Amicitiae Cultus Ingenuus Est: The Proper Cultivation of Emperors, Patrons and Friends as Strategy and Mirage in the Works of Q. Aurelius Symmachus

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ABSTRACT

The late fourth-century Roman senator Q. Aurelius Symmachus (c. 340-402 CE), author of the *Orations*, *Relations* and *Letters*, is undoubtedly an important source for late Roman patronage and its cultivation. This thesis seeks to explain why these phenomena should be so clearly visible in these works, through a literary analysis of the works in which they most appear and an examination of their social context. It argues that Symmachus not only cultivated his superiors but was, among Latin authors, uniquely concerned with the question of proper cultivation, deliberately and regularly highlighting proper forms of cultivation – those which he practiced himself – in contrast to common improper forms. In doing so he was responding not only to the practical need to cultivate benefactors to advance and safeguard his career as a prominent senator, but also to a new, primarily negative, attention paid in his own age to cultivation and the unmerited advantages that it could procure, attested in Mamertinus and Libanius. The hypothesis that he responded in this way to particular negative attention to his friendships at court in in Rome in the later 390s explains many details of the organization and inclusion of material in the *Letters*, Symmachus' main work of literary self-presentation. This was not, however, Symmachus' first foray into discussion of cultivation: the explicit description of particular gifts as offering proper cultivation is a recurring and surely useful feature of a series of works delivered decades earlier and for a wholly different audience with its own expectations at imperial anniversaries. It is even found, albeit in a highly anomalous and inverted form, in the famous *Relation* 3. The cultivation of benefactors, then, is prominent in the works of Symmachus, across his career, not only because he was engaged in cultivation, but also because the activity raised suspicions and generated expectations on the part of his readers. As he responded to these, in his own way, Symmachus defined himself as statesman and friend.

For Tristan, Amber and James

and in memory of

Herbert Berry

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AE	*L'Année Épigraphique*
Aug. *Ep*.	Augustine, *Epistulae*
Symmaque I	Symmaque, *Lettres, Tome I (Livres I-II)*. Texte établi, traduit et commenté par Jean Pierre Callu (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1972)
Symmaque II	Symmaque, *Lettres, Tome II (Livres III-V)*. Texte établi, traduit et commenté par Jean Pierre Callu (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1982)
Symmaque III	Symmaque, *Lettres, Tome III (Livres VI-VIII)*. Texte établi, traduit et commenté par Jean Pierre Callu (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1995)
Symmaque IV	Symmaque, *Lettres, Tome IV (Livres IX-X)*. Texte établi, traduit et commenté par Jean Pierre Callu (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2002)
Symmaque V	Symmaque, *Tome V, Discours-Rapports*. Texte établi, traduit et commenté par Jean Pierre Callu (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2009)
CIL	*Corpus Inscriptionarum Latinarum*
CTh	*Codex Theodosianus* (ed. Theodor Mommsen, Berlin: Weidmann, 1905)
Ep.	Symmachus, *Epistulae* (ed. Jean-Pierre Callu, Paris: Belles Lettres, 1972-2002)
ILAlg	Stéphane Gsell and H -G Pflaum, *Inscriptions latines de l'Algérie* (Paris: E. Champion, 1923)
ILS	Hermann Dessau, *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1892-1916)

Olympiodorus *B*	Olympiodorus of Thebes, fragments (ed. R.C. Blockley, in *The fragmentary classicising historians of the later Roman empire*, Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1981)
Olympiodorus *M*	Olympiodorus of Thebes, fragments (ed. C. Mueller, in *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum IV*, Paris: Firmin Didot, 1851)
Orat.	Symmachus, *Orationes* (ed. Jean-Pierre Callu, Paris: Belles Lettres, 2009)
PLRE I	*The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, *Volume 1, A.D. 260-395,* ed. A.H.M. Jones, J.R. Martindale, and J. Morris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971)
PLRE II	*The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, *Volume 2, A.D. 395-527,* ed. J.R. Martindale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980)
Plin. *Ep*.	Pliny the Younger, *Epistulae*
Relat.	Symmachus, *Relationes* (ed. Jean-Pierre Callu, Paris: Belles Lettres, 2009)

INTRODUCTION

Q. Aurelius Symmachus (c. 340-402 CE), was a late fourth-century Roman senator and author active during the reigns of Valentinian I, Gratian, Valentinian II, Theodosius and Honorius, the final period of relative stability and direct imperial rule in the West. Symmachus is hardly one of the most closely studied late antique authors, but he has attracted attention for two main reasons. First, his surviving literary output makes him one of the better represented authors of his time, and by far the best represented Roman senatorial author. Symmachus is therefore an invaluable source not only for his own career and for late antique prosopography, but also for the ideology and functioning of the senate, as well as for late antique rhetoric, epistolography, literary culture, law, and social history generally. It is hardly surprising that he is cited in most general studies of late antiquity and in many specialized studies, usually as an exemplar of a conservative elite.[1] Second, Symmachus is known as one of the last prominent Roman pagans, and as intimately involved in what is often portrayed as the final struggles between the pagan senators and the Christian court. All the same, although Symmachus has been located in terms of the key transformations of the pivotal time in which he lived, he has rarely been read in his own terms, with a broad appreciation of the range of his interests and agendas and adequate attention to his self-presentation. It is the purpose of this thesis to chart the way in which he reacts to his circumstances and presents himself in his writings, by examining his entire extant output and focussing on the notion of the cultivation of patronage, loosely defined. This question has been relatively little studied in the case of

[1] See Alan Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 353-398, 535-542 and Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 93-119, to cite only two recent major works.

Symmachus but is necessarily important for a senator with contacts as extensive as those of Symmachus and who offers recommendations.[2] I argue that Symmachus is not only an important exemplar of late antique patronage and its cultivation, but also engages critically with these concepts, and quite deliberately presents himself as navigating them correctly.

In this introductory chapter I will first describe the presentation of Symmachus in current scholarship, both in terms of his own work (and in the process I will provide a full biography of Symmachus as reconstructed from these works) and in terms of debates around late Roman paganism. I then define the analytic framework for this thesis, centering on the concept of interpersonal *cultus*. In the process, I will review Symmachus' terminology related to networking, and compare it to that found in Cicero and Pliny the Younger. Finally, I will provide an outline of the three chapters of the thesis.

[2] For patronage in general, Anton Blok, "Variations in patronage," *Sociologische Gids* 16 (1969): 365-78, the various contributions of *Patrons and Clients in Mediterranean Societies*, ed. Ernest Gellner and John Waterbury (London: Duckworth, 1977) and S.N. Eisenstadt and Luis Roniger, *Patrons, Clients, and Friends: Interpersonal Relations and the Structure of Trust in Society* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984) are all very useful. For Roman patronage, there is Anton Premerstein, *Vom Werden und Wessen des Prinzipats* (Munich: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1937), 13-116, Geoffrey Ernest Maurice De St. Croix, "Suffragium: From Vote to Patronage," *British Journal of Sociology* 5 (1954): 33-48, Louis Harmand, *Le patronat sur les collectivités publiques des origines au bas empire* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1957), Richard Saller, *Personal Patronage Under the Early Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) and "Patronage and Friendship" in *Patronage in Ancient Society*, ed. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (London: Routledge, 1989), 49-61, along with various other contributions in this same edited collection, particularly Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, "Patronage in Roman Society: From Republic to Empire," in *Patronage in Ancient Society*, ed. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (London: Routledge, 1989), 63-87 and Peter Garnsey and Greg Woolf, "Patronage of the rural poor in the Roman world," in *Patronage in Ancient Society*, ed. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 153-167. See also Peter Brunt, *The Fall of the Roman Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), David Konstan, "Patrons and friends," *Classical Philology* 90 (1995): 328-342, and John Nicols, *Civic Patronage in the Roman Empire* (Leiden: Brill, 2014). For late antique patronage in particular, see Jens-Uwe Krause, *Spätantike Patronatsformen im Westen des römischen Reiches* (Vestigia 38), (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1987), who argues for its relative continuity, Ramsay MacMullen, *Corruption and the Decline of Rome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 122-197, arguing for its undermining, and Peter Garnsey, "Roman Patronage," in *From the Tetrarchs to the Theodosians: Later Roman History and Culture, 284-450 CE*, ed. Scott McGill, Cristiana Sogno and Edward Watts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 33-54, arguing for its continued though not unchallenged importance.

0.1 Symmachus: the nature of the evidence for his life

Symmachus is one of the better-attested private individuals in antiquity, and his life can be reconstructed in considerable detail.[3] The task is admittedly complicated by the fact that there is no narrative biography or autobiography, though there is an extant funerary inscription providing a list of his offices and honours:

> Of Eusebius:
> To Q. Aurelius Symmachus, a senatorial man, quaestor, praetor, greater pontifex, corrector of Lucania and the Brittii, companion of the third order, proconsul of Africa, urban prefect, ordinary consul, an exceedingly eloquent orator.
>
> EUSEBII
> Q. AUR. SYMMACHO, V.C; QUAEST.; PRAET.; PONTIFICI MAIORI; CORRECTORI LUCANIAE ET BRITTIORUM; COMITI ORDINIS TERTII; PROCONS. AFRICAE; PRAEF. URB.; COS. ORDINARIO; ORATORI DISERTISSIMO (*CIL* 6 1699=*ILS* 2946).

This establishes Symmachus as one of the most prominent senators of his time, the urban prefecture and especially the ordinary consulship being rare distinctions, and as at least formally involved in one of the central organs of Roman civic religion.

The main source for the life of Symmachus, however, is his extant literary output, the *Orations*, *Relations* and *Letters*, a mixture of works which Symmachus must have published or at least prepared for publication himself, and which form part of a literary self-presentation (the *Orations* and the first seven books of the *Letters*), and works which may have been published from his archives well after his death (the last three books of the *Letters* and perhaps the *Relations*).[4] Symmachus did not arrange the works intended for

[3] All modern biographies of Symmachus, of which Cristiana Sogno, *Q. Aurelius Symmachus: A Political Biography* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006) is the most complete, are indebted to Otto Seeck, *Q. Aurelii Symmachi opera quae supersunt* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1883).
[4] For the publication history, see below, p. 5-7.

publication in strict chronological order or provide dates, and his later editors probably could not;[5] they are however very voluminous and occasionally refer to dateable events.

These works are supplemented by occasional mentions of Symmachus in other authors, both contemporaries (Libanius, Ambrose, Prudentius, Augustine) and later witnesses (Olympiodorus, Socrates Scholasticus, Sidonius Apollinaris). Libanius of Antioch writes to him and mentions that he was once slated to be Symmachus' tutor (Libanius *Ep*. 1004), while Ambrose also corresponded with him and both he and Prudentius write refutations of Symmachus' *Relation* 3 (Ambrose *Ep*. 17, 18, Prudentius *Against Symmachus* 1, 2). Augustine, finally, mentions that he was the subject of a (lost) recommendation from him (*Conf*. 5.13.23).[6] He is also mentioned by several fifth century authors of the subsequent two or three generations. Quodvultdeus (*de promissionibus et praedicationibus Dei* 3.38.2), Olympiodorus (fr. 44 M = 41.2 B), Socrates Scholasticus (5.14.6) and Sidonius Apollinaris (*Ep*. 1.1), make passing references to Symmachus, while Macrobius makes him one of the primary interlocutors of his symposium dialogue, the *Saturnalia*.

Few of these, however, are truly independent witnesses. Many of these mentions, including most of the most considerable ones, are either clearly or likely dependent on the works of Symmachus. Prudentius' and Ambrose's responses to Symmachus' defense of the altar of Victory react to the text of *Relation* 3, while Macrobius' *Saturnalia*, to be discussed in more detail below, may have actually drawn its characters, all of whom are mentioned at least once in

[5] For the way in which Symmachus does arrange his *Letters*, see below, p. 174-180.
[6] For this recommendation, and the possible relevance to contemporary religious struggles of recommending a Manichean to a position at court, see Stefan Rebenich, "Augustinus im Streit zwischen Symmachus und Ambrosius um den Altar der Victoria," *Laverna* 2 (1991): 53-75, T.D. Barnes, "Augustine, Symmachus and Ambrose," in *Augustine: From Rhetor to Theologian*, ed. Joanne McWilliam (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992), 7-13 and especially Jennifer Ebbeler and Cristiana Sogno, "Religious Identity and the Politics of Patronage: Symmachus and Augustine," *Historia* 56 (2007): 230-42. Ebbeler and Sogno are almost certainly correct in arguing that this recommendation had no special significance and simply reflected Symmachus' general practice of writing recommendations when asked to do so.

the *Letters* of Symmachus, from that collection.[7] Sidonius Apollinaris explicitly comments on Symmachus as a letter-writer (*Ep*. 1.1). Only Socrates Scholasticus' account of Symmachus' panegyric to Maximus and subsequent taking refuge in a Novatian church in 5.14.6 (perhaps), Olympiodorus' assessment of the wealth of Symmachus as middling for a prominent senator (fr. 44 M = 41.2 B) and the funerary inscription (*CIL* 6 1699=*ILS* 2946) provide credible information for Symmachus not derived from his literary works. Other authors, then, provide relatively little additional information about Symmachus, although they confirm that Symmachus found attentive readers for his works both in his own time and especially in the century after his death.

