

87. Herodian 7.2.8. Herodian relates that the picture was destroyed soon after, apparently as part of a *damnatio memoriae*. Whittaker, *Frontiers*, suggests that Herodian's account was based on these pictures.

88. Eunapius, frag. 68, from Blockley, *Fragmentary*.

89. Priscus 22.2.

90. Cf. scenes from the column of Trajan, where preparations for campaign, crossing the Danube frontier, and engaging the enemy form the central narrative. The sense is that the Empire is being extended and projected among foreign peoples. By Late Antiquity, the major image is the glory of the emperor and the defeated barbarians. Such visual depictions suggest images of a solidified and static frontier.

91. For a debate over the propaganda and/or communication value of Roman coinage, see A. H. M. Jones, "Numismatics and History," in *Essays in Roman Coinage Presented to Harold Mattingly*, ed. R. A. G. Carson and C. H. V. Sutherland (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), 13–33; and the reply to it in C. H. V. Sutherland, "The Intelligibility of Roman Imperial Coin Types," *JRS* 49 (1959): 46–55. See also a response to both in J. D. Evans, *The Art of Persuasion: Political Propaganda from Aeneas to Brutus* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 1–32.

92. On the visual value of coinage for the historian, see in particular MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony*, 11–12, and plates.

93. Amm. Marc. 26.7.11.

94. Eunapius, frag. 30, from Blockley, *Fragmentary*.

95. *Panegyrici* N&R, 9.21.

96. The Eastern Revolts of 175–272 are well explained and analyzed by Eadie, "One Hundred Years of Rebellion."

97. Libanius, *or.* 18.204–5.

98. Libanius, *ep.* 1367; D&L 257–58.

99. Libanius, *or.* 18.246.

100. Julian, *or.* 2.62B.

101. *Expositio Totius Mundi* 22.

102. Jerome, *Life of Malchus* 3. The whole of this life describes conditions on or near the eastern frontier, complete with local customs and Saracen raids against travelers on the roads. Malchus tells the story to Jerome when they meet near Antioch, thus verbally passing on firsthand news of the frontier.

103. Theodore of Sykeon, *Life of St. Theodore,* 73.

104. In addition to the large number of inscriptions that attest to troop movement (see Mitchell, *Anatolia,* 1:224–25), recent studies have shown how coinage can be used to trace troop movement. Mitchell argues that the presence of imperial coins, minted primarily for soldiers along the eastern frontier and distributed in finds widely across eastern Asia Minor, shows that the troops were far from sedentary and that they engaged in trade throughout (*Anatolia,* 1:242). The presence of imperial coins can be measured against civic coins, which were minted for local spending. Ziegler, "Civic Coins," also argues that coinage rate can trace troop movement throughout the eastern sector.

105. For veterans returning to native communities, see *IGR* III. no. 865 = *ILS* 8877; G. E. Bean, "Notes and Inscriptions from Pisidia. Part 1," *Anatolian Studies* 9 (1959): 67–117; *Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua* IV, no. 237. Theodore of Sykeon, *Life of St. Theodore,* gives reference throughout to travelers and military personnel passing the night at the small community on a major trunk road through Anatolia.

106. On the profound impact of military traffic throughout the Anatolian peninsula, see Mitchell, *Anatolia,* 1:124–35. The interaction between permanent garrisons and local populations is, however, a bit less clear. Pollard uses a case study to argue that there was very little interaction between army and civilians in Syria ("Roman Army"). This study specifically challenges Fentress, *Numidia,* which presented the army as a mediator between center and periphery. Pollard sides with a study of North Africa by Shaw, which also specifically challenged Fentress by proposing the model of a "total institution," or institution completely separate from wider society. See Pollard, *Soldiers, Cities, and Civilians;* see also Shaw, "Soldier and Society."

107. J. Matthews, *Roman Empire,* 378, 284–85.

108. Libanius, *ep.* 818.

109. *Panegyrici* N&R, 2.47.6.

110. Julian, *or.* 2.62B; Libanius 59.101; D&L 181.

111. Libanius, *or.* 59.84.

112. In *Homilae in Matthaeum* 19.9, Chrysostom mentions how his audience gives calm attention and silence—indeed, even upright posture—to the reading aloud of imperial letters. The letters, Chrysostom reveals, would be read in the theater, suggesting a large audience. If someone should disrupt the proceedings, Chrysostom says, it would show disrespect to the emperor himself and would be a capital offense. But when the "letters from heaven" are read in the churches, written by one "greater than the emperor," "there is constant turmoil everywhere," he admonishes. The implication here is that the reading of the letters was common and was held in large-capacity places to accommodate all the people. Cited in Ando, *Imperial Ideology,* 181.

113. Libanius, *ep.* 758.4; see also 802, 1220.8, 1402, 1426, 1434. These are referenced in Ando, *Imperial Ideology,* 128.

114. This does not hold true absolutely, however. The presence or absence of cities and passable roads, as will be seen later in the chapter, also could determine the range and intensity of news spread.

115. Libanius, *or.* 17.1.

116. Julian, *or.* 1.13–14.

117. See esp. chap. 6.

118. Libanius, *or.* 13.40. The rest of this passage suggests the proliferation of the news as Libanius, in fine panegyric fashion, declares that the whole world was rejoicing at the news—in the country; in houses, theaters, hills, and plains; and even on rivers, lakes, and the high seas.

119. Amm. Marc. 21.1.6. It is in this immediate context that Ammianus reacts against those who maliciously ascribe Julian's being "learned and devoted to all knowledge" to evil arts for divining future events. He gives a long digression on the power of divination. 21.1.7–14 provides a fascinating overview of a late Roman pagan addressing prophecy and divination.

120. Amm. Marc. 21.1.6.

121. Amm. Marc. 22.2.1–2, 22.2.3. Ammianus borrows the image of Rumor being driven through the sky by dragons from Hyginus, *Fabulae* 147, and Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 5.641–43.

122. Libanius, *or.* 1.134. Riepl, *Nachrichtenwesen,* 235–40, argues that because the Romans did not develop a relay system like the Persians, the Romans tried to explain rumor in different ways, resorting to divinity. To Riepl, as with many modern writers, divinity itself was the ancients' deus ex machina when other more preferred forms of communication broke down. Lenski, "*Initium Mali Romano Imperio,*" 163, also seems to present this position: "despair and breakdown of communication caused people to look to divine intervention." Yet it seems that ancients did not "resort" to divinity but that it formed a natural and accessible part of their worldview.

123. 21.1.14, quoting Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* 2.4.12 and *De Divinatione* 1.52.118.