We now turn to Symmachus' own literary output. There are extant fragments of eight speeches (the *Orations*), delivered both in Trier (*Orations* 1-3) and in Rome (*Orations* 4-8) between 368 and 388,[8] along with forty-nine state papers directed to the emperor while Symmachus was urban prefect of Rome in 384-5 (the *Relations*),[9] and over nine hundred private letters (the *Letters*), which cover Symmachus' entire active life, from the late 360s to 402.[10] These are, for the most part, functional works, "primarily intended not to inform but to manipulate, to produce results."[11] In any case, they are only a portion

[7] For the relationship of the *Saturnalia* to the *Letters* of Symmachus, see Charles Guittard, "Macrobe et Symmaque," in *Epistulae Antiquae* vol. 2, ed. Léon Nadjo and Élizabeth Gavoille (Louvain, Paris: Peeters, 2002), 291-293, who argues, plausibly, that the characters of the *Saturnalia* were drawn from the *Letters* of Symmachus.
[8] For the dating of *Orat*. 1-3, see Cristiana Sogno "Barbarians as Spectacle: The Account of an Ancient 'Embedded Reporter,'" in *Romans, Barbarians, and the Transformation of the Roman World*, ed. Ralph.W. Mathisen and Danuta Shanzer (Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 134 and 134 n. 3 and 4. For the other speeches, see Jean-Pierre Callu, *Symmaque V* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres. 2009), xxii-xxvi.
[9] For the dating of the *Relations*, see R.H. Barrow, *Prefect and Emperor* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009), 16-17, Domenico Vera, *Commento storico alle Relationes di Q. Aurelius Symmachus* (Pisa: Giardini, 1981), *passim*, and, most recently, Callu, *Symmaque V*, *passim* 77-144.
[10] For the dating of the *Letters*, see the translations and commentaries of Jean-Pierre Callu (1972, 1976, 1982, 2002, 2009), *Symmaque I, II, III, IV, V*, and the Giardini historical commentaries of Giovanni Alberto Cecconi (2002) on Book 2, of A. Pellizari (1998) on Book 3, of Arnaldo Marcone (1987) on Book 4, of P. Rivolta Tiberga (1992) on Book 5, of Arnaldo Marcone (1983) on Book 6, of Sergio Roda (1981) on Book. 9. For the first book, see Michele Renee Salzman, *The Letters of Symmachus: Book 1*. (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), lxix-lxxii.
[11] John Matthews, "The Letters of Symmachus," in *Latin Literature of the Fourth Century*, ed. J.W. Binns (London:

of what must have been a rather larger literary output. Some of what was originally published is missing, including two speeches delivered in the senate, on the reintroduction of the censorship and the quaestorship of the son of a new senator, which Symmachus circulated publicly (to the correspondents of *Ep*. 4.29, *Ep*. 4.45, and *Ep*. 5.9). These would have provided examples of deliberative oratory, aimed at persuading an audience of a course of action, to complement the rhetoric of praise and blame that survives in *Orat*. 1-5. Much of what does not survive, however, was likely never intended for wider circulation. Symmachus' previously mentioned recommendation of Augustine, for example, and the state papers which must have been sent in connection with the expulsion of foreigners from Rome in 384 (mentioned by Ammianus Marcellinus 14.6.19) are not preserved and there is no reason to believe that they ever circulated publicly. Many of the speeches of Symmachus must similarly have been left unpublished: the speech in the senate supporting the regime against the rebel Gildo mentioned in *Ep*. 4.5 is one example and there must have been more, delivered both in the senate and on senatorial embassies at court. All the same, Symmachus' surviving oeuvre makes up a considerable body of work.

One striking feature of this surviving corpus, which has coloured its interpretation, is its resemblance to the surviving corpus of Pliny the Younger (c. 61-113 CE[12]). The latter's importance in contemporary rhetorical culture is clear from the inclusion of his *Panegyric* as the initial work of the *Latin Panegyrics* collection, a collection of twelve panegyrics otherwise all delivered by Gallic orators of the third and fourth centuries and probably published in the time of Symmachus. It is therefore tempting to posit a Plinian literary self-presentation: Symmachus' panegyrics parallel Pliny's *Panegyric*, his ten books of *Letters* parallels Pliny's ten books of *Letters*, and his *Relations*, if they were published in the tenth book of Symmachus' *Letters*, would

Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), 64; the point is underlined throughout the article, 58-91.
[12] For the dating, see Anne-Marie Guillemin, *Pline le Jeune: Lettres I* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1961), vi, xxv.

clearly parallel the tenth book of Pliny's *Letters*, all addressed to the emperor Trajan.[13] Ultimately, however, these parallels only reflect Symmachus' own authorial intentions if Symmachus conceived of his published works in their extant form. This does not appear to be the case. The publication of the *Relations*, and whether Symmachus intended to publish it at all, is still very much disputed,[14] but Sergio Roda has convincingly argued for a one-book collection of the *Letters* (Book 1), followed by a seven-book collection released posthumously (Books 1-7).[15] The full ten-book collection may have been inspired by the *Letters* of Pliny, but in that case the parallel was highlighted by Symmachus' son or by a later editor, not by Symmachus himself: the importance of Pliny as a literary antecedent for epistolographers was likely not as obvious in the fourth century as it was in the fifth.[16]

It is, indeed, an open question how familiar Symmachus was with Pliny the Younger, whom he never actually cites. The case for Symmachus having actually read the whole oeuvre of Pliny is not supported by verbal parallels: Gavin Kelly convincingly argues that Symmachus read Pliny's *Panegyric* (and drew on it works dating to the time of the accession of Gratian, especially *Orat*. 4 but also *Ora*t. 5 and *Ep*. 1.13 and *Ep*. 10.2) but not his *Letters*.[17] Aside from the fourth oration, which celebrates the new reign of Gratian after the reign of terror of his father Valentinian I's praetorian prefect Maximinus

[13] Matthews, "The Letters of Symmachus," 65-68 argues that these parallels, in the case of the *Letters*, are deliberate, though he does not suggest a particular purpose to adherence to a Plinian model.
[14] See below, n. 44.
[15] Sergio Roda, *Commento storico al libro IX dell'epistolario di Q. Aurelio Simmaco* (Pisa: Giardini, 1981), 69-74, supported by Salzman, *The Letters of Symmachus: Book 1*, liv-lxvi. Sogno, *Q. Aurelius Symmachus: A Political Biography*, 61-62 has provided additional evidence for a seven-book publication in the form of structural parallels between the first and seventh and between the second and sixth books. When exactly the first book was published is disputed and the arguments remain inconclusive; see below, n. 39. I propose a dating in the later 390s on p. 171.
[16] Jennifer Ebbeler, "Pedants in the Apparel of Heroes? Cultures of Latin Letter-writing from Cicero to Ennodius" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2001), 94-106 argues that it was only in Symmachus' own time that Pliny (and Cicero) became central models for letter-writers, a development whose clearest manifestation was in the *Ep*. 1.1.1 of Sidonius Apollinaris in the following century. Previously, as she argues, 63-94, Pliny and Cicero had been read but had not provided clear literary antecedents for Latin collections of letters.
[17] Kelly, "Pliny and Symmachus," 261-287, especially 263-269 and 275-285.

and which does have Plinian overtones, the extant orations of Symmachus, even the panegyrics like *Orat.* 1-3, show no particular overt dependence on Pliny. Although Pliny was the earliest and single most prominent exemplar of panegyric, as Symmachus surely knew, the mere fact of writing panegyric did not, seemingly, imply a Plinian self-presentation, and certainly did not require the panegyrist to include direct allusions to him.

The Plinian model, then, was a relatively familiar one which was directly relevant to Symmachus at one, relatively early point in his career, during which he drew on the *Panegyric*, and again, perhaps, to his later editors, who drew on Pliny's *Letters*, but was relatively unimportant to Symmachus in his own plan for his literary output. Symmachus would be compared to Pliny in Macrobius' *Saturnalia* 5.1.7 and in Sidonius Apollinaris *Ep*. 1.1.1, but he did not, apparently, aspire himself to be Pliny: Cicero, unlike Pliny often mentioned in the works of Symmachus (*Orat*. 1.2, *Ep*. 1.3.2, *Ep*. 1.31.1, *Ep*. 3.12.2, *Ep*. 3.44.2, *Ep*. 4.60.3, *Ep*. 9.110.2), was a far more prestigious model.

Nonetheless, Pliny's and Symmachus' respective literary oeuvres, especially their respective *Letters*, are similar for a rather different reason, that they were products of similar activities, undertaken as part of relatively similar senatorial careers. Both collections of letters provide windows into similar worlds of elite friendship, in which the recommendations that both authors write were apparently sought-after means of advancement for those who could obtain them. The ingratiating tone of the oratory of both authors, in turn, clearly demonstrates that both sought imperial favour.[18] Insofar as both Pliny and Symmachus were representative of the best-connected senators of their times, and there is reason to suppose that they were, they suggest the

[18] For Symmachus, the fundamental work is the previously mentioned article of Matthews, "The Letters of Symmachus," 58-99, with some of the conclusions further developed by Sogno, *Q. Aurelius Symmachus: A Political Biography*.

social and, one must assume, political importance of personal patronage in the Roman empire.[19] It is a measure of the ubiquity of this phenomenon that Pliny could provide a close counterpart for Symmachus as friend, patron and seeker of patronage without obviously being an explicit model: he certainly was not a sufficiently prestigious model to obviously impose himself. Ultimately I will argue not simply for the importance of patronage and friendship to Symmachus' career, but for the importance, indeed centrality, of legitimate success in them to his literary self-presentation. This naturally led Symmachus to present himself as doing many of the same sorts of things as Pliny did, but the parallel was apparently not one that he felt compelled to draw.

The life of Symmachus

The detailed reconstruction of the life of Symmachus from his works was first undertaken by Otto Seeck in 1883; his sequence of events remains broadly accepted, with only minor revisions, and is built on in the most detailed current discussion of the life of Symmachus, Cristiana Sogno's 2006 *Q. Aurelius Symmachus: A Political Biography*.[20] *Oration* 2 can be dated to the day (January 1, 370), and it is a mark of the generally well-established nature of the life of Symmachus that the two most recent revisions to be proposed, both of which concern the earlier activities of Symmachus, are of a matter of months or, at most, a year. Gavin Kelly's "Pliny and Symmachus" (2013) which plausibly redates and sets in a new political context the activities of Symmachus around the accession of Gratian in 375-376, delays *Ep*. 10.2 by several months.[21] The first panegyric which Symmachus delivered in Trier (*Orat*. 1), similarly, must have been in 368 rather

[19] See below, p. 39-49.
[20] Seeck, *Q. Aurelii Symmachi Opera quae Supersunt*, xxxiv-lxxiii.
[21] Kelly, "Pliny and Symmachus," 281 n. 58.

than 369 as Seeck asserted, which complicates the question of the length of Symmachus' stay in Trier.[22] In this thesis I accept the current state of the question for Symmachus' biography reconstruction as stated by Sogno (2006) and revised by Kelly (2013), which can be summarized as follows.

Given the date of his first magistracies, Symmachus was presumably born c. 340, during the reign of Constans I (337-350). His father was L. Aurelius Avianius Symmachus (*PLRE* I p. 863-865 Symmachus 3), a prominent senator. Avianius Symmachus would go on to be a senatorial ambassador to Constantius II during the usurpation of Julian in 361 (Ammianus Marcellinus 21.12.24), urban prefect in 364-5 and die as consul designate for 377.[23] Symmachus' ancestry beyond his father is less clear, but his grandfather may have been Aurelius Valerius Tullianus Symmachus, the consul of 330 (*PLRE* I p. 871 Symmachus 6), and the Symmachi were likely established in the senate since the Severans, well over a century earlier.[24] Though pagan, they had fared well under Constantine and his sons, and after an apparent setback under Julian, Avianius Symmachus would enjoy several career successes under Valentinian I and his son Gratian.[25]

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[22] See Seeck, *Q. Aurelii Symmachi opera quae supersunt*, xlvi-xlvii. For a summary of recent discussion, see Rita Lizzi-Testa, *Senatori, Popolo, Papi: Il governo di Roma al tempo dei Valentiniani* (Bari: Edipuglia, 2004), 447-454 and Sogno, "Barbarians as Spectacle: The Account of an Ancient 'Embedded Reporter' (Symm. *Or*. 2.10-12)," 134 n. 4.

[23] Ammianus Marcellinus mentions an urban mob burning his house on the Vatican after he refused to sell his supply of wine at discount prices during a shortage (27.3.4).

[24] Alan Cameron, "The Antiquity of the Symmachi," *Historia* 48 (1999): 477-505. Cameron's arguments are accepted by Jean-Pierre Callu, *Symmaque IV* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 2002), xvi. The ultimate origins of the Symmachi is unclear: Symmachus provides some information about Septimius Acindynus (*PLRE* I p. 11 Acindynus 2), from whom he inherited a house in Bauli (via the father of his wife) in *Ep*. 1.1.2-3, 5, but nothing about his own ancestors. For an analysis of this part of *Ep*. 1.1 and for the relationship between Symmachus and Acindynus, see Salzman, *The Letters of Symmachus: Book 1*, 5, 10. Symmachus acknowledges no other hometown (*patria*) than Rome, though he mentions twenty-three properties which he held in Rome, throughout central and southern Italy, and in Sicily and Africa, on the count of Seeck, *Q. Aurelii Symmachi opera quae supersunt*, xlv, still universally cited.

[25] See Sogno, *Q. Aurelius Symmachus: A Political Biography*, 3-4 for the delaying of the urban prefecture until after the death of Julian.

Symmachus was educated, as he mentions in *Ep*. 9.88.3, by a Gallic tutor, perhaps Tiberius Victor Minervius, one of the professors of Bordeaux commemorated by Ausonius (*Commemoratio professorum Burdigalensium* 1), as suggested by Seeck.[26] Libanius of Antioch (*Ep*. 1004) mentions, in a response to a lost letter by Symmachus, an initial plan by which Symmachus would have studied with him, but this appears not to have happened.[27] The result, as noted by Alan Cameron, is that Symmachus had some exposure to the Greek classics but no more (and almost certainly also no less) than might be expected for an educated Roman, and appears to have had limited command of Greek as an adult.[28] This would largely limit him to Latin-speaking correspondents in his letters, though *Ep*. 8.22 is a Latin response to a Greek letter; it also precluded any serious study of philosophy, a field in which Symmachus acknowledges his limitations (*Ep*. 1.29 to Ausonius). These were, however, limitations which most of his readers surely shared, and which did not prevent Symmachus from drawing heavily on an abundance of Greek exemplary material long incorporated into widely available Latin works. The odd self-deprecating comment aside, the main impression of his readers in terms of the Greek culture of Symmachus would presumably have been of a Roman senator well aware of, and sometimes following, a wide variety of prestigious Greek models.[29] For this his education was, clearly, entirely adequate.

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[26] Seeck, *Q. Aurelii Symmachi opera quae supersunt*, xliv. The identification is mentioned as possible, though with reservations, by Salzman, *The Letters of Symmachus Book 1*, 41 n. 3.
[27] For the letter, see Lizzi-Testa, *Senatori, Popolo, Papi*, 444-446.
[28] Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome*, 535-542, especially 538; see 527-566 and Pierre Courcelle, *Les lettres grecques en occident* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1944) for Greek learning in the Latin West in general. The implication of *Ep*. 4.20.2, in which Symmachus describes himself as relearning Greek with his son, is that he did not already master it. For the Greek learning of Symmachus, see Wilhelm Kroll, *De Q. Aurelii Symmachi Studiis Graecis et Latinis* (Breslau: Verlag von Wilhelm Koebner, 1891), 6-16, and Gerd Haverling, "Symmachus and Greek Literature," in *Greek and Latin Studies in Memory of Cajus Fabricius*, ed. Sven-Tage Teodorsson (Göteborg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, 1990), 188-205.
[29] For these models, see below, p. 76, and also 80-83.

Symmachus' entry into public life was typical for a member of a senatorial family at the time. He assumed, presumably in childhood and adolescence, the notional magistracies of the quaestorship and praetorship, mentioned in his funerary inscription, whose main duties were the giving of public games, and also became priest of Vesta, also mentioned in the inscription.[30] His first strictly administrative post, depending on imperial patronage, was as governor (*corrector*) of Lucania and Bruttium in 365 (*CTh* VIII 5.25), the year that his father was urban prefect of Rome, followed by the proconsulship in Africa in 373.[31] Neither the provinces themselves nor the gap between offices would have been unusual for a senator: Africa and the southern Italian provinces had important senatorial landholdings and were typically governed by senators, while senatorial clout, based on private patronage networks, could be maintained in private life and was perfectly compatible with infrequent office-holding.[32]

Between his two governorships, Symmachus received a special mark of distinction from the senate, and an important boost to his career, when, at about thirty years old, he was appointed as senatorial envoy to the court of Valentinian I and his young son Gratian in Trier in 369. The mission was all the more important in that it apparently represented the first senatorial contact with the already well-established new regime.[33] Here he delivered *Orat.* 1, 2 and 3, and his stay in Trier may have extended up to two years.[34] Symmachus had likely already begun to make

[30] For the inscription, see above, p. 3. Concerns for the Vestal virgins recur throughout his *Letters*, especially in *Ep*. 2.36, on the subject of an honorific statue to Vettius Agorius Praetextatus which the Vestals proposed to erect, and *Ep*. 9.147 and 9.148, demanding that the Vestal virgin Primigenia be punished for adultery.
[31] For Symmachus' proconsulship of Africa, see *CTh* XII 1.73; *proconsule* p.A.v.s.i. VIII 24584 Carthage; *proconsulatu Aureli Summachi* VIII 5347=*ILAlg*. I 272 Calama (Proconsularis); *procos*. *AE* 1966, 518 near Thysdrus- and also mentioned in many letters of Symmachus: *Ep*. X 1.2-3, *Ep*. VIII 20, *Ep*. VIII 5, *Ep*. IX 115, *Ep*. I 1, II 63, *Rel*. 2.
[32] John Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court AD 364-425* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 1-30, especially 23-30. See also MacMullen, *Corruption and the Decline of Rome*, 122-197.
[33] Sogno, *Q. Aurelius Symmachus: A Political Biography*, 2-3. For the ruling circle under Valentinian I, see Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court AD 364-425*, 32-54.
[34] For a summary of scholarship on the quite uncertain length of Symmachus' stay at Trier, see Sogno, "Barbarians as Spectacle: The Account of an Ancient 'Embedded Reporter' (Symm. *Or*. 2.10-12)," 134 n. 4.

politically valuable contacts before this time, and in particular seems to have established contact with Gratian's tutor Ausonius by letter (*Ep*. 9.88) somewhat before the embassy.[35] He clearly took advantage of the opportunity to pursue these contacts in person at court, and Ausonius later mentions (*Ep*. 1.32.4) the friendly relations which he enjoyed with Symmachus at this time, in the letter preserved as Symmachus' *Ep*. 1.32. Symmachus' contact with Ausonius would be politically invaluable later, after the death of Valentinian I and the accession of Gratian as reigning emperor in his own right in 375, a time at which Ausonius enjoyed great influence.[36]

Due to these contacts, Symmachus was well-placed to mediate between the senate and court after the accession of Gratian, which he celebrates in *Orat*. 4 and 5, *Ep*. 1.13 and *Ep*. 10.2. He reported to Ausonius on the senatorial reaction to the initial communication from the court of Gratian (*Ep*. 1.13), and was chosen by the emperor to read his second letter to the senate (for which Symmachus expresses his gratitude in *Ep*. 10.2). This was delicate business: Gavin Kelly convincingly argues that the accession of Gratian was complicated by the decision of certain officials in the court of his father to set up Gratian's four-year-old half-brother Valentinian II as co-emperor, and that their pressure was responsible for some of the decisions which Symmachus attributes to Gratian alone. Most important was the removal and eventual execution of Valentinian I's feared praetorian prefect

[35] Sergio Roda, *Commento storico al libro IX dell'epistolario di Q. Aurelio Simmaco*, 219-22; "Un nuova lettera di Simmaco ad Ausonio," *Revue des études anciennes* 83 (1981): 273-80, rejected by Altay Coşkun, "Symmachus, Ausonius und der *Senex Olim Garumnae Alumnus*: Auf der Suche nach Adressaten von Symm. *Epist*. 9.88," *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 145 (2002): 120-28 but rightly supported by Sogno, *Q. Aurelius Symmachus: A Political Biography*, 6, and Salzman, *The Letters of Symmachus: Book 1*, 37 and 39.
[36] For the influence of Ausonius, see especially Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court AD 364-425*, 69-87.

Maximinus, whose reign of terror in Rome is described by Ammianus Marcellinus (28.1.1-56) as well as Symmachus (*Orat*. 4.9-14, *Ep*. 10.2.2-3).[37]

Symmachus would continue to capitalize on favourable relations with court by maintaining an active correspondence with Ausonius (*Ep*. 1.13 – *Ep*. 1.43), whose consulship he celebrates in *Ep*. 1.20, and with the latter's son Hesperius (*Ep*. 75-88). The early part of the reign of Gratian, when Ausonius was ascendant at court, receives particular attention in the first book of the *Letters* (though the collection also includes both slightly earlier and later material) and was clearly a period of personal success for Symmachus, and may well have been witnessed by the publication of Symmachus' extant *Orations* at this time.[38] The first book of the *Letters* itself cannot have been published until rather later; when it was published remains an open question, since the time of Gratian does not seem to have been remembered as fondly after the fact.[39] Relations with court were apparently less smooth after the retirement of Ausonius, and Symmachus was actually denied audience when he led a senatorial delegation to court to restore the altar of Victory, which Gratian had removed from the senate house, in 382 (*Relat*. 3.1, 20).

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[37] Kelly, "Pliny and Symmachus," 274-275, 279, 281, 286.

[38] For the glorification of the early reign of Gratian in Book 1 of the *Letters*, see Philippe Bruggisser, "*Gloria novi saeculi*: Symmaque et le siècle de Gratien (epist. 1.13)," *Museum Helveticum* 44 (1987): 134-149. The letters to Symmachus' father (*Ep*. 1.1-12) mostly predate Gratian, while some of the letters to Praetextatus (*Ep*. 1.44-55) likely date to the period immediately after the death of Gratian, in 383. Seeck, *Q. Aurelii Symmachi opera quae supersunt*, Callu, *Symmaque I* and Salzman, *The Letters of Symmachus: Book 1*, lxix-lxxii all date the letters independently. For the publication of the *Orations*, Sogno, *Q. Aurelius Symmachus: A Political Biography*, 28-30 dates everything to the reign of Gratian, that is, the later 370s, but Callu, *Symmaque V*, viii-xii, may well be right in confining the publication at that date to *Orat*. 5; his dating, in ix n. 1, 2 and 3 of the extant eight-book publication to c. 385, depending as it does on a publication of the *Relations* and the first book of the *Letters* at that time which is quite uncertain, is possible but not strongly compelling.

[39] For a date after 384 but by the early 390s, see Callu, *Symmaque I*, 17-18, Roda, *Commento storico al libro IX dell'epistolario di Q. Aurelio Simmaco*, 69 n. 34 and 79, Philippe Bruggisser, *Symmaque ou le rituel épistolaire de l'amitié littéraire* (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse, 1981), 25-31 and Salzman, *The Letters of Symmachus: Book 1*, liv. For a later date, immediately after the death of Symmachus in 402, see Alan Cameron "Were pagans afraid to speak their minds in a Christian world? The Correspondence of Symmachus," in *Pagans and Christians in Late Antique Rome*, ed. Michele Renee Salzman, Marianne Sághy and Rita Lizzi-Testa (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 94-95. I favour a date during the reign of Honorius, though not necessarily as late as 402. See below, p. 188-190.

In 382, after the murder of Gratian by the usurper Magnus Maximus, the senate rallied around Gratian's young half-brother Valentinian II; Symmachus' friend Vettius Agorius Praetextatus (the recipient of *Ep*. 1.44-55) was appointed praetorian prefect of Italy, an important judicial function, and Symmachus was appointed urban prefect of Rome (summer 384 to winter 385). This period of his career is very well attested, since a collection of state papers (the *Relations*) which he sent to the emperor, apparently at a rate of two per week, is extant, though not ordered chronologically or precisely dated.[40] The urban prefecture was usually held by a senator, typically for a term of approximately a year, and both Symmachus' father (*PLRE* I p. 863 Symmachus 3) and father-in-law Orfitus (*PLRE* I p. 651 Orfitus 3) had earlier held it, in 364-5 and in 353-5 and 357-9 respectively.[41] Indeed, the debts to the treasury which Orfitus had contracted in this capacity would cause some difficulties for Symmachus, who argues that he was not personally liable for them in *Relat*. 34 and in *Ep*. 9.150.[42] Symmachus, as personal representative of the emperors in the city and the primary intermediary between the senate and the emperor, acknowledged and returned imperial gifts (*Relat*. 7, 9, 13, 15, 47), conveyed popular and senatorial opinion to the emperors (*Relat*. 14 is a clear example) and adjudicated in a variety of legal cases (*Relat*. 16, 19, 29, 31, 36, 38, 40, 41, 48, 49), among other duties.

[40] For the political circumstances, see especially Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court AD 364-425*, 173-210, Sogno, *Q. Aurelius Symmachus: A Political Biography*, 40-57, and, more briefly, Callu, *Symmaque V*, xxxix-xliii, xlvi-li. For the sending of the state papers, see Barrow, *Prefect and Emperor*, 15-19.
[41] For the office, see André Chastagnol, *La préfecture urbaine à Rome sous le bas-empire* (Paris. Presses Universitaires de France, 1960) and Robert Chenault, "Rome Without Emperors" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2008), 73-81 for its prominence in the Calendar of 354. Ammianus Marcellinus, as Chenault, notes, p. 163-167, dates events outside of Rome by consulships but events in Rome by urban prefectures, a sign of the importance of the office.
[42] See Salzman, *The Letters of Symmachus: Book 1*, 5.

Two particular incidents seem to have attracted particular attention at the time. First, Symmachus would ultimately have been responsible for the expulsion of the non-resident population of the city during a severe food shortage (Ammianus 14.6.19, Ambrose *De officiis ministrorum* 3.45-52, Themistius *Or*. 18.222a). This was, an action which clearly incurred resentment and which Symmachus does not publicize himself. *Ep*. 2.7.3, which, by virtue of its inclusion in the first seven books of the *Letters*, figures in the arrangement of letters which Symmachus prepared for publication himself, mentions the expulsions without taking any credit for them: "let the city call back as soon as possible those whom it sent away unwillingly" (*quamprimum revocet urbs nostra, quos invita dimisit*). It is rather more surprising that references to the expulsion order do not survive in the extant *Relations*, since it must have been mentioned to the emperor, but Symmachus might well have destroyed the relevant state papers from his own archives. The mentions of the food shortage which do survive (*Relat*. 9.7 and *Relat*. 18) are entirely unproblematic appeals for help with the provisioning of the city. Secondly, Symmachus also famously embroiled himself in religious politics, unsuccessfully seeking the return of the altar of Victory and subsidies for the Vestal virgins in his famous *Relation* 3 (of which the bishop Ambrose in Milan rebutted in his own *Ep*. 17 and, after he managed to obtain a copy of *Relat*. 3, in *Ep*. 18).[43]

Since Symmachus' urban prefecture is generally considered not to have been a success, it is debatable whether he published his *Relations* himself, presumably soon after his resignation, in order to justify himself (an apparent motive for the near-contemporary publication of the *Letters* of Jerome), or preferred to forget the incident and left the collection unpublished, to be rediscovered much later.[44] On balance, however, I believe that a later publication is rather more

[43] See n. 74.
[44] The latter is plausibly suggested by Vera, *Commento storico alle "Relationes" di Q. Aurelius Symmachus*, xxxi n.

likely. The tenth book of Pliny's *Letters* provides a parallel for technical subject matter but not for publication in the face of controversy, and it seems unlikely, as explained above, that Symmachus took them as an explicit model.