CHAPTER 5

1. For a helpful analysis of the communication difficulties following the Battle of Adrianople, see Lenski, "*Initium Mali Romano Imperio*." The translation cited here is Lenski's.

2. For the whole context of human travel in antiquity, Casson, *Travel,* remains standard.

3. Lewis, *News,* 2–3.

4. Lewis, *News,* 2–3.

5. The starting point on all research on Roman roads is Chevallier, *Roman Roads*.

6. *Or.* 1.132–34.

7. On the high cost of maintaining Anatolia's crucial road system, see Mitchell, *Anatolia,* 1:126–28.

8. For the earlier imperial context, see Tacitus, *Annales* 1.50; for the later context, see Frontinus, *Strategameta* 1.3.10. See also *Scriptores Historiae Augustae, Hadrianus* 12.

9. Isaac, *Limits,* 119–23, 171, 199–206.

10. See Mitchell, *Anatolia,* 1:132–35. French has done an impressive amount of research on the roads of Anatolia; his publications of the milestones of Asia Minor have been particularly helpful in the study of Roman roads. See his "Study"; "Roman Road-System"; *Roman Roads and Milestones,* parts 1 and 2.

11. Lee, *Information,* 89. Lee borrows the term from K. Lynch. For a discussion of Lynch's contributions, see Downs, "Geographic Space Perception," 70–75.

12. Lightfoot, "Survival." See also Mitchell, *Anatolia,* 1:84–88.

13. Basil, *ep.* 1 (*Saint Basil, the Letters,* trans. R. J. Deferrari [New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1926–34]).

14. John Chrysostom, *Ad Stagirium* 2.189–201; also cited in Isaac, *Limits,* 183.

15. Amm. Marc. 14.11.5.

16. Eusebius, *Onomasticon.* See B. Isaac, "Eusebius and the Geography of Roman Provinces," in Isaac, *Near East,* 284–309.

17. Basil, *ep.* 195.

18. Basil, *epp.* 48, 27, 223.

19. Contrary to what we might think, sea travel in the Later Empire is often a concession to problems that keep one from traveling by land, the preferred method. St. Basil complains in *ep.* 215, for example, that the roads going to and from Cappadocia were so bad that the letter carrier would have to proceed by sea. The tone suggests that sea travel was a last resort. In a complaint against Justinian for dismantling the Roman imperial post, Procopius contends that Justinian thereby forced "the couriers to go all the way from Byzantium to Helenupolis by sea, much as they objected" (*Anecdota* 30 *Secret History,* trans. G. A. Williamson [London: Penguin, 1981]).

20. Basil, *ep.* 231.

21. Basil, *ep.* 268 (trans. Lenski).

22. For the only detailed study of Ancyra for any period of antiquity, see Foss, "Late Antique and Byzantine Ankara." Foss does much with the limited number of sources available, but his analysis also highlights the paucity of evidence in comparison to other eastern cities. See also the overview at Mitchell, *Anatolia,* 2:84–95. Bosch, in an expectedly thin volume, provides a brief chronological overview of the history of ancient Ancyra and a compendium of sources (*Quellen zur Geschichte der Stadt Ankara in Altertum*).

23. Mitchell, *Anatolia,* 1:127.

24. French, *Roman Roads and Milestones,* 1:13.

25. See Dilke, *Greek and Roman Maps,* 117. The other cities are Ravenna, Aquileia, Thessalonica, Nicaea, and Nicomedia, all in some sense capitals.

26. Mitchell, *Anatolia,* 1:127–29.

27. Herodotus, *Histories* 5.52–53.

28. On this fact, see Mitchell, *Anatolia,* 2:91; Foss, "Late Antique and Byzantine Ankara," 36–37. The tradition is preserved in a Syriac translation of Athanasius. It should also be noted that Augustus erected a copy of his *Res Gestae* here, the only complete copy extant.

29. Themistius, *or.* 1.

30. Amm. Marc. 22.8.8–14

31. *CT* 8.5.13.

32. *ILS* 754.

33. Amm. Marc. 25.10.11 (Jovian's complete itinerary is given here), 26.1.5, 26.8.4, 16.8.4, 14.8.3.

34. See Foss, "Late Antique and Byzantine Ankara," 55.

35. Mitchell, *Anatolia,* 2:87, notes the ten known Ancyran pupils who went to study with Libanius.

36. Dilke, *Greek and Roman Maps,* 116.

37. See French, *Roman Roads and Milestones,* 1:13.

38. *Expositio Totius Mundi* 41.

39. Procopius, *Anecdota* 30 (Penguin trans.). The ten-day journey would be about 240 miles. In support of this speed, see John Lydus, *De Magistratibus Populi Romani* 3.31.

40. See "*Agens in Rebus*," in *LA,* 278–79. See also A. H. M. Jones, *Later Roman Empire,* 833–34, for a discussion of the economic burden of the post, the reason Justinian had to discontinue it. E. J. Holmberg, *Zur Geschichte des Cursus Publicus* (Uppsala: Lundequistska, 1933), remains standard on the subject. A file of movements on the *cursus* was kept by the station leaders; an example survives in B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt, eds., *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1898–2001), 40:4087–88.

41. Libanius, *ep.* 1402.1–3 (D&L 258); Libanius, *or.* 14.13.

42. See W. Sinnigen, "The Roman Secret Service," *Classical Journal* 57 (1961): 65–72; Austin and Rankov, *Exploratio.*

43. See Symmachus, *epp.* 1.21, 4.7, 7.48, 105–6, 9.22; A. H. M. Jones, *Later Roman Empire,* 1346; *CT* 8.5.44, 54, 35; Amm. Marc. 21.16.18; Gregory of Nyssa, *ep.* 2.12; Gerontius, *Vita Melaniae Junioris.*

44. See Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage,* 57–58, for a description of the process with pilgrims.

45. Studied for the modern period in P. Bohannan and G. Dalton, eds., *Markets in Africa* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1962), 15–16. On this important function of fairs and markets, see also Lee, *Information,* 176–77. See also Ligt, *Fairs and Markets.* This is the most thorough treatment to date in any language. I leave aside weekly markets, which would have been very local, attracting only people from the surrounding communities.

46. W. G. Lockwood, "The Market-Place as a Social Mechanism in Peasant Society," *Kroeber Anthropological Society Papers* 32 (1965): 52–53, quoted in Lee, *Information,* 175–76.