An early and at least vaguely self-justifying collection is not impossible, and the *Relations* do follow a logical organization, which could conceivably be Symmachus' own. They do, after all, begin with thanks to the western and eastern emperors who appointed him (*Relat*. 1 and 2), followed by the famous and rhetorically elaborate *Relat*. 3, on the altar of Victory, and end with a series of reports on a variety of legal cases (*Relat*. 16, 19, 29, 31, 36, 38, 40, 41, 48, 49), which, though tedious, might show Symmachus' diligence and fair-mindedness.[45] This does not, however, suggest publication for a potentially hostile audience in connection with the concerns of a particular moment: while the suppression of mentions of the expulsion order in connection with the famine is not surprising, one would expect demonstrations of diligence in securing the grain supply (*Relat*. 9.7, *Relat*. 18) to be rather more prominently placed. Nor does Symmachus mention publishing the *Relations* in the same way that he mentions publication of at least some of the *Orations* (*Ep*. 1.52, *Ep*, 1.78, *Ep*. 1.96, *Ep*. 1.105, *Ep*. 3.7, *Ep*. 5.43)[46] and mentions at least the possibility of publishing the *Letters* themselves (*Ep*. 4.34), and there is little evidence that Symmachus' *Relations*, besides for *Relation* 3, which was clearly circulated separately, by Ambrose, were actually read in the fourth or fifth centuries. The

1 and xc-xciv, who proposes a late publication date, in the sixth century, supported by Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome*, 253-98, and Salzman, *The Letters of Symmachus: Book 1*, lxi and lxvii. Even Callu, *Symmaque V*, liv-lv, who proposes that the state papers were almost immediately arranged and made available to a small circle of friends, in 385, admits, lv, that the reports, with the exception of *Relat*. 3, did not circulate widely until the date proposed by Vera.

[45] For the question of the addressee lines, which might over-represent Theodosius and Arcadius in Constantinople, see Barrow, *Prefect and Emperor*, 15, and especially Callu, *Symmaque V*, xli-xlii.

[46] See Callu, *Symmaque V*, viii n. 5.

organization of the *Relations*, while it could reflect work by Symmachus himself, is at least as well explained if it was the product of a significantly later editor whose interests in Symmachus were as a late pagan and perhaps as a later counterpart to Pliny, and who knew about the altar of Victory but not the famine.

The conclusion which must be drawn is that the *Relations*, although they are the record of the office for which Symmachus was most famous, both in his own time and later, were rhetorically finished, and do present Symmachus in a particular light at least for their primary addressees, the emperor and his court, were not released. Symmachus did not intend for the collection, in its extant form, to be widely circulated, at least not in 385. I argue below that Symmachus does react to some extent to the impression created by his urban prefecture in the works that he did release,[47] but I do not consider the *Relations*, in themselves, as part of Symmachus' literary self-presentation for a general public.

After his urban prefecture Symmachus remained at least intermittently involved in and affected by public life. Within months of his replacement as urban prefect, he was involved in (unsuccessfully) opposing in the pontifical college, as he mentions in *Ep*. 2.36, a proposal that the Vestal virgins dedicate a statue to his friend Praetextatus, who had died during Symmachus' urban prefecture (*Relat*. 10-12).[48] In 388, it fell on him to deliver a panegyric (*Ep*. 2.31; indirectly alluded to in *Ep*. 2.28) to the usurper Magnus Maximus, who had seized Rome in 387.[49] It is unlikely that he had much of a choice in the matter, but it apparently led him to seek refuge in a church when Theodosius I retook the city later in 388 (Socrates Scholasticus 5.14.6), and

[47] See below, p. 55-66 and chapter 4 generally.
[48] For the operation of the pontifical college, see Françoise Van Haeperen, *Le college pontifical (3èm s.a.C. – 4ème s.p.C.): Contribution à l'étude de la religion publique romaine* (Bruxelles: Institut historique belge de Rome, 2002).
[49] See Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court AD 364-425*, 223 and Sogno, Q. *Aurelius Symmachus: A Political Biography*, 67-71, who rightly downplays the extent to which Symmachus had a real choice in the matter. Most recently, see Salzman, *The Letters of Symmachus: Book 1*, xxxvi-xxxvii.

depressed his fortunes in the later 380s, leaving him powerless to protest the occupation of one of his estates by the troops of Theodosius I (*Ep*. 2.52 and *Ep*. 6.72).[50] He was subsequently able to recover, due to the influence of members of the emperor's court, above all his friend Flavianus Nicomachus senior (*PLRE* I p. 347), Theodosius' quaestor of the sacred palace in 389/390, the addressee of all of Book 2 of the *Letters*; the letters written to Ricomer (*Ep*. 3.54-69), Timasius (*Ep*. 3.70-73), Promotus (*Ep*. 3.74-78) and especially Rufinus (*Ep*. 3.81-91) all date to this time. Having delivered a (lost) apology for the panegyric and a (lost) panegyric for Theodosius (mentioned in *Ep*. 2.13 and 2.28, 30.3, 31), he reached the pinnacle of his official career in 391, when he was rewarded with the ordinary consulship.[51]

The last decade of Symmachus' life, after 391, saw his greatest political successes and is the period best represented in his *Letters*. Crucially, in an age in which connections at court could be highly useful but associations with usurpers potentially disastrous, Symmachus' political instincts proved good: unlike his friend Flavianus Nicomachus senior, he prudently kept his distance from the regime of the usurper Eugenius in 394, and was able to extricate Flavianus' son, his own son-in-law, from political difficulties by the later 390s. After the death of Theodosius I, Symmachus forged close ties with Stilicho, the leading figure at the court of Theodosius' son Honorius, and thus became a useful channel for patronage in Rome, able to secure bureaucratic positions for his protégés, as reflected in the many letters of recommendation from this period. Presumably because of these privileged ties at court, he was also well-placed to represent the senate to the court, as a participant in several embassies during these years, and, occasionally, the court to the

50 See Sogno, *Q. Aurelius Symmachus: A Political Biography*, 71-76.
51 For Symmachus' political recovery, see Sogno, *Q. Aurelius Symmachus: A Political Biography*, 71-78.

senate.[52] Symmachus' last dateable letter is from 402, and he presumably died of the illness which he complains of in *Ep*. 4.13 and 5.94-96 after returning to Rome from court.[53]

This decade also witnessed Symmachus' major public spectacles and the release of at least some, perhaps most, of the literary works that he would release: in this sense we can speak of Symmachus crafting and fine-tuning his self-presentation for various audiences at this time. It was at this time that his son Memmius Symmachus begin to enter public life, celebrating his quaestorship (394) and praetorship (401) with expensive public games.[54] It was also at this time, probably in 397-8, that Symmachus published, for a select audience at court, two (lost) speeches opposing a revival of the censorship and the quaestorship of the son of a particular senator, Polybius, respectively, mentioned in *Ep*. 4.29, *Ep*. 4.45, and *Ep*. 5.9.[55] This was likely the time when the first book of the *Letters*, focussed on the early reign of Gratian and Symmachus' first period of prominence, was released; Alan Cameron proposed this dating on the basis of ancient publication practice and I will support it, in my fourth chapter, on the basis of parallels to the present which Symmachus might have wished to highlight.[56] This was also necessarily the time when Symmachus began, and substantially finished, preparing the seven-book publication of his *Letters*, since every book except for the first contains a substantial number of letters postdating 391 but the collection has an obvious structure; the collection would be posthumously published by his son Memmius Symmachus (between 402 and 408).[57]

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[52] See especially Sogno, *Q. Aurelius Symmachus: A Political Biography*, 78-85. The main occasion on which Symmachus represented court interests at Rome was during the war with Gildo, as described in *Ep*. 4.5. See below, p. 58, 63.
[53] See Seeck, *Q. Aurelii Symmachi opera quae supersunt*, lxxii-lxxiii, Matthews, "The Letters of Symmachus," 58 and 60 and Salzman, *The Letters of Symmachus: Book 1*, xliv.
[54] For the many letters connected to these games, see below, p. 191.
[55] The date of publication is proposed by Seeck, *Q. Aurelii Symmachi opera quae supersunt*, viii on the basis of the magistracies of Felix (*quaestor sacri palatii*) and Minervius (*comes rerum privatarum*) at Milan at this time. For the delivery of the speeches themselves, see below, n. 341.
[56] See Cameron, "Were Pagans Afraid to Speak Their Minds in a Christian world? The Correspondence of Symmachus," 94-95 and below, p. 168-169.
[57] For arrangement by Symmachus himself and the date of publication, see above, n. 15. The *termini post quem* and

The Symmachi would remain prominent senators for several generations, long past the collapse of direct imperial rule in the West, and the works of Symmachus remained in circulation.[58] Symmachus' *Orations* and *Letters* were apparently read by Macrobius (more on this below), who compares Symmachus to Pliny the Younger for oratory (*Saturnalia* 5.1.7), and his *Letters* also by Sidonius Apollinaris and Ennodius. Indeed, the *Relations* and the later books of the *Letters* (Books 8, 9 and 10) may actually have been published in the time of Sidonius Apollinaris and Ennodius, in the later fifth and early sixth centuries.[59] The *Relations* and *Letters* apparently circulated both separately and together in the Middle Ages, while the *Orations* ultimately survived only in a single palimpsest manuscript copy, over-written with the acts of the council of Chalcedon and rediscovered and published by Angelo Mai, later cardinal, in Milan (1815) and Rome (1823).[60] The *editio princeps* of the *Letters* and *Relations* were in 1503 and 1549 respectively; modern scholarship on Symmachus, as previously mentioned, really begins with Otto Seeck, who restored the page order of the *Orations* and established the chronology of the life of Symmachus.[61]

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ante quem are fixed by the attribution in the manuscript, "published after his death by Q. Fabius Memmius Symmachus, of senatorial rank, his son" (*editus post eius obitum a Q. Fabio Memmio Symmacho vc filio*) after the second and fourth books, which must thus be posthumous, and by the fall and execution of Stilicho, who figures prominently in the *Letters*, as the addressee of *Ep*. 4.1-14, in 408.

[58] For a chart of the descendants of Symmachus, including several consuls, see Seeck, *Q. Aurelii Symmachi opera quae supersunt*, xl.

[59] Roda, *Commento storico al libro IX dell'epistolario di Q. Aurelio Simmaco*, 69-79, supported by Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome*, 253-98, and Salzman, *The Letters of Symmachus: Book 1*, lxi and lxvii.

[60] For the manuscripts, see Callu, *Symmaque I*, 29-47 and *Symmaque V*, lv-lix. For the rediscovery of the *Orations*, see Callu, *Symmaque V*, xx.

[61] For a summary of the modern publication, see Callu, *Symmaque I*, 29-35 and *Symmaque V*, xx, xxix-xxxi, lvi-lix. For the reconstruction of the *Orations* quaternion, see Seeck, *Q. Aurelii Symmachi opera quae supersunt,* viii-xv; for the biography of Symmachus, see xxxix-lxxiii.

0.2 Symmachus and late antiquity

By virtue of what survives of his works, Symmachus is an important source for his period, in fields as disparate as late Roman society, literature (both letters and panegyrics) and literary culture, politics, law and religion.[62] Naturally, the interpretation of Symmachus has both influenced and, conversely, been heavily influenced by, the way in which his period as a whole is interpreted. Here I will outline three main overarching models of interpretation for the age of Symmachus: the decline of the ancient world, the *longue durée* transformation toward the late antique or medieval world, and, more recently, a more finely-textured model of competition and adaptation using existing cultural resources in specific situations.[63]

The model of decline, famously adopted by Edward Gibbon in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-89), describes well the fate of the imperial administration and of classical education in the Latin West in the fifth century, though it is rather less immediately obvious as a model for the fourth century or for Constantinople.[64] Symmachus complains of contemporary

[62] For works wholly or in large part devoted to Symmachus as a historical source, see, for example, Bettina Hecht, *Störungen der Rechtslage in den Relationen des Symmachus: Verwaltung und Rechtsprechung in Rom 384/385 n. Chr*. (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2006) for law, Andreas Felmy, "*Die Römische Republic im Geschichtsbild der Spätantike* (PhD diss., Universität Freiburg, 1999) for the use of historical *exempla* in the fourth century, François Paschoud, *Roma Aeterna: Études sur le patriotism romain dans l'occident latin à l'époque des grandes invasions* (Rome: Institut Suisse de Rome, 1967) 71-109 for late Roman patriotism, André Chastagnol, "Le sénat dans l'oeuvre de Symmaque," in *Colloque Genevois sur Symmaque à l'occasion du mille six centième anniversaire du conflit de l'autel de la Victoire*, ed. F. Paschoud (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1986), 73-92 for the functioning of the senate, and Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome*, 353-398 for his social circle and 535-542 for the Greek culture of the senatorial aristocracy. See Chenault, "Rome Without Emperors," 181-249 for the promotion of Rome as a senatorial city, Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, 93-119 for attitudes toward wealth, and Ebbeler "Pedants in the Apparel of Heroes? Cultures of Latin letter-writing from Cicero to Ennodius," 133-138, 150-157 for the development of late antique epistolography. See also Ralf Behrwald, *Die Stadt als Museum? Die Wahrnehmung der Monumente Roms in der Spätantike* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2009), 147-157 for the topography of Rome.

[63] These are the three models which Lieve Van Hoof and PeterVan Nuffelen, "The Social Role and Place of Literature in the Fourth Century AD," in *Literature and Society in the Fourth Century AD: Performing Paideia, Constructing the Present, Presenting the Self*, ed. Lieve Van Hoof and Peter Van Nuffelen (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 1-12, highlight for late antique literature, the latter considered above all in terms of performance.

[64] This is pointed out, for example, in Lucy Grig and Gavin Kelly, "From Rome to Constantinople," in *Two Romes*, ed. Lucy Grig and Gavin Kelly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 25-27.

decline, in virtue or achievement (as in *Ep*. 1.4.2) and in purity of literary style (as in *Ep*. 3.11.1-2), as do many of his contemporaries; although this rhetoric is hardly new to late antiquity, in this context it has been tempting to take it at face value and to use it as evidence to complement other sorts of perceived decline, particularly in the social and political sphere, which are not the focus of contemporary authors and which may only be clear in retrospect. Alternately, Symmachus and his contemporaries are cited for their own debased interests and literary style, in at least implicit comparison to the public-mindedness and eloquence of Cicero or others.

Two rather different examples of this approach to Symmachus are found in François Paschoud (*Roma Aeterna*, 1967) and Ramsay MacMullen (*Corruption and the Decline of Rome*, 1988). Paschoud, following the analysis of the narrow self-interest of Symmachus and his peers in John McGeechy,[65] argues that the lack of senatorial understanding of the military crisis after Adrianople and unwillingness to sacrifice its financial interests materially weakened the western empire. Here Symmachus becomes a cause and exemplar of decline.[66] MacMullen, on the other hand, identifies imperial decline with the relative decline of patronage relations, which he describes as "power effective" insofar as they were central, both for local elites and for the emperors, to getting things done in an under-governed empire. This decline he correlates with the replacement of patronage with occasional monetary transactions, represented by a growth of fees for services in an expanding bureaucracy. MacMullen naturally identifies Symmachus, associated with patronage and

[65] "Q. Aurelius Symmachus and the Aristocracy of the West" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1942).
[66] François Paschoud, *Roma Aeterna: Études sur le patriotism romain dans l'occident latin à l'époque des grandes invasions* (Neuchatel: Institut Suisse de Rome, 1967), 71-109, and 106 for vacuousness as a letter-writer, defined as endless repetition of polite formulae without engagement with the issues of his time. See, however, Matthews, "The Letters of Symmachus," 88-91 for an argument that the letters of Symmachus served an important social function which might have been compromised by broaching contentious issues. For a more recent rather low appraisal of the culture of Symmachus and his peers, see Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome*, 535-542.

with the transmission of imperial directives to the senate, with a fading model of what worked.[67]

Decline, then, can be a useful model for interpreting Symmachus, indeed a model which Symmachus himself sometimes highlights, as for "Attic" style in *Ep*. 3.11.1-2, and which he would have understood. Classical models did continue to be important reference points in Symmachus' time, hence the frequency with which he cites Cicero as a stylistic model (for example, for his father in *Ep*. 1.3.2). All the same, these models and the rhetoric of decline itself could serve particularly late antique functions.[68] To judge Symmachus by classical standards, while tempting, is to not consider Symmachus fully in his own terms, and to ignore his particular agenda in using the models that he does in the way that he does.

A second, more recent, model is one of transformation, namely the transformation of classical forms into Byzantine and medieval forms. This model is particularly associated with Peter Brown,[69] and it is on this notion of metamorphosis that late antiquity as a historical period is predicated. In this perspective, late antique society and culture are not judged by classical standards, and may receive positive assessments. According to this model, Symmachus is viewed not at the endpoint of antiquity, but at the beginning or midpoint of postclassical developments.

In terms of the use of money and patronage in late antique society and administration, two examples of this approach are Christopher Kelly and Peter Brown, both previously mentioned. Kelly, accepting Ramsay MacMullen's analysis of the spread of monetary transactions in government but not his negative assessment of it, argues that it rationalized the administration by establishing a system for prioritizing the many requests with which the imperial service dealt, and

[67] MacMullen, *Corruption and the Decline of Rome*, 122-197.
[68] Lieve Van Hoof, "Lobbying through Literature: Libanius, *For the Teachers* (*Oration* 31)," in *Literature and Society in the Fourth Century AD: Performing Paideia, Constructing the Present, Presenting the Self*, ed. Lieve Van Hoof and Peter Van Nuffelen (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 68-82 makes this argument for a work of Libanius.
[69] See, for example, Peter Brown, *World of Late Antiquity: AD 150-750* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971); *Power and Persuasion* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), and his recent *Through the Eye of a Needle*.

was part of a new balance in government, at least in the eastern empire.[70] Peter Brown, similarly, in his *Through the Eye of a Needle* (2012), describes the decline of traditional elite patronage for civic ends and the rise of episcopally-sponsored Christian charity, which targeted the poor as a category rather than a particular citizen body. In both cases, Symmachus is invoked to represent the "before" stage, defined by the traditional elite use of personal contacts and wealth, though he is contemporary with some of the exemplars of the later stages.

Alternatively, Symmachus is located at the midpoint of late antique transformations. Sabine MacCormack has Symmachus illustrate the middle stage of a transformation in panegyric and ceremony beginning with the tetrarchic orators of the *Latin Panegyrics* collection and ending in the age of Justinian. This is a development in which human political consensus, performed in the adventus ceremony in which local notables joined to welcome the emperor as he arrived into their city, was increasingly replaced, as an imagined source of the emperor's power, by the concept of divine endorsement of the emperor exemplified in ceremonies of accession, which were elaborated in late antiquity.[71] Jennifer Ebbeler and Robert Chenault, in turn, in their respective dissertations (*Pedants in the Apparel of Heroes*, 2001 and *Rome Without Emperors*, 2008), both helpfully locate Symmachus in a new late antique context defined by distance. Ebbeler describes Symmachus' letters as sharing in a wider late antique tendency to initiate friendships by letter and to manage relationships at a distance, while Chenault describes Symmachus in a Rome which had been without emperors for most of

[70] Christopher Kelly, *Ruling the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 107-231.
[71] Sabine MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 198-200.

a century. In both cases, Symmachus is presented as offering a particular response to a peculiarly late antique situation and as attempting to secure the return of an absent party (in Chenault's case, the return of the emperor to Rome), or at least to compensate for the absence, though neither Ebbeler nor Chenault emphasize his success in this regard.[72]

Finally, some late antique scholars, following the lead of second sophistic scholarship, have recently held up individual performance in response to specific contemporary challenges using traditional resources as an alterative to overarching models. Thus Lieve Van Hoof and Peter Van Nuffelen (2015) have argued that classical literary education, at least in the Greek East, did not so much decline or even undergo transformation in the fourth century as simply become applied to new situations, with each author individually redeploying classical material – and the rhetoric of decline – to specific contemporary ends and individual performances.[73] As an explicit model, Van Hoof and Van Nuffelen's adaptation and performance lends itself best to an accumulation of case studies, and is, not surprisingly, articulated in the introduction to an edited volume rather than a monograph.

This more finely textured approach has also recently been applied to the religion of late antique Rome, hitherto often treated, especially in continental scholarship, in terms of generalized religious conflict between pagans and Christians.[74] Under the model of conflict, much of the classicizing literature produced in the later fourth and early fifth centuries in Rome, including that

[72] Chenault, "Rome Without Emperors," 181-249; Ebbeler, "Pedants in the Apparel of Heroes? Cultures of Latin Letter-writing from Cicero to Ennodius," 133-138, 150-157.
[73] Van Hoof and Van Nuffelen, "The Social Role and Place of Literature in the Fourth Century AD," 8-11.
[74] Contemporary models of generalized religious conflict date back to Andreas Alföldi, *The Conversion of Constantine and Pagan Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948) and Herbert Bloch, "The Pagan Revival in the West at the End of the Fourth Century," in *The Conflict Between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century*, ed. Arnaldo Momigliano (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963). It has most recently been defended by Stephane Ratti, *Polémiques entre païens et chrétiens* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2012). For a good general summary of the question, see Rita Lizzi-Testa, "Concluding Remarks: *Urbs Roma* Between Christians and Pagans," in *Pagans and Christians in Late Antique Rome*, ed. Michele Renee Salzman, Marianne Sághy and Rita Lizzi-Testa (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 399-407.

of Symmachus, has been interpreted as pagan cultural propaganda, and *Relat*. 3, which engages with a particular religious flashpoint, has accordingly received far more attention than any other single work of Symmachus.[75] Although the reality of conflict is undeniable,

[75] See D.W. Robinson "An Analysis of the Pagan Revival of the Late Fourth Century, with Special Reference to Symmachus," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 46 (1915): 87-101; Friedrich Hochreiter, "Die Relation des Symmachus für die Wiedererrichtung des Altares der Viktoria und die Gegenschriften des Ambrosius und Prudentius" (PhD diss., Leopold-Franzens-Universität, 1951) and "Relation an den Kaiser über den Victoriaaltar: Symm. rel. III, 384 n. Chr.," *Gymnasium* 64 (1957): 205-210; Jennifer Ann Sheridan, "The Altar of Victory: Paganism's Last Battle," *L'Antiquité Classique* 35 (1966), 186-206; Paschoud, *Roma aeterna: Etudes sur le patriotisme romain dans l'Occident latin a l'epoque des invasions*; Fabrizio Canfora, *Simmaco e Ambrogio o di un'antica controversia sulla toleranza e sull'intoleranza* (Bari: Adriatica, 1970); Richard Klein, *Der Streit um den Victoriaaltar: Die dritte Relatio des Symmachus und die Brief 17, 18 und 57 des mailendars des Bischofs Ambrosius* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftlische Buchgesellschaft 1972); John Matthews, "Symmachus and the Oriental Cults," *Journal of Roman Studies* 63 (1973): 175-95; Marcella Forlin Patrucco and Sergio Roda, "La lettere di Simmaco ad Ambrogio: Vent'anni di rapporti amichevoli," in *Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Studi Ambrosiani*, 284-98 (Milan: Vita e pensiero, 1976); Jean-Pierre Callu, "Date et genèse du premier livre de Prudence Contre Symmaque," *Revue des Études Latines* 59 (1981): 253-59; Alexander Mallá, "Quintus Aurelius Symmachus: Heuchler oder tragische Gestalt," *Graecolatina et Orientalia: zborník Filozofickej Fakulty Univerzity Komenského* (1981-1982): 13-14, 37-54; François Paschoud, "Le role du providentialisme dans le conflit de 384 sur l'autel de la Victoire," *Museum Helveticum* 40 (1983): 197-206; Arthur Hilary Armstrong, "The Way and the Ways: Religious Tolerance and Intolerance in the Fourth Century A.D," *Vigilia Christiana* 38 (1984): 1-17; Marco Bertolini, "Sull'atteggiamento religioso di Q. A. Simmaco," *Studi classici e orientali* 36 (1986): 189-208; Richard Klein, *Symmachus: Eine tragische Gestalt des augehenden Heidentums* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftlische Buchgesellschaft, 1986); Philippe Bruggisser, "*Orator disertissimus*: à propos d'une lettre de Symmaque à Ambroise," *Hermes* 115 (1987): 106-115; Philippe Bruggisser, "Symmaque et la mémoire d'Hercule," *Historia* 38 (1989): 380-383; Danuta Schanzer, "The Date and Composition of Prudentius' *Contra Orationes Symmachi*," *Rivista di filologia e di istruzione classica* 117 (1989): 442-62; Christian Gnilka, "Zur Rede der Roma bei Symmachus rel. 3," *Hermes* 118 (1990): 464-470; Christian Gnilka, "Die vielen Wege und der Eine: Zur Bedeutung einer Bildrede aus dem Geisteskampf der Spätantike," *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch* 31 (1990), 9-51; Stefan Rebenich, "Augustinus im Streit zwischen Symmachus und Ambrosius um den Altar der Victoria," *Laverna* 2 (1991): 53-75; María Pérez Medina, "Dos tradiciones en el paganismo romano del siglo IV?" *Florentia Iliberritana: Revista de estudios de antiqüedad clásica* 2 (1991): 401-408; María Pérez Medina "La controversia Símaco-Ambrosio: Análisis de la *Relatio III* simaquiana y de las Epístolas XVII y XVIII del obispo," *Florentia Iliberritana: Revista de estudios de antiqüedad clásica* 3 (1992): 463-501; T.D. Barnes, "Augustine, Symmachus, and Ambrose," in *Augustine: From Rhetor to Theologian*, ed. Joanne McWilliam (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992), 7-13; A.V. Van Stekelenburg, "Stating the Case of Paganism in 384 AD: Argumentation in the Third Relation of Symmachus," *Akroterion* 38 (1993): 39-45; Neil McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994); Klaus Rosen, "*Fides contra dissimulationem*: Ambrosius und Symmachus im Kampf um den Victoriaaltar," *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 37 (1994): 29-36; Isabella Gualandri, "La riposta di Ambrogio a Simmaco: Destinari pagani e destinari cristiani," in *Pagani e cristiani da Guilano l'Apostata al sacco di Roma*, ed. Franca Ela Consolino (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 1995), 241-256; Clifford Ando, "Pagan Apologetics and Christian Intolerance in the Ages of Themistius and Augustine," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 4 no. 2 (1996): 171-207; Francesco Lipani, "La controversia sull'*Ara Victoriae*," *Atene e Roma: rassegna trimestrale dell'Associazione Italiana di Cultura classica* 41 no. 2-3 (1996): 75-79; C.M. Ternes, "Ambroise, Symmaque: deux cultures pour une Europe?" in *D'Europe à l'Europe* 1, ed. Rémy Poignault and Odile Wattel-De Croizant (Tours: Centre de recherches A. Piganiol, 1998), 117-130; Willy Evenepoel, "Ambrose vs. Symmachus: Christians and Pagans in AD 384," *Ancient Society* 29 (1998), 283-306; Philippe Bruggisser, "Rarissimes païens: L'art du persiflage dans le *Contre Symmaque* de Prudence," *Historia* 51 (2002): 238-253; Alfonso Traina, "Nota a Simmaco, *Rel*. 3.8," *Eikasmos* 15 (2004), 373-374; Charles Guittard, "Symmaque et l'haruspicine," in *Les écrivains du IVe siècle: L'etrusca disciplina dans un monde en mutation: actes de la table-ronde tenue à Clermont-Ferrand les 17 et 18 septembre 1999* (Paris: École Normale Supérieure, 2005), 87-95;

Alan Cameron, in his 2011 book *The Last Pagans of Rome* and in a 2015 book chapter ("The Correspondence of Symmachus"), has effectively argued that there cannot have been a cohesive pagan resistance to Christianity, and his arguments have been widely, and rightly, accepted, at least in the English-speaking world. The lack of a cohesive pagan bloc in the senate with a consistent agenda of its own does not, however, detract from the reality of pagan convictions or preclude multi-sided religious competition, various aspects of which have been compellingly sketched out, some in connection with major flashpoints, in a recent book *Pagans and Christians* (Salzman and Lizzi-Testa).[76] As Van Hoof does for literature, Salzman, Lizzi-Testa and many of their contributors rightly stress the continued viability of certain ancient forms in specific late antique situations.