47. Mitchell, *Anatolia,* 1:242.

48. Menander Rhetor ca. 366, in *Menander Rhetor,* ed. and trans. D. A. Russell and N. G. Wilson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981), quoted in Ligt, *Fairs and Markets,* 229; Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *ep.* 70. For an analysis of the importance of this fair as proof of the continuity between the late Roman and early Byzantine periods, see Ligt, *Fairs and Markets,* 69–70; Theodosius, *De Situ Terrae Sanctae* ca. 32, in *Itineraria et Alia Geographica, CC* 175. This passage is cited with this connection in Ligt, *Fairs and Markets,* 69. On the importance of Cilicia as a region from which frontier news could circulate westward, see Libanius, *or.* 15.45–50.

49. *Expositio Totius Mundi* 22.

50. Procopius *Bellum Persicum* 2.2.3.

51. Terms recorded in Festus, *Breviarium* 25; Amm. Marc. 25.7.9; but most fully at Petrus Patricius, frag. 14 (*Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum,* ed. C. Mueller

[Frankfurt: Minerva, 1975] 4.189); see Eadie, "Transformation," 75. Eadie cites A. Lewin, "Dall'Eufrate al Mar Rosso: Diocletian, l'Esercito e i Confini Tardoantichi," *Athenaeum* 68 (1990): 147. See also S. Gregory, *Roman Military Architecture*, 216; Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy*, 5–7; Winter, "On the Regulation," 555–71. Lee, *Information*, 63, doubts that this stipulation should be taken at face value, citing evidence that trade did take place elsewhere along the eastern frontier. His doubt seems well founded: most recent writers just link the two laws, over a half century apart. None of this, it seems, challenges the idea that the terms were relaxed before the mid-fourth century.

52. *Codex Iustinianus* 4.63.4. *Codex Iustinianus* 4.63.6 seems to be a reiteration of this law in 422, a testimony to short memory or disobedient merchants. Even the 408–9 law seems to have been a repeat of earlier enactments.

53. Although Lee, *Information*, 64, claims that "there is no ambiguity about the law of 408/409," a recent work, in fact, has problematized traditional explanations. French and Lightfoot, *Eastern Frontier*, 3, as well as Lieu, "Captives, Refugees, and Exiles," 491, interpret this law as a ban on "frontier fairs" in any place except these three areas. The interpretation often follows from analysis of the treaty of 298 and the importance of controlling the movements of merchants as potential spies. Ligt, *Fairs and Markets*, 53–54, conversely, sees it as a prohibition against exercising any business transaction [*nundinas exercere*] outside of these areas, not as a specific reference to fairs at all. Either way, the importance of keeping a close watch on merchants is clear.

54. Recorded at Lee, *Information*, 64.

55. Amm. Marc. 14.3.3, 18.8.13.

56. Procopius, *De Aedificiis* 3.3.9–11, cited in Whittaker, *Frontiers*, 78.

57. Optatus Milevitanus, *Contra Parm. Donat. 3.4*, in *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (Vienna: Academia Litterarum Caesarae Vindobonensis), vol. 26 (1893); see Ligt, *Fairs and Markets*, 120.

58. Ligt, *Fairs and Markets*, 121.

59. For an analysis of rural markets in Roman North Africa, see "Rural Markets in North Africa and the Political Economy of the Roman Empire," in Shaw, *Rulers*, 37–83.

60. Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii* 1.20, described in Whittaker, *Frontiers*, 68–69. Whittaker uses the presence of this market as proof that the Peutinger Table does not depict a linear frontier. But the presence of other fairs at the frontiers only further underscores the possibility of it actually being so.

61. *CIL* 4.4508.

62. Casson, *Travel*, 148.

63. With the best treatment in Futrell, *Blood in the Arena*, esp. chap. 2, and, using central place theory, in appendix 1.

64. See Kearney, *World View*; Kearney, "Worldview."

65. Lee, *Information*, 89.

66. A. Siegfried, *Germs and Ideas: Routes of Epidemics and Ideologies*, trans. J. Henderson and M. Clarasó (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), 39. See also Lee, *Information*, 151–52.

67. See the discussion by Bryan Ward-Perkins, "Urban Continuity?" in *Towns in Transition: Urban Evolution in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. N. Christie and S. T. Lotheby (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1996), 4–6, for some crucial definitions. See also C. E. Stancliffe, "From Town to Country: The Christianization of the

Tourraine, 360–600," in *The Church in Town and Countryside*, ed. D. Baker (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979), 45, for a discussion of gradations of urbanity and rurality (*oppida*, *vicus*, *pagus*, and so forth).

68. A. H. M. Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 714. See also K. Green, *Archaeology of the Roman Economy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 67–97.

69. N. Pounds cautions against an overemphasis on numbers in deciding rural versus urban. For instance, literary sources recognize as cities some areas with presumably no more than five hundred inhabitants. See Pounds, "Urbanization of the Classical World," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 59 (1969): 135–52.

70. Based in part on Ward-Perkins, "Urban Continuity?" 4–6.

71. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, vol. 1, introduction.

72. Libanius, *or.* 12.71, 67.20, 18.264.

73. Rushworth, "North African Deserts," 301.

74. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 2:116.

75. They also began to challenge or outshine centers of cultural focus even as some gave the impression of being cities with their walled sanctuaries and internal buildings. See Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 2:117.

76. Lewis, *News*, 39.

77. On eastern pilgrimage, see Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage*. For travel and lodging on the way to and from pilgrimage sites, see Casson, *Travel*, 300–329.

78. On motives, see Mitchell, *Anatolia*, esp. 2:116.

79. On the attraction and function of eastern Christian centers, see Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 2:116.

80. Palmer, *Monk and Mason*, 112. See also Mitchell, *Regional Epigraphic Catalogues*, 258–59, for churches on main military roads.

81. John of Ephesus (507–89) records many examples of such shelter in *Lives of Eastern Saints;* see also Lieu, "Captives, Refugees, and Exiles," 490.

82. *Itinerarium Egeriae* 6, 8, 23, 7, 20.

83. Theodore of Sykeon, *Life of St. Theodore* 3.

84. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 2:124.

85. *Life of St. Daniel the Stylite* 57.

86. *Life of St. Daniel the Stylite* 55, 56.

87. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 2:117.

88. *Itinerarium Egeriae* 23.4. On Isaurian raids in the second half of the fourth century, see Amm. Marc. 14.2.

89. S. Gregory, *Roman Military Architecture*, 97.

90. Basil, *ep.* 9.

91. Such as Theodore of Sykeon's monastery near a major road. Gregory of Nazianzus also mentions monasteries near road stations. See *epp.* 163, 238. See Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 2:116, for epigraphic evidence that monasteries tended to follow road networks. See *CIL* 6660 for an example of the amenities that could be provided at some forts near the eastern frontier, just the type of arrangement a monastery could use.

92. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 2:116.

93. Cyprian, *ep.* 80.1; *Letters of Cyprian of Carthage*, trans. G. W. Clarke (New York: Newman, 1984).

94. Basil, *ep.* 231.

95. Ando, *Imperial Ideology*, 120.

96. Pollard, "Roman Army," 211.

97. Wells, "*Profuit Invitis te Dominate Capi*," 441. See also Whittaker, *Frontiers*, 200: "as barbarian and Roman became more alike, the dominant upper-class ideology became more shrill in its chauvinistic refusal to recognize the fact." Whittaker's argument here seems to mirror an argument about mimicry set forth by H. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. F. Cooper and A. L. Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 152–60. Bhabha's argument is based in colonial cultures and analyzes what he calls the "almost but not quite/not white" phenomenon in which the Other is mimicking the dominant but cannot ever be the same—"the reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of difference." The Other that provokes the strongest yet most ambivalent response is the one who looks and acts the most like the colonizer. Whittaker's analysis works well for an ancient Western European context, but I am not so sure about the other frontiers. Persians, for example, did not become more and more like Romans. Furthermore, neither they nor the African "Moors" carved out "sub-Roman" kingdoms after the fall of the Empire. In fact, we are told at one point that "crossing the Euphrates" made "a Roman resemble a Persian," suggesting a cultural difference in appearance (Thirteenth Sibylline Oracle). The frontiers I am exploring maintained that crucial difference. Therefore, the ideology of frontiers seems not to have been worked out between Romans and barbarians in Europe but most likely along the Eastern frontier in response to heightened news flow.

CHAPTER 6

1. Terminus protected all Roman boundary markers, including those between private properties. Augustine here specifically connects him with the *fines* of the empire, showing that Terminus' role extended very broadly. Terminus and Iuventas, two aspects of Jupiter, expressed both his military and protector aspects. Whittaker connects these dual aspects, via Dumézil, to polarities running deep in Indo-European culture. See Whittaker, *Frontiers*, 11, 29; see also "Terminus," in *Real-Encyclopädie der Klassischen Altertumswissenschaft*, ed. A. Pauly, G. Wissowa, and W. Kroll (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1894–1972), 781–84.

2. *De Civ. D.* 4.29.

3. Brown, *Authority and the Sacred*.

4. Both Brown, *Authority and the Sacred*, and MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism*, use the term *thought world* to summarize the Christian and pagan modes of thought.

5. See Chuvin, *Chronicle*.

6. See *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* on the distinguished career of Volusianus. See also Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 300.

7. MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism*. See also MacMullen, *Christianizing*; MacMullen, *Paganism*.

8. See Bouche-Leclerq, *Histoire*, 549–76; Parke, *Sibyls*; Potter, *Prophets*; P. J. Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*; Hellholm, *Apocalypticism*; most recently (but rather thinly) Wildfang and Isager, *Divination and Portents*.

9. See the brief but helpful description of this theme in Cameron, "Remaking the Past," 4–5.

10. Potter, *Prophets*, 2.

11. Although, as will be seen, there were some crucial shifts in presentation of divine and superstitious elements in histories. See MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism*, for an argument about the proliferation of "superstition" (*superstitio*) prior to and concurrent with Diocletian's reign (284–305). MacMullen juxtaposes the more "scientific" observers of the earlier empire—Pliny, Plotinus, and Plutarch—with more superstitious types who came into positions of political and cultural power in the later Roman Empire. See also Momigliano, "Popular Religious Beliefs."

12. Potter, *Prophets*, 213.

13. Examples abound in *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, Ammianus Marcellinus, Eunapius, Zosimus, Photius, Olympiodorus, Philostorgius, and Socrates Scholasticus, among many others. See Momigliano, "Popular Religious Beliefs."

14. See Momigliano, "Popular Religious Beliefs"; MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism*. Not all recent historians have accepted this notion. See in particular, Potter, *Prophets*. Although he sees more continuity between historiography of the earlier and the later Empire than do MacMullen and Momigliano, Potter acknowledges that Ammianus was thoroughly convinced of divination (52).

15. See Beagon, *Roman Nature*, 85–87; MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism*, 74–102.

16. MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism*, 83.

17. Amm. Marc. 21.1.8, translation in Rike, Apex Omnium, 13–14.

18. Rike, Apex Omnium, 13–14; Liebeschuetz, "Ammianus, Julian, and Divination," is helpful as well.

19. Amm. Marc. 21.1.13.

20. Amm. Marc. 21.1.13, 21.1.8–12.

21. *De Civ. D.* 4.29.

22. Niccoli, *Prophecy*.

23. Lerner, *Powers*, esp. 8.

24. Potter, *Prophets*, 97.

25. See J. Matthews, *Roman Empire*, 118–22, for a helpful introduction to the context of oracles in Ammianus.

26. McQuail, *Media Performance*.

27. J. Matthews, *Roman Empire*, 249.

28. Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 272, 329–31.

29. Potter, *Prophets*, 94–95. See also Bowman and Woolf, *Literacy and Power*; chaps. 11 and 12 address Late Antiquity. Literacy in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages has been well explored by Petrucci, *Writers and Readers*; McKitterick, *Uses of Literacy*.

30. On the issue of continuity, see Liebeschuetz, "Ammianus, Julian, and Divination"; J. Matthews, *Roman Empire*, 226.

31. Cameron, "Remaking the Past," 4.

32. Julian, *or.* 4.152.

33. See D. S. Potter, "Oracles," in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd ed., ed. S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1071–72. The books were deposited from the early days of the Republic in the temple of Capitoline Jupiter and later in the temple of Palatine Apollo and were retained under a special body of priests, the *duoviri sacris faciundis*. The number and thus the designation of this group changed over time. See also Parke, *Sibyls*, 190–215.

34. Amm. Marc. 23.1.7: *imperatorem eo anno discedere a limitibus suis*. Rutilius Namatianus, *De Reditu Suo* 2.52, records that the books were ultimately destroyed by Stilicho, but Procopius records that they were consulted in Latin as late as 536–37 (*Gothicus* 1.24).

35. Contrary to Athanasius' contention that oracles ceased to exist with Christ (*De Incarnatione* 8.46).

36. *The Shepherd of Hermas* and various interpreters of Vergil's *Fourth Eclogue* among them.

37. On the complex question of the church fathers and the Sibylls, see Thompson, "Patristic Use"; Collins, "Development"; Parke, *Sibyls;* Potter, "Sibyls" (review of Parke).

38. Lactantius, *Epitome Institutionum* 68 (73), quoted in Collins, "Development." Other Christian writers who view the Sibyls favorably include Theophilus, Clement of Alexandria, Justin Martyr, Eusebius, Hippolytus, Tertullian, and St. Augustine.

39. *De Civ. D.* 18.23.

40. For prophecy in the Middle Ages, see Lerner, *Powers;* Anderson, *Alexander's Gate*.

41. See Goffart, "Zosimus," reprinted in W. Goffart, *Rome's Fall and After* (London: Hambledon, 1989), 81–110. See also Mazzarino, *End;* Kaegi, *Byzantium*.

42. Zosimus 1.57. Zosimus makes the first statement after telling a story about the Palmyrenes consulting an oracle about whether they would win the eastern Empire. His view of decreasing divination is probably responding to Christianization. See Zosimus 2.6–7. See also Eunapius, *Vitae Sophistarum* 6.19.17, 7.3.5, for examples of the neglect of oracles.

43. Zosimus 2.34.

44. See Liebeschuetz, "Ammianus, Julian, and Divination." For their use in the late Republic and early Empire, see Krause, "Interpretation."

45. MacBain, *Prodigy and Expiation*.

46. See MacBain, *Prodigy and Expiation,* for an analysis of the incidence and decline of portents in the late Roman Republic. For an analysis of the comparatively scarce early Imperial prodigies and their use, see Bowersock, "Mechanics."

47. See MacBain, *Prodigy and Expiation,* for a helpful analysis of these two extremes of interpretation for the later Republic.

48. See Momigliano, "Popular Religious Beliefs." Against this common notion, see R. Scott, *Religion and Philosophy in the Histories of Tacitus* (Rome: American Academy, 1968).

49. Momigliano, "Popular Religious Beliefs," 8. On developments in Roman attitudes toward *superstitio,* see MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism,* 74–102.

50. See also Amm. Marc. 21.1.17, 21.14.3–5, For a discussion of these elements in Ammianus' historical writing, see Enßlin, *Zur Geschichtschreibung,* 83–96. See also Rike, Apex Omnium, 8–36; Blockley, *Ammianus Marcellinus,* 174; Liebeschuetz, "Ammianus, Julian, and Divination"; most recently, Harrison, "*Templum Mundi Totius*."

51. Amm. Marc. 25.10.1. Libanius records that earthquakes were sent to prove that fate now disfavors the Empire; see *or.* 27 and 28.

52. Amm. Marc. 25.10.2. An alternate view is given in Theodoret, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 3.28. Here "the victory of the cross was extolled" at Julian's death, and the

"imposture of the oracles was ridiculed, not only in the churches and in the assembly of the martyrs, but also in the theaters."

53. Amm. Marc. 25.9.3: *provinciarum muro cessisse, cuius obices iam inde a vetustate innoxiae permanserunt.* Recall, however, Ammianus' faulty knowledge of the past here; his emphasis on the frontiers is instructive, but his knowledge of second- and third-century events seems skewed. The eastern frontier was long a negotiated space between the Roman and Persian Empires.

54. The connection of emperor statues to prodigies and other divination occurs throughout Roman Imperial history. Suetonius records miracles surrounding the moving of a statue of Caligula (*Vita Caligulae* 57.1), and Herodian (2.9.4) explains how portents preceding Severus' rise to power are recorded on his statue. See Price, *Rituals and Power,* 191–95. See also Bowersock, "Mechanics," 307–8. On "animated" statues that delivered oracles, see J. Matthews, *Roman Empire,* 118; Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles,* 495–96; Fox, *Pagans and Christians,* 133–35; Potter, *Prophets,* 121. For a connection of silver statues directly to the defense of the frontiers, see chap. 7.

55. J. Matthews, *Roman Empire,* 126–27, distinguishes Ammianus' account of Julian's eastern campaign by its emphasis specifically on divine elements.

56. Examples of such connections include the story of an old soldier left ill among the Persians by Galerius, when his "beard was just beginning to grow," who now joyfully greets the Persian expedition of 363 at a ripe old age (Amm. Marc. 24.10.1); negotiations after Julian's death where the Persian king specifically and obstinately demands the lands that "were his and had been taken long ago by Maximianus [Galerius]" (25.7.9; the specific land demanded was "five provinces on the far side of the Tigris: Arzanena, Moxoëna, and Zabdicena, as well as Rehimena and Corduena with fifteen fortresses, besides Nisibis, Singara and Castra Maurorum, a very important stronghold"); negotiations over prodigies before the campaign in which philosophers claim that the prodigies did not doom Galerius' campaign and therefore should not trouble Julian's (23.5.11).

57. Amm. Marc. 23.5.11 (D&L 128).

58. For other references to this episode, see Aurelius Victor, *Liber de Caesaribus* 39, 33–36; Festus, *Breviarium* 14, 25; Eutropius 9.24–25, 1; Jerome, *Chronicon* s.a. 302, 304; *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* Car. 9.3; Orosius, *Adversos Paganos* 7.25, 9–11.; *Chronicon Paschale* 512, 513; Jordanes, *Getica* 21 (110); Malalas 13; Theophanes, *Chronicon;* Eutychius, *Annales;* Zonoras XII.

59. Festus, *Breviarium* 14.

60. Eadie, "Transformation," 74.

61. *Panegyrici* N&R, 9.21.1–3.

62. Although this statue of Galerius presumably no longer exists, there is a parallel that still does. The famous colossal bronze statue standing before the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Barletta features a late Roman emperor holding a sphere in his left hand (see fig. 9). The identity of the statue is disputed, although many point to Valentinian I (r. 364–75). It is variously identified as definitely Valentinian (A. Ferrill, *The Fall of the Roman Empire: The Military Explanation* [New York: Thames and Hudson, 1986] and Loeb Library Ammianus, vol. 3, frontispiece), possibly Valentinian (Brown, *World of Late Antiquity*), Heraclius (S. Vryonis, *Byzantium and Europe* [London: Thames and Hudson, 1967]), Marcianus (R. Delbrueck, *Spätantike Kaiserporträts*

[Berlin: de Gruyter, 1933]), and an "unknown late antique emperor" (MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony*). Using parallels from Ammianus, it may be possible to identify this statue more affirmatively. For Ammianus also describes Valentinian as crucial to restoring and maintaining the frontiers of the Empire; hence, he also helped to stabilize the cosmos, in effect, and thus he could be presented as holding it in his own control. His work of restoring the Rhine frontier makes him worthy to bear the sphere as cosmos in hand. Valentinian, perhaps the best emperor-general of the late fourth century, was largely responsible for restoring the Rhine frontier. The parallel, then, is natural.