While decline, broad transformation, and specific adaptation and competition all accurately describe particular aspects of the late antique world, it is adaptation and competition, to the extent that they can be described as models, which best accommodate a single-author study. My thesis, then, considering certain major transformations of Symmachus' world (above all the absence of the emperors from Rome and the growth of the Christian church and corresponding decline of civic religion), seeks to determine the way in which Symmachus, as a prominent and somewhat controversial senator and secondarily as a (sincere) pagan, reacted to them. I consider Symmachus' rhetoric and self-presentation, including his overt references to the

Florencio Hubeñák, "El affaire del altar de la Victoria: Uno de los últimos estertores de la romanidad precristiana," *Semanas de estudios romanos* 13 (2006): 223-254, Richard Klein, "Die dritte *Relatio* des Symmachus: Ein denkwürdiges Zeugnis des untergehenden Heidentums," in *Suus cuique mos*, ed. Ulrich Schmitzer (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2006), 25-58; Jennifer Ebbeler and Cristiana Sogno, "Religious Identity and the Politics of Patronage: Symmachus and Augustine," *Historia* 56 (2007): 230-42; Rita Lizzi-Testa, "Christian Emperor, Vestal Virgins and Priestly Colleges: Reconsidering the End of Roman Paganism," *Antiquité Tardive* 15 no. 1 (2007), 251-262.

[76] See especially Robert Chenault (2016) "Beyond Pagans and Christians: Politics and Intra-Christian Conflict in the Controversy over the Altar of Victory," in *Pagans and Christians in Late Antique Rome*, ed. Michele Renee Salzman, Marianne Sághy and Rita Lizzi-Testa (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 46-63.

Roman past, in an individual rather than a partisan perspective. I do not assume that he published his works for a specifically pagan audience or with a specifically pagan agenda; indeed, I find little evidence for either. Nor do I assume that the Roman past which buttressed contemporary paganism in *Relat*. 3 and elsewhere is always or even usually to be associated with a particular religious position in the works of Symmachus: the cause of traditional religion is only one of the causes that Symmachus could draw on Roman tradition to promote, though there is no particular reason to doubt his sincerity when he does promote it. My analysis assumes, and tends to support, an interpretation of Rome at the end of the fourth century as still divided on religious lines but not as deeply polarized as has sometimes been suggested.

0.3 Scope of the work

In this thesis, therefore, I consider Symmachus mainly as an individual actor with his own agenda and making an individual use of the classical heritage rather than as the representative of a particular faction or era. The question which I seek to address is what sort of competition or adaptation Symmachus was involved in, and how it can best be assessed. My hypothesis is that the answer is to be found, in large part, in the framework which Symmachus prominently and regularly references in his own literary self-presentation, the regularly repeated exchange of cultivation (*cultus*) by inferiors for benefactions (*beneficia*) by superiors, within asymmetrical and theoretically durable relationships. This is closely analogous to the exchanges within formal patronage, which also presupposes asymmetry and durability and could be described in terms of the same language,[77] but I do not assume that all the relationships in question in the works of

[77] See Nicols, *Civic Patronage in the Roman Empire*, 2-3.

Symmachus are relations of formal patronage. In fact, as we will see, although a particular sort of civic patronage, that exercised by the emperor over Rome, is important in the works of Symmachus, personal patronage in the strict sense is virtually invisible. All the same, I will argue that something very much like patronage is essential to the self-presentation of Symmachus.

The framework of *cultus* and *beneficia* which I analyze is first of all a social framework, defined by social relations between the giver and the recipient maintained by particular gifts.[78] The nature of what was offered might vary widely, to include friendly letters, praise in speeches, gifts of money or in kind, and sacrifices; most of these – sacrifices obviously excluded – could potentially count as either *beneficia* or *cultus*.[79] In theory, however, any gift given by the superior could count as a benefaction, and any gift by the inferior partner as cultivation. The social gap between cultivator and benefactor could be almost negligible, very large, or anything in between: Richard Saller emphasizes that benefactions in the Roman world were given to friends, family members, and clients.[80] In the works of Symmachus, it is possible to see relations between superior and inferior friends, family members, patrons and clients, emperors and subjects, and humans and the gods, indeed, any partners who were not absolutely equal, all described in similar terms.[81] To the extent that this can be described as a single phenomenon, it was truly pervasive.

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[78] In social terms, the principles and thinking which underlay the exchange of cultivation for benefactions, the relatively immaterial nature of the exchange (with honour exchanged for commodities, or honour for honour) and the way in which they held together the Roman empire and made palatable its vast discrepancies in power have been most comprehensively studied by J.E. Lendon, *Empire of Honour* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). See also Premerstein, *Vom Werden und Wessen des Prinzipats*, 13-116, Ronald Syme, *Roman Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939), 349-386, MacMullen, *Corruption and the Decline of Rome*, 112, 121.

[79] For example, sacrifice as *cultus* in *Ep*. 1.46.2, letters as *cultus* in *Ep*. 1.28, an anniversary payment as *cultus* in *Orat*. 2.32. *Beneficia*, for example, include letters (*Ep*. 1.1.1), assistance in staging games (*Ep*. 2.77) and the emperor's provisioning of Rome (*Relat*. 37.3)

[80] Saller, *Personal Patronage Under the Early Empire* and "Patronage and Friendship," 49-61 refers to all these relations as this as patronage; Nicols, *Civic Patronage in the Roman Empire*, 2 provides a narrower definition more in line with the Roman use of the term *patrocinium*.

[81] Thus *cultus* can be given to the gods (*Orat*. 2.32, *Relat*. 3.8, *Relat*. 3.9, *Ep*. 1.46.2), to the emperor (*Orat*. 2.32), and to friends (*Ep*. 1.28, *Ep*. 1.42.1, *Ep*. 2.9.2, *Ep*. 2.56.1, *Ep*. 3.41, *Ep*. 3.54, *Ep*. 4.11, *Ep*. 4.30.3, *Ep*. 4.42.2, *Ep*. 4.49, *Ep*. 5.8.1, *Ep*. 5.17, *Ep*. 5.38, *Ep*. 5.52, *Ep*. 5.68.1, *Ep*. 5.78.1, *Ep*. 6.17, *Ep*. 7.52.1, *Ep*. 7.60.1, *Ep*. 7.99.1, *Ep*. 7.128.1, *Ep*. 8.26, *Ep*. 9.25.1, *Ep*. 9.46.1, *Ep*. 9.87, *Ep*. 9.88.1).

In at least some of the asymmetrical social contexts mentioned above, there were considerable social advantages for individuals and groups – Symmachus, the senate, and the emperors included – to gain from *cultus* and *beneficia*. At a general level, J.E. Lendon emphasizes the importance of exchanges which honoured both giver and recipient in holding together the Roman empire, and John Matthews demonstrates that letters like those of Symmachus helped to bridge the gulf between the highly disparate elites of the fourth Indeed, it was this sort of social utility in the expansive world of the fourth century, in which the curial classes redirected their attention away from the local city and toward the central imperial government, that accounts for the prominence of both letters and panegyrics – two literary forms well-suited to cultivating recipients and honorands whom the author did not regularly meet – in surviving late antique literature generally.[83] It is to be expected that the advantages that accrued from networking with magnates through letters – and from panegyrics – would go above all to those who mastered the game, and this is abundantly clear from Cristiana Sogno's analysis of the career of Symmachus.[84] In terms of *cultus*, many of Symmachus' peers must have had every incentive to do as he did.

This is not to say that everyone could successfully cultivate the major power-brokers of the day, nor that *cultus* was the only means of gaining access. For those whose dealings were primarily with the lower levels of the imperial administration, access to

[82] Lendon, *Empire of Honour*, especially 13-27, echoed by Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, 58-59 for gift-giving. For the social bridging function of Symmachus' letters, see especially Matthews, (1974) "The Letters of Symmachus," 89-91. For the effectiveness of this sort of informal power, see also MacMullen, *Corruption and the Decline of Rome*, 96-121.
[83] Andrew Gillett, "Epic Panegyric and Political Communication in the Fifth-Century West," in *Two Romes: Rome and Constantinople in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lucy Grig and Gavin Kelly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 280-282 emphasizes the occasional nature of the relationship between panegyrist and honorand. See Ebbeler, "Pedants in the Apparel of Heroes? Cultures of Latin Letter-writing from Cicero to Ennodius," 166-167 and *Disciplining Christians: Correction and Community in Augustine's Letters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 227-228 for the new potential of letters in the fourth century.
[84] Sogno, *Q. Aurelius Symmachus: A Political Biography*, especially 78-83.

power was increasingly purchased not with cultivation but with money, and transactions were occasional and impersonal, creating no lasting obligations, as both Ramsay MacMullen (1988) *Corruption and the Decline of Rome* and Christopher Kelly (2004) *Ruling the Later Roman Empire* have emphasized. These impersonal alternatives to *cultus* and *beneficia*, which were unattractive from an elite cultural perspective and which Symmachus' contemporary the Antiochene orator Libanius strongly deplores, especially in *Or*. 47 but also in *Or*. 2 and *Or*. 18, were, as Kelly plausibly argues, an integral part of an emerging system of government.[85] It was possible to short-circuit this system, as it had always been for well-connected members of the elite, but there must have been increasingly few who had the contacts and clout to short-circuit it quite as completely as Symmachus does. In this sense, although cultivation was the action of an inferior toward a superior, it required an already high social position to cultivate a magnate like Stilicho.

In social terms, then, the cultivation of benefactions from the most powerful figures of his day was an opportunity uniquely available to Symmachus as a leading senator, which he personally embraced, pursuing it above all through his letters, and which was essential to his considerable success both in Rome and in the wider world of the western Roman empire. The social importance of cultivation and benefactions for Symmachus should not be underestimated.

Cultivation of patronage and friendship did not, however, exist in a purely social realm. The panegyrics and especially the letters, which make up the better part of Symmachus' literary output, are part of a deliberately crafted literary self-presentation: they must therefore also be considered in literary terms, with reference to accepted models as well as practical success. Both in the cases of the genres listed above, however, and in the case of the act of cultivating

[85] MacMullen, *Corruption and the Decline of Rome*, 122-197; Kelly, *Ruling the Later Roman Empire*, 107-185, especially 129-137.

benefactions, there were few clearly canonical models for Symmachus to follow. Epideictic oratory, to which panegyrics belong, though in practice the dominant rhetorical genre since the early empire, did not have the traditional prestige of deliberative and forensic oratory, though Symmachus certainly read and imitated certain features of Pliny's *Panegyric*.[86] In terms of letters, similarly, Jennifer Ebbeler is probably correct in arguing that the letters of Pliny and Cicero did not have any clear canonical status in the fourth century.[87] As for literary *exempla*, cultivation is not a category in the *Memorable Deeds and Sayings* of Valerius Maximus, and I will argue below that although Symmachus often highlights *exempla* for the cultivation of benefactions and for the way in which this cultivation impinges on civic life, the *exempla* which he highlights were rarely pre-codified for the purposes for which he uses them.[88] As a concept worthy of highlighting in literary self-presentation, proper cultivation appears to be an invention of Symmachus himself, created in order to explain and justify his activities, particularly as a letter-writer.

[86] For the status of epideictic in relation to other sorts of oratory, see especially Donald Russell, "The Panegyrists and their Teachers," in *The Propaganda of Power: The Role of Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, ed. Mary Whitby (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 24-25. For its social function in the early empire, see Laurent Pernot, *La rhétorique de l'éloge dans le monde gréco-romain* (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1993), above all 720-723 and 793; for its integration with imperial ceremony in the late empire, see MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity*, 1-14. In terms of Pliny the Younger, Kroll, *De Q. Aurelii Symmachi Studiis Graecis et Latinis*, 93-94, identifies twelve parallel passages between Pliny's *Panegyric* and the works of Symmachus; Kelly, "Pliny and Symmachus," 269-285 provides a full analysis of the main intertexts.