63. Amm. Marc. 23.5.7.

64. Amm. Marc. 23.5.10–11.

65. Libanius, *or.* 18.297, 27.30.

66. The connection of deformed humans or animals to divine wrath was also prevalent during the Renaissance and Reformation eras. See Niccoli, *Prophecy*.

67. Amm. Marc. 19.12.19–20.

68. "The Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon," in *Three Byzantine Saints*, ed. Dawes and Baynes, 127, 134.

69. Niccoli, *Prophecy*, xv–xvi.

70. Incidentally, such search for meaning through eschatology is not just a thing of the past. Certain elements of our own "modern" (or "postmodern") world show a tendency to search for meaning in similar ways. One current example is the extreme popularity of the Left Behind series (ca. 60 million copies now sold). This should show us the potential popularity of attempts to read prophecy in light of the present moment (at least from a crass marketing perspective). Current conservative religious efforts to shape media (*Today in Bible Prophecy*, with Jack Van Impe, is only one of many examples) also show the same tendency as the ancients. The parallels between modern fundamentalist media and Late Antique modes of thought on this point could use further study.

71. See the still useful analysis in Anderson, *Alexander's Gate*, 9. He references Commodianus' *Carmen Apologeticum* 803–14. The dates of Commodianus' life are in dispute, ranging from the third to the fifth century. His provenance also is uncertain, with North Africa and Syria being suggested. His language and tone suggest a work aimed at uneducated Christians. See Fontaine, *Naissance*, 39–52.

72. See Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14, referring to Daniel 9:27, 11:31, 12:11.

73. Ambrose, *De Fide* 1.137–38: *namque et futuram nostri depopulationem et bella Gothorum Ezechiel illo iam tempore profetavit. . . . Gog iste Gothus est, quem iam videmus exisse.* The text continues, *de quo promittitur nobis futura victoria, dicente Domino: 'Et depraedabuntur es qui depraedati eos fuerant, et despoliiabunt eos qui sibi spolia detraxerant, dicit Dominus. Eritque in die illa, dabo Gog (hoc est, Gothis) locum nominatum, monumentum Israel multorum virorum congestum, qui supervenerunt ad mare; et per circuitum struet os vallis, et obruet illic Gog et totam multitudinem eius, et vocabitur Ge Polyandrium Gog; et obruet eos domus Israel ut purgetur terra*' (quoted from Lenski, "*Initium Mali Romano Imperio*," 157).

74. *De Civ. D.* 20.11.

75. Jerome, *Commentaria in Ezechielem* XI, in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J. P. Migne (Paris: Migne, 1844–64), 25.15–490: he writes, "*in prophetia difficillima illud breviter admonebo, quod vir nostrae aetatis haud ignobilis, ad imperatorem scribens, super hac natione*

dixerit: Gog iste Gothus est, cui qua ratione possint omnia quae in ea scripta sunt coaptari, nonest meum sed eorum qui hoc putant dissere."

76. *Monumenta Germaniae Historica (Auctores Antiquissimi)* (Berlin: Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1877–1919), 11: *Gothi a Magog filio Iaphet nominati putantur, de similtudine ultimae syllabae, quos veteres magis Getas quam Gothos vocaverunt.*

77. For the medieval references, see Anderson, *Alexander's Gate.*

78. For a wide-ranging look at apocalypticism in the ancient Near East, Egypt, Persia, India, and Syro-Palestine, see N. Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos, and the World to Come: The Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic Faith* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993). For discussions of Persian apocalypticism in particular, see G. Widengren, "Leitende Ideen und Quellen der Iranischen Apokalyptic," in *Apocalypticism,* ed. Hellholm, 77–162; A. Hultgård, "Das Judentum in der Hellenistisch-Römischen Zeit und die Iranische Religion—Ein Religionsgeschichtliche Problem," in *ANRW,* ed. W. Haase and H. Temporini, II.19.1 (1979): 512–90; A. Hultgård, "Persian Apocalypticism," in *Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism,* ed. Collins, McGinn, and Stein, 39–83; M. Boyce, "On the Antiquity of Zoroastrian Apocalyptic," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 47 (1984): 57–75.

79. Although most scholars accept the genre of apocalypse, Potter does not see it as a category distinct from or within prophecy (see Potter, *Prophets,* 3, 215). See also L. Hartman, "Survey of the Problem of Apocalyptic Genre," in *Apocalypticism,* ed. Hellholm, 329–43.

80. J. J. Collins, ed. *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1979). See also Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination.*

81. On the Christian and Jewish apocalyptic genre in general, see P. J. Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition;* P. J. Alexander, *Oracle;* A. Yarbro Collins, "Early Christian Apocalypses"; D. S. Russell, *Method and Message.*

82. For a very helpful overview of terminology, see C. V. Bostick, *The Antichrist and the Lollards: Apocalypticism in Late Medieval and Reformation England* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 1–18.

83. On the question of pagan historical theory in the later Empire, see Momigliano, "Pagan and Christian Historiography."

84. For a basic reference to Jewish apocalyptic literature with abundant further reference and extensive bibliography, see Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination.* See also D. S. Russell, *Method and Message.*

85. D. S. Russell, *Method and Message,* 18, quoted in P. J. Alexander, *Oracle,* 127.

86. On the fascinating question of pagan versus Christian response to crisis, see in particular Alföldy, "Crisis." He writes, "there was no fundamental difference between pagan and Christian attitudes toward actual problems or even toward the fate of the Roman Empire. On the contrary, the symptoms of that crisis and its character as a general transformation and decay were regarded by pagan and Christian authors in a similar manner and sometimes expressed in astonishingly similar terminology; when explaining the causes, they argued against each other, but partly with the same arguments, and in arguing they showed also similar conceptions of history; and their attitudes toward prospects for the future were not unlike" (110).

87. Hippolytus, *In Danielem.* See Potter, *Prophets,* 106–7.

88. Cyprian, *Ad Demetrianum* 3: *hoc etiam nobis tacentibus . . . mundus ipse iam loquitur et occasum sui rerum labentium probatione testatur.* See also Alföldy, "Crisis," 95, 103.

89. Cyprian, *ep.* 80.1. On Cyprian's "intelligence service," see chap. 4; G. Alföldy, "Der Heilige Cyprian und die Krise des Römischen Reiches," *Historia* 22 (1973): 479–501. See also Alföldy, "Crisis," 96.

90. Cyprian, *Ad Demetrianum* 4 (*Fathers of the Church,* trans.).

91. Cyprian, *Ad Demetrianum* 17. *Vt memorias taceamus antiquas et ultiones pro cultoribus Dei saepe repetitas nullo uocis praeconio reuoluamus, documentum recentis rei satis est quod sic celeriter quodque in tanta celeritate sic granditer nuper secuta defensio est ruinis reru, iacturis opum, dispendio, deminutione castrorum.*

92. Cyprian, *Ad Demetrianum* 17.

93. See in particular Alföldy's analysis of Cyprian's altered views between 246 and 258 in response to news of changing historical circumstances in "Der Heilige Cyprian und die Krise des Römischen Reiches."

94. Ambrose, *Ex. Evan. Lucae* 10.10 (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 32): *verborum autem caelestium nulli magis quam nos testes sumus, quos mundi finis invenit. quanta enim proelia et quas opiniones accepimus proeliorum! Chuni in Halanos, Halani in Gothos, Gothi in Taifalos et Sarmatas insurrexerunt, nos quoque in Illyrico exules patriae Gothorum exilia fecerunt et nondum est finis . . . ergo quia in occcasu saeculi sumus, praecedunt quaedam aegritudines mundi* (trans. Lenski "*Initium Mali Romano Imperio,*" 157).

95. Ambrose, *De Excessu Fratris* 1.30: *totius orbis excidia, mundi finem.*

96. See above on Jerome's and Augustine's objection to such specific eschatology as cases in point.

97. Burgess, *Chronicle of Hydatius,* 6.

98. See Burgess, "Hydatius and the Final Frontier."

99. See Potter, *Prophecy.*

100. Potter, *Prophecy;* for a description of each of the thirteen books, see 95–102. Potter bases the "person on the street" contention on the fact that the work was written by a provincial with no obvious connection with the government (vi).

101. Potter, *Prophecy,* 97.

102. Potter, *Prophecy,* 102.

103. Potter, *Prophecy,* 138, 140.

104. That this city itself was viewed as a frontier city can be demonstrated in an exchange of letters between Julian and Libanius. Libanius, *or.* 1.132–34, claims that Julian had written him a letter from the frontier of the Empire. The letter he refers to, Julian, *ep.* 98, was written at Hierapolis.

105. See Chapot, *Frontière,* 338; see also P. J. Alexander, *Oracle,* 338.

106. P. J. Alexander, *Oracle,* 48–65.

107. See P. J. Alexander, *Oracle,* 129–35, for an explanation of how the sixth-century texts revised the fourth-century text to better fit prophecy with present historical circumstances.

108. P. J. Alexander, *Oracle,* lines 141–42.

109. P. J. Alexander, *Oracle,* lines 183–85.

110. I Enoch 100:1–3 records blood reaching the breasts of horses; II Esdras 15:35–36 places it as high as a horse's belly.

111. P. J. Alexander, *Oracle*.

112. Isaac, *Limits*. On the cities of the East making up the network that formed the eastern frontier, see Isaac, *Limits;* Isaac, "Meaning."

113. *Baalbek* lines 170–72. The Sibyl (Baalbek) predicted that in the reigns of Valens, Valentinian I, and Jovian, "the barbarians will not harm the cities of the Roman Empire," 98. It takes a real stretch of the imagination to hold that Jovian did, in fact, secure peace on the eastern frontier. See Zosimus 5.41 for decline of cities and aid of cities by divinity.

114. See Mango, "Heraclius," 117.

115. Rushworth, "North African Deserts," 300–301. There is, of course, a great deal of difficulty in analyzing North African frontiers. For a recent overview of debates about where and how to locate North African frontiers, see Cherry, *Frontier and Society,* esp. 28–35. See Daniels, "Frontiers: Africa," for the suggestion that roads and forts formed the North African *limes*.

CHAPTER 7

1. Julian, *or.* 4.132c; see also 137c, d; Libanius, *or.* 12.91.

2. Olympiodorus, frag. 27, in Blockley, *Fragmentary*.

3. Zosimus 6.

4. See E. K. Fowden, *Barbarian Plain,* which explores the cult of saints along the eastern frontier, arguing that "we cannot afford to project onto our evidence a separation of religious belief and military or political action" (3).

5. Libanius, *or.* 12.51.

6. Paulinus of Nola, *Carmina* 19:329–42; on these relics, see Mango, "Constantine's Mausoleum"; cf. E. K. Fowden, *Barbarian Plain,* 46.

7. See Procopius, *De Aedificiis* 4.4, 5.7, 4.11. For cults of military saints, see Orselli, *Santità Militare*. See also E. K. Fowden, *Barbarian Plain,* 4.

8. Theodoret, *Graec. Aff. Cur.* 8, p. 335, quoted in E. K. Fowden, *Barbarian Plain,* 46.

9. Theodoret, *Hist. Relig.* 1.1, in *Patrologia Graeca,* ed. Migne, 82.1304D.

10. E. K. Fowden, *Barbarian Plain*.

11. See Zosimus, 2.6–7, 34.

12. Orosius, *Historiarum Adversus Paganos Libri* VII 7.22: *solvuntur repente undique permissu Dei ad hoc circumpositae relictaeque gentes, laxatisque habenis in omnes Romanorum fines invehuntur*. See Theodoret, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 3.21, for an example of God's protection being removed from Julian as the Persians cross the frontier.

13. James of Edessa, "Hymns of Severus of Antioch" 216, in *Patrologia Orientalis,* ed. R. Graffin, F. Neu, and A. Graffin. (Paris: Firmin-Didot et cie, 1907–), 75.676. See chap. 3 for a discussion of the wall metaphor.

14. Theodoret, *Graec. Aff. Cur.* 8, p. 335. See E. K. Fowden, *Barbarian Plain,* 96, 55, 76.

15. E. K. Fowden, *Barbarian Plain,* 96; cf. Theodoret, *Graec. Aff. Cur.* 8, 335.

16. E. K. Fowden, *Barbarian Plain,* 65.

17. Joh. Diakrin, frag. 2.558, p. 157; John Lydus, *De Magistratibus Populi Romani* 47, quoted in E. K. Fowden, *Barbarian Plain,* 65, n. 25.

18. *Passio antiquior SS. Sergii et Bacchi* 13. Ed. Ivan de Gheyn in *Analecta Bollandiana* 14 (1895): 371–95. "ἐν τοῖς λιμίτοις πλησιοχώροις οὖσι τῷ τῶν Σαρακηνῶν ἔθνει"; both quoted in E. K. Fowden, *Barbarian Plain*, 9–10.

19. *CIL* 8.5352, trans. in E. K. Fowden, *Barbarian Plain*, 47.

CHAPTER 8

1. *Illic enim tibi no Vestalis focus, non lapis Capitolinus, sed Deus unus et verus / Ne metas rerum tempora ponet / Imperium sine fine dabit* (*De Civ. D.* 2.29).