[87] See above, n. 16. Kelly, "Pliny and Symmachus," 261-287 and especially 263-269 lends support to this argument by convincingly demonstrating that Symmachus, despite his use of *the Panegyric*, made little use of the *Letters* of Pliny.

[88] Generosity, gratitude, and familial ties all appear in Books 4 and 5 of Valerius Maximus, with "Those who from enmity were joined by friendship or intimate relations" (*Qui ex inimicitiis iuncti sunt amicitia aut necessitudine*, 4.2) and "On generosity" (*De liberalitate*, 4.7) "On the grateful" (*De gratis*, 5.2), "On the ungrateful, (*De ingratis*, 5.3), "On duty toward parents, brothers, and the fatherland" (*de pietate erga parentes erga fratres erga patriam*, 5.4), "On the love of parents and leniency toward children" (*De parentum amore et indulgentia in liberos*, 5.5). All the same, not one of Symmachus' *exempla* taken from Valerius Maximus is taken from these categories, as can be seen by consulting Kroll, *De Q. Aurelii Symmachi Studiis Graecis et Latinis*, 82-88.

This is not, of course, to say that Symmachus wrote in a cultural void. There were, clearly, accepted ways of writing panegyric, a form which had always engaged with classical culture and for which manuals existed, of which that of Menander Rhetor is a surviving example.[89] In terms of letters, there were some treatments in manuals, of which the second appendix of Julius Victor's *Art of Rhetoric* is the surviving Latin example, and it seems highly unlikely that any of the rules which Philippe Bruggisser culls from the letters of Symmachus, though few figure quite as explicitly in the works of Pliny the Younger, would have been genuinely novel or unfamiliar to Symmachus' readers.[90] As for the cultivation of benefactions in general, there must have been some rules whose violation would have been felt. It remains the case, however, that there was a lack of canonical Roman models, and that Symmachus, in identifying such models, was being culturally creative.

I therefore treat cultivation of friendship/patronage in two perspectives. The first is as a real and important but low-profile social phenomenon among the aristocracies of the western empire – and also well-represented in places and at social levels which make less of an impression in the works of Symmachus –, which was necessarily governed by cultural rules common or at least intelligible to these aristocracies. The second, and it is here that Symmachus is original, is as something to be highlighted in the offering and, insofar as it attracted public comment, to be explicitly justified.

Several basic observations, to be discussed in more detail below, can be made here. First, Symmachus was much more inclined to explicitly highlight *cultus* and *beneficia* and their

[89] For the rules of panegyric, see especially Pernot, *La rhétorique de l'éloge dans le monde gréco-romain* and Russell, "The Panegyrists and their Teachers," 17-49.
[90] Bruggisser, *Symmaque ou le rituel épistolarie de l'amitié littéraire*, 17 and for a summary of all surviving treatments in handbooks, and 19-24 for a summary of the rules of epistolography.

associated rules when addressing his superiors in status or power (although the social gulf separating them was not necessarily overwhelming) rather than his inferiors or equals.[91] Second, Symmachus appears unique, at least in Latin epistolography up to his own time, in explicitly emphasizing the cultural rules and models which surrounded *cultus* – and to a certain extent the models for cultivation of friends, parents, the emperors and the gods appear as interchangeable – quite as often as he does. Third, Symmachus must have intended for publication at least some of the works in which he discusses *cultus* and *beneficia*, and many in which his *cultus* is on display.

The central question of this thesis stems from these observations: why did Symmachus highlight his cultivation of his superiors and its rules? Related to this, what sort of exchange of cultivation for benefaction does he present himself as engaged in? How consistent was he? Finally, what sort of advantages did Symmachus gain from his discourse of *cultus* and *beneficia*, and what failures did he encounter?

a) Outline of the work

In my first chapter, I treat patronage and active cultivation of superiors as a phenomenon of fourth-century Roman society for which Symmachus would have been known and would have developed a reputation. My question is how prominent patronage was, what expectations surrounded it, and how prominent Symmachus would have been as a patron and as a beneficiary of patronage, in various circles which might have been targeted by his self-presentation.

[91] In virtually every instance that Symmachus mentions *cultus* in the *Letters*, he is addressing superior friends, not inferior friends: *Ep*. 1.28, *Ep*. 1.42.1, *Ep*. 2.9.2, *Ep*. 2.56.1, *Ep*. 3.41, *Ep*. 3.54, *Ep*. 4.11, *Ep*. 4.30.3, *Ep*. 4.42.2, *Ep*. 4.49, *Ep*. 5.17, *Ep*. 5.38, *Ep*. 5.52, *Ep*. 5.68.1, *Ep*. 5.78.1, *Ep*. 6.17, *Ep*. 7.52.1, *Ep*. 7.60.1, *Ep*. 7.99.1, *Ep*. 7.128.1, *Ep*. 8.26, *Ep*. 9.25.1, *Ep*. 9.46.1, *Ep*. 9.87, *Ep*. 9.88.1 are all addressed to probable superiors; only in the case of *Ep*. 5.8.1 is there some doubt.

In my second chapter, I address the question of the prominence of *cultus* and its non-clientelistic (indeed anti-clientelistic) counterpart, merit (patronage as an institution is quite discrete) in what Symmachus actually discusses explicitly, across his works, as indicated by its prominence in his use of historical *exempla*. This is used to assess the extent to which these themes, not particularly prominent in earlier Latin literature, including the obvious *comparanda* in the works of Pliny, were important to what Symmachus wrote, in general terms.

In my third chapter, I examine the way in which Symmachus put his rhetoric of appropriate cultivation to practical use for the benefit of his city, within an existing context of significant gift-giving between emperor and Rome. I demonstate that Symmachus explicitly highlights the way in which specific instances of this gift-giving did in fact express a broader relationship between Rome and the emperor, as a useful complement to the gift-giving itself. It is in the context of the concerns expressed in these panegyrics and written expressions of loyalty that I treat the famous *Relat*. 3, which offers a contrasting though also quite explicit treatment of religious *cultus*.

In my fourth chapter, finally, I examine Symmachus' self-presentation in terms of appropriate *cultus* in his main work of self-presentation, the *Letters*. The late antique letter collection is a vehicle for self-presentation, although Symmachus is unique in presenting himself as a letter-writer specifically (I would argue ultimately as a senator engaged in *cultus* more generally) rather than, like Jerome, conceivably Symmachus' inspiration for publishing his letters, as a scholar and ascetic. I argue that the structure of the collection highlights Symmachus' style of epistolary *cultus* in particular contexts (in a way in which earlier collections do not do), and that particular practices which he adopts as a letter-writer and particular inclusions of material highlight the simplicity of Symmachus' *cultus*, the fact that his frequent *cultus* of magnates at court occurred within the context of frequent letter-writing in general (and that he

ultimately controlled the frequency himself), and that his *cultus* did not seek to obtain public honors for himself, but rather services for others.

CHAPTER 1

The *cultus* of Symmachus in fourth-century Roman society

Summary:

In contrast to subsequent chapters, this chapter takes a historical rather than a literary approach to Symmachus' *cultus*. It aims to demonstrate that Symmachus, as a late-fourth-century senator, was necessarily involved in patronage relations and in cultivating patrons in ways that could be, and in his case were, liabilities for his public image in Rome. I argue that involvement in patronage was entirely normal, but that cultivation of a superior might be difficult to square with the dignity which a senator wished to project. Furthermore, clear advantages in public life stemming from this cultivation could invite jealousy and were at odds with the accepted principle of merit. Symmachus was, like his peers and rivals, potentially vulnerable to criticism on these issues, and had personal reasons in the later 390s for wishing to present his particular cultivation of patrons as appropriate.

This chapter contributes to the overall argument of the thesis by establishing a historical context for patronage and cultivation of patrons as issues for discussion as well as social realities in later fourth century Rome, the premise of this thesis in general. This chapter also establishes the particular premise of the fourth chapter, that Symmachus had particular reason to seek to justify his *cultus* in the later 390s, which can account for the organization of the *Letters*.

My argument relies on a demonstration of the range of patronage ties with which Symmachus was probably enmeshed, their probable visibility to his fellow Romans, the sort of sanction which patronage and its cultivation enjoyed in general and the apparent reactions to Symmachus' own patronage ties in particular. My demonstration of the importance of patronage ties and their cultivation in late antiquity relies for its definitions mainly on Terry Johnson and Chris Dandeker's 1989 book chapter "Patronage: Relation and System" and Peter Garnsey's

2010 book chapter "Roman Patronage." In arguing that patronage was ubiquitous at the time, I follow the latter work, along with Ramsay MacMullen's 1988 *Corruption and the Decline of Rome*, Jens-Uwe Krause's 1987 *Spätantike Patronatsformen im Westen des römischen Reiches*, and Robert Chenault's 2008 dissertation "Rome Without Emperors." I also draw on the same works to demonstrate that there were functional limits and ideological competition to patronage and *cultus*. In terms of ideological competition, I support my point with demonstrations of the stigma of *cultus* and a perceived incompatibility with the principle of merit in Mamertinus' somewhat earlier *Pan. Lat*. 3, and in Symmachus' own work. Here I draw on Seneca's *On Benefits* and Pliny's *Panegyric*, both much earlier, to assess what was distinctively late antique. The prominent visibility of Symmachus' own patronage ties to court and negative reactions in Rome to some of these ties in the late 390s, during the war with Gildo, finally, I infer from scattered references in his own works.

Introduction

If Symmachus makes *cultus* visible in his works, as I will demonstrate that he does in my second, third and fourth chapters, it is first necessary to establish why he might wish to do so, and which aspects of his *cultus* he might be concealing. How important, then, how visible, and how problematic was patronage more generally and the cultivation of friendship and support by the inferior party in in his senatorial world in the first place? My focus here is on public life, in which the competing principles of deserved rewards for merit clearly operated and attracted the attention of Symmachus and several other late antique authors. Secondly, how visible was Symmachus' personal involvement in patronage and *cultus*, to his peers, fellow-citizens, and those likely to read his published works?

This chapter is divided into three sections. All share a focus on the themes of deserved rewards and the cultivation of friendship and patronage and, especially in the second and third

section, on the person of Symmachus, but the perspective in which Symmachus is considered is different in each. In the first section (1), focussed on the social and cultural context of the fourth-century Roman senate and the extent to which it was enmeshed in relations of patronage, Symmachus appears as one historical source among several. In the second section (2), he appears as a historical figure in his own right, whose public fame or notoriety, to be inferred from his works, preceded the publication of these works: here Symmachus the senator is treated as an object of public opinion. In the third section (3), finally, Symmachus appears as an author with particular aims of his own in discussing *cultus*.

1.1 Expectations for patronage and *cultus* in public life, from the works of Symmachus

This first section is devoted to Symmachus' late antique and senatorial context, examined especially in light of the absence of emperors from Rome described by Robert Chenault in his dissertation *Rome Without Emperors* but also the challenge of Christianity.[92] I examine first the extent to which Symmachus' immediate context could be said to be clientelistic generally, using the definition of a society as a patronage system of Terry Johnson and Chris Dandeker,[93] and, as a separate but closely related question, the legitimacy or illegitimacy of specific patronage relations in various fourth-century elite social contexts. I then examine overt and unprompted *cultus*, as distinct from expressions of gratitude for benefactions already offered, as a component of clientelism. Here I draw, both for definitions and for points of comparison, on Seneca's *De Beneficiis*, and Pliny the Younger's *Panegyric*, both works of the early Principate which assume benefactions and gratitude but which devote virtually no attention to *cultus*. Throughout this section my major source for the late antique senatorial context is Symmachus himself,

[92] See Chenault, "Rome Without Emperors."
[93] "Patronage: Relation and System" in *Patronage in Ancient Society*, ed. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 219-242.

supplemented by the *Latin Panegyrics* collection, especially Mamertinus' speech of thanks to Julian (*Pan. Lat*. 3).

In terms of "clientelism," the phenomenon of patronage as such, the sociologists Terry Johnson and Chris Dandeker (1989) draw a very useful distinction between a patronage system, in which an entire society operates primarily according to the principles of patronage, and particular patronage relations between individuals, which are essential within patronage systems but which may equally well occur outside of them. Johnson and Dandeker define patronage systems as requiring multiple competing patrons reliant on support from voluntary followings of clients which might disperse at any time and attach themselves to other patrons. They accordingly allow that the late Roman Republic may have been a patronage system, but argue that the society of the Principate, due to the pre-eminent position of the emperor, was not, despite the obvious persistence and importance of client-patron relations.[94] Whether or not patronage was really quite as central to the late Republic as Johnson and Dandeker suppose – Peter Brunt has convincingly argued that it was not[95] – it seems clear that the Roman empire of the later fourth century was not ultimately reducible to a simple competition between patrons for personal followings.