2. *De Civ. D.* 2.29.

3. For an overview of the connection of the City of God idea to Roman civic-mindedness, see Mazzolani, *Idea*.

4. McCormick, *Eternal Victory*.

5. The thesis of G. Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth*. Fowden continues by arguing that monotheism is also the Achilles' heel of empire—insistence on doctrinal rigidity and the consistent demand to separate heresy from orthodoxy tended to break down the universal empire into the reality of commonwealths.

6. McCormick, *Eternal Victory;* see also Paschoud, Roma Aeterna.

7. These are well explored in McCormick, *Eternal Victory;* MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony*.

8. Amm. Marc. 14.6.3–4.

9. J. Matthews, "Ammianus and the Eternity."

10. Florus, *Epitome Bellorum Omnium Annorum DCC*. 1 pr. 4ff. Some scholars have argued that this Ammianus passage was lifted from Florus. See also MacMullen, *Enemies*, 335.

11. See, for example, Amm. Marc. 14.6.4 (quoted earlier); Augustine, *Sermo* 81.8; Libanius, *or.* 18.281 (here Julian had restored the world to proper health again, so the decline was not automatic). See MacMullen, *Enemies*, 335 for these and other references; MacMullen, *Corruption*.

12. Cyprian, *Ad Demetrianum* 3–25.

13. Cyprian, *Ad Demetrianum* 3, quoted in MacMullen, *Enemies*, 161.

14. *De Civ. D.* 20.7.1; Augustine, *De Diversis Questionibus Octoginta Tribus* 83.58.2; Augustine, *ep.* 199.1.1. See Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 296. See also Luneau, *Histoire;* Schwarte, *Vorgeschichte;* Markus, *Saeculum*.

15. On the kingdoms topos, see Mendels, "Five Empires"; J. W. Swain, "The Theory of the Four Monarchies: Opposition History under the Roman Empire," *Classical Philology* 35 (1940): 1–21; S. K. Eddy, *The King Is Dead: Studies in the Near Eastern Resistance to Hellenism, 334–31* B.C. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961); D. Flusser, "The Four Empires in the Fourth Sibyl and in the Book of Daniel," *Israel Oriental Studies* 2 (1972): 148–75.

16. See in particular Demandt, *Zeitkritik*.

17. Lenski, "*Initium Mali Romano Imperio*," 163; cf. J. Matthews, "Ammianus and the Eternity."

18. For listings of all known references to third-century emperors designated as *restitutor, restitutor orbis, restitutor saeculi, restitutor patriae, restitutor orbis totius, restitutor orientis, restitutor gentis, restitutor publicae securitatis ac libertatis conservator,* and *restitutor sacrorum et libertatis*, see Peachin, *Roman Imperial Titulature*.

19. See Lightfoot, "Trajan's Parthian War." Lightfoot argues convincingly that Festus and Eutropius were using Trajan as a prod to Valens. See Barnes, "Constantine," 132.

20. See Potter, *Roman Empire*, 446–47.

21. *Panegyrici* N&R 2.23.1: *dum ultra terminos rerum metasque Naturae regna Orientis extendis*.

22. On the rhetoric of universal empire, see in particular Cameron, *Christianity;* G. Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth*.

23. Tertullian, *Adversus Iudaeorum* 7: *inaccessa Romanis loca, Christo vero subdita*.

24. Potter, *Roman Empire*, 445–46.

25. See Potter, *Roman Empire*, 444, on this contrast. Constantine "plainly considered the traditions of the 'barbarians' across Rome's frontiers as being less worthy of respect and their lands to be fertile territory for the expansion of the faith." This point is often made with reference to the Constantinian architecture of Rome. The pagan core of Rome was left largely intact by Constantine as he pushed his own architectural program on the outskirts of the city and in Constantinople.

26. See Barnes, "Constantine."

27. Wolska-Conus, *Topographie*, 503–5.

28. Barnes, "Constantine." See also G. Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth*, 93.

29. On the ostensible free movement of Christians across the eastern frontier, see Lee, *Information*, 55.

30. Lee, *Information*, 445–46.

31. Barnes, "Constantine," 136.

32. Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 4.24. See *Eusebius*, ed. Cameron and Hall, 320; D. de Decker and G. Dupois-Masay, "L'Épiscopat' de l'Empereur Constantin," *Byzantion* 50 (1980): 118–57, for a variety of views.

33. G. Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth*, 91–93. *Eusebius*, ed. Cameron and Hall, 320, challenges Fowden's interpretation of the title, claiming that it refers only to those outside the church with no reference to those beyond Roman frontiers.

34. Rufinus, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 10.8. See G. Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth*, 91–93. Fowden sees "nothing inherently implausible" about Constantine's role in this process as building a universal Christian empire by invading Persia (96).

35. On one later effort, see Mango, "Heraclius."

36. For the complete text of the letter, see *Eusebius: The Life of Constantine* 4.8–13. On the question of Persian Christians, see in particular M.-L. Chaumont, *La Christianisation de l'Empire Iranien des Origines auz Grandes Persécutions du IV^e^ Siècle* (Louvain: Peeters, 1988).

37. *Eusebius: The Life of Constantine* 4.14.1; cf. the wording of 4.49–50, showing a universal empire with Constantine even ruling over India.

38. Eusebius, *In Praise of Constantine* 16.6, in H. A. Drake, *In Praise of Constantine: A Historical Study and New Translation of Eusebius' Tricennial Orations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

39. Augustine, *ep.* 199.46. For the full text, see chap. 4.

40. Augustine, *ep.* 199.47: "The Lord did not promise the Romans but all nations to the seed of Abraham. . . . Some nations, not held under Roman power, have received the gospel and have been joined to the Church." Augustine specifically notes that such was not the case for those beyond the North African frontiers. In passages

such as these, Augustine distances himself from the Kingdom of God = Roman Empire model prevalent in Christian historiography of the mid- to late fourth and early fifth centuries. His emphasis here suggests that he is fighting an uphill battle against this particular Christian ideology.

41. Contrast this with the eschatological reading of the Christianization of Persia noted in Mango, "Heraclius," 117.

42. Potter puts the appointment of Ulfila at 337, just before Constantine died (*Roman Empire,* 444). 341 appears to be the latest possible date; see G. Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth,* 93 n. 62, for further references.

43. Wallace-Hadrill, *Frankish Church,* 143.

CONCLUSION

1. See Eger, "Islamic Frontiers."

2. F. J. Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," *Annual Report of the American Historical Association*, 1893, 199–207.

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Index

Index Locorum