All the same, the Roman empire of Symmachus' time remained "clientelistic" in the more limited sense used by the sociologists S. Eisenstadt and Luis Roniger in their 1984 book, that is to say, strongly conducive to the formation of individual patronage relations alongside other sorts of interpersonal rapports. Most of the features of "clientelistic" societies identified by Eisenstaft and Roniger apply in Symmachus' time. The political centre, here the court, controlled goods, above all appointments within the imperial service and honours, desireable to local elites, but

[94] Johnson and Dandeker, "Patronage: Relation and System," 237-239. For the importance of clientship and patronage under the Principate, see Saller, *Personal Patronage Under the Early Empire*.
[95] Brunt, *The Fall of the Roman Republic*; Krause, *Spätantike Patronatsformen im Westen des römischen Reiches* makes a similar point for late antiquity.

was, conversely, unable to impose its will without some cooperation with local elites. Finally, generally low levels of trust enjoyed by the political centre (the imperial administration) would have encouraged the use of trusted intermediaries, the patrons and brokers, usually members of the local elite, when dealing with it.[96]

Where specifically do we find patronage relations in later fourth-century Rome, and what sort of other rapports did they compete with? Here I will examine the first question first, beginning with the survival of relations of an obviously traditional type. One specific patronage relation which survived from earlier antiquity is in the emperor's patronage of Rome, reflected in the *annona* and in spectacles. The commodities provided and their sources had changed since the high empire, and Rome was no longer unique as a recipient of this sort of patronage, but the relation itself survived.[97] As a type of relation, traditional formal patronage relations of members of the elite also persisted from the high empire: Symmachus and his peers clearly had their clients, though he rarely mentions them, and Ammianus Marcellinus 14.6 and 28.4 makes clear that the morning salutations and afternoon distributions remained the same as they had been in the time of Juvenal and Martial.[98] These traditional patronage relations remained important – fundamental in the case of imperial patronage – to the functioning of the city, and patronage, loosely defined, accounted for the real clout of senators who held office only infrequently.[99]

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[96] Eisenstadt and Roniger, *Patrons, Clients, and Friends*, 208-214. For the reliance, in an undergoverned empire, on local petitions, see especially Fergus Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World, 31 BC – AD 337* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977).

[97] See especially Raymond Van Dam, *Rome and Constantinople: Rewriting Roman History During Late Antiquity* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 24-28 for the dependence of Rome on this kind of largess to maintain its population, and Peter Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply in the Greco-Roman World: Responses to Risk and Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 218-68 for the *annona* in general.

[98] See Krause, *Spätantike Patronatsformen im Westen des römischen Reiches*, 6-67 for the persistence of patronage in late antiquity. For the daily routine associated with patronage in the high empire, see Duncan Cloud, "The Client-Patron Relationship: Emblem and Reality in Juvenal's First Book," in *Patronage in Ancient Society*, ed. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 205-218. See Garnsey, "Roman Patronage, 47-48.

[99] See especially Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court AD 364-425*, 28-30 and MacMullen, *Corruption and the Decline of Rome*, 122-197 for the private nature of senatorial power.

Nor was late antique patronage purely traditional and vestigial: the strength and importance of late antique patronage relations, here defined loosely, is also reflected in the fact that they were well-represented in newer institutions. Fuctioning bureaucracy is to be distinguished from patronage, but within the expanded imperial service, if the (admittedly later) works of John Lydus are any indication, patronage was well-represented: the head of a department might act as a patron to junior members of his staff and his personal patronage remained important for career advancement.[100] This was even something to be highlighted: it is to the praetorian prefects who helped John Lydus that his *On the Magistracies* is dedicated (1.15). Ultimately, the empire continued to rely heavily on patronage, as it had done since late Republic and the early empire to replenishment the ranks of the governing classes, as Peter Garnsey argues in a recent article: what had changed is that the number of positions to fill and the number of competing patrons had risen.[101]

The church was also enmeshed with patronage, with bishops both dispensing and receiving patronage. Symmachus sends recommendations to Ambrose of Milan (*Ep*. 3.30-37), as to other notables at court; although, unlike virtually all other addressees of Symmachus' recommendations, Ambrose was no longer part of the imperial service himself, he was a prominent figure in Milan, the imperial residence, and his support would, presumably, have helped those who sought imperial patronage. In Rome, with the competition of a wealthy and well-entrenched senate, the bishop was less obviously an important source of patronage, and the positions were reversed, with bishop Damasus cultivating aristocratic patronage himself.[102] In fact, the church, at least in Rome, was not only enmeshed in patronage relations with the court

[100] Kelly, *Ruling the Later Roman Empire*, 12, 44-45, 83, 173.
[101] Garnsey, "Roman Patronage," 33-54, especially 52.
[102] Neil McLynn, "Damasus of Rome," in *Rom und Mailand in der Spätantike: Repräsentationen städtischer Räum in Literatur, Architektur, und Kunst*, ed. Therese Fuhrer (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 320.

and with members of the senate, but actually comes close, given the presence of several rival bishops in the city at this time, to a patronage system in the sense used by Johnson and Dandeker, that is, a system dominated by competing patrons with voluntary followings.[103]

All the same, the importance of patronage relations in late antique Rome should not be exaggerated. The emperor headed an administration over the whole empire, or at least the part of it which he ruled, which was regularly described as having a uniform character, depending on his particular personality, rather than on inherited relationships with particular cities or individuals. Valentinian I, who was exceptional for having travelled so widely within the empire, inspires Symmachus' comment that "the emperor is like God observing everything equally, when he knows all the parts of the empire" (*similis est princeps deo pariter universa cernenti, qui cunctas partes novit imperii*, *Orat*. 1.1). Symmachus describes even the young Valentinian II as "your heavenly Mildness, busy with the affairs of the whole world and who must therefore deal with some of your many cares in a cursory manner" (*Caelesti[s] Mansuetud[o] Vestra totius orbis negotiis occupata et cui ideo inter multa curarum summatim nonnulla tractanda sunt*, *Relat*. 34.2). Although the responsibilities of imperial ministers are more specific, Symmachus assumes that it is their duty to uphold the (uniform) reputation of the reign of the emperor whom they serve: he asserts upholding the emperor's reputation as his own goal as urban prefect in 384-5 (*Relat*. 4.1, *Relat*. 34.1) and that of an imperial envoy in *Relat*. 23.1, and he denounces officials at court for failing to uphold it (*Relat*. 3.2). Finally, when appealing to officials at court, whether on

[103] For this competition, see Chenault, "Beyond Pagans and Christians: Politics and Intra-Christian Conflict in the Controversy over the Altar of Victory," 52-55. For Damasus in particular, see especially McLynn, "Damasus of Rome," 305-25 and Charles Piétri, "Damase, Évèque de Rome," in *Saecularia damasiana. Atti del convegno internazionale per il XVI centenario della morte di Papa Damaso I*, *Studi di antichità Cristiana 39* (Vatican City: L'Istituto, 1986), 31-58.

his own behalf (*Ep*. 5.34.2, *Ep*. 9.150.1) or on behalf of his protégées (*Ep*. 9.1), Symmachus may appeal to their duty to bring about outcomes which reflect well on the reign generally.[104]

These general ideals are echoed, though without the emphasis on the particular personality of the ruler, in the impersonal and monarchical political theology of Symmachus' contemporary Ambrosiaster, a supporter of bishop Damasus, and has its close counterpart in his similarly impersonal and monarchical ecclesiology. Here the emperor, like the bishop, is explicitly described as drawing his authority from his office rather than from the support of those under him.[105] Whatever their actual reliance on and involvement in patronage of particular cities and individuals, which was surely considerable, the imperial administration and the church clearly aspired to something different.

This more formal conception of imperial authority is reflected in the fact that there were formal as well as informal channels of communication between the emperor and the senate, above all the urban prefecture.[106] It is true that the urban prefect, generally a senator like Symmachus, might as an individual already have a variety of informal ties to court and to his peers, as Symmachus clearly did.[107] In office, however, he communicated with the emperor directly, in state papers such as Symmachus' extant *Relations*.

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[104] In practice, it is clear that Symmachus is principally interested in the reputation of the emperor and his reign as maintained in Rome, so that the business to which he refers in *Relat*. 14, *Orat*. 4.9, *Relat*. 3, *Relat*. 4, and in *Relat*. 34 and *Relat*. 23 relates to the finances (*Relat*. 14, *Relat*. 34), religion (*Relat*. 3), ceremonial (*Relat*. 4) and good order (*Relat*. 23) of the city, and the climate in which the senate operates (*Orat*. 4.9). All the same, he frames his appeals in terms of generalities.

[105] See Sophie Lunn-Rockliffe, *Ambrosiaster's Political Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 119-124 and 134-136 for Ambrosiaster's description of honour as due to – and efficacy as emanating from – legitimate office, not simply personal merit, and especially 177-178 for the conception of political and ecclesiastical office in monarchical terms as reflections of a singular God.

[106] See especially Chastagnol, *La préfecture urbaine à Rome sous le bas-empire*, 66-80.

[107] For a recent study of the urban prefects of the earlier fourth century, see Michele Renee Salzman, "Constantine and the Roman Senate," in *Pagans and Christians in Late Antique Rome*, ed. Michele Renee Salzman, Marianne Sághy and Rita Lizzi-Testa (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 24-35.

So far we have considered vertical ties between superiors and inferiors, but it is clear that horizontal ties, certainly between senators, were also important, perhaps all the more with the distance of court. The senate met together and arrived at collective decisions on the questions within its competence, including admission to its own ranks.[108] One (lost) oration which Symmachus published, whose text was accompanied by *Ep*. 4.29, *Ep*. 4.45, and *Ep*. 5.9, is specifically concerned with ensuring that the son of a certain Polybius was not irregularly promoted into the senate. Even the recommendations of Symmachus, in which he acted individually on behalf of individual protégés, not only connected his inferiors to their (and sometimes his) superiors, but also arguably reflected an ideology of senatorial solidarity, of promoting fellow-senators.[109] This was group solidarity, or at most cronyism, but not patronage as such.

These sorts of horizontal ties of group solidarity or cronyism might also exist within the imperial service, between bureaucrats in the same department; at any rate they would exist in the time of John Lydus,[110] and similar loyalties may have underlain the clashes between the urban prefecture and the vicariate of Rome described in *Relat*. 23. Group solidarity, finally, was also operative as an ideal in the church: the authority of bishop Damasus seems to have been asserted, in the case of the altar of Victory, as Chenault plausibly argues, in part through his ability to identify himself in solidarity with the anti-pagan struggles of the Christian senators in 383.[111] In Rome, therefore, personal patronage, though indispensable, existed in tension with these group loyalties as well as with formal definitions of the duties and prerogatives of individual office,

[108] See Chastagnol, "Le sénat dans l'oeuvre de Symmaque," 86-92, especially 86-87.
[109] See Sergio Roda, "Polifunzionalità della Lettera Commendaticia: Teoria e Prassi nell'epistolario Simmachiano," in *Colloque Genevois sur Symmaque à l'occasion du mile six centième anniversaire du conflit de l'autel de la Victoire*, ed. François Paschoud (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1986), 177-202.
[110] See Kelly, *Ruling the Later Roman Empire*, 36-51, especially 36-37.
[111] See Chenault, "Beyond Pagans and Christians: Politics and Intra-Christian Conflict in the Controversy over the Altar of Victory," 47-61.

both of which seem to have taken on new importance in the fourth century with the new distance of the court and the growth of the imperial bureaucracy.

What did this mean for expectations around patronage relations in the late fourth century? It seems highly unlikely that anyone, least of all Symmachus, would have argued that patronage was always wrong by definition: these relations were far too ubiquitous, too necessary, and in many cases had the support of long tradition. All the same, they had competition, to some extent practical, in the sense that there might be other ways of getting things done, and above all ideological, in the sense that there were late antique ideals for the functioning of the imperial government, the senate, and the church which did not leave any obvious place for patronage relations.

In practice, there were, in the time of Symmachus, two obvious grounds to call into question the legitimacy of the patronage from which a dependent party benefited, to judge by the instances in which patronage is either attacked or denied. One of these grounds was status, both the status conferred by being a client as such, and the status conferred by being the dependent of a low-status patron, while the other is interference with the particularly late antique principle of merit. In terms of the first, the question of status, it is clear that the status of a fourth-century client who was openly described as such, like that of his high empire counterpart, was comparatively low, and that members of the fourth-century elite, like their earlier counterparts, invariably did not present their own benefactors as patrons or themselves as clients, preferring instead to use the egalitarian language of friendship.[112] This might often in fact be, as David Konstan has argued, not simply a euphemism for patronage, but an alternative model: in describing a relationship as friendship, one might be insisting, more or less plausibly, that it

[112] See especially Saller, "Patronage and Friendship in Early Imperial Rome: Drawing the Distinction," 49-62, and, supporting him, Garnsey, "Roman Patronage," 47.

really was friendship rather than, or as well as, patronage.[113] Symmachus' own friendship with Stilicho, reflected in *Ep*. 4.1-14, clearly involved a highly unequal exchange of services and could hardly be friendship in the ordinary sense, but even here Symmachus insists on treating it as such and demands that Stilicho also do so.[114] The status of client, then, was one which elite dependents sought to avoid.

In terms of expectations, it was clearly important for members of the elite not only to avoid being labelled as clients as such, but also to avoid any perceived dependence, whether labelled as clientship or not, on obvious social inferiors. The panegyrist Mamertinus provides a list of inappropriate patrons for those who sought high office:

> They would cultivate not even men, but womenfolk; not women only, but eunuchs also, whom either the origin of nature or a disaster of the body cut off as it were from the company of the human race as rejects from either sex. Thus those famous names of the ancients used to flatter whoever was basest and most disgraceful in the imperial retinue.
>
> *Nec viros quidem sed mulierculas exambibant; nec feminas tantum sed spadones quoque, quos quasi a consortio humani generis extorres ab utroque sexu aut naturae origo aut clades corporis separavit. Ita praeclara illa veterum nomina sordidissimum quemque ex cohorte imperatoria et probrosissimum adulabant* (Mamertinus, *Pan. Lat*. 3.19.4).

This wish again was not new, and is reflected in Seneca's remarks on the sorts of people to whom it was degrading to be required to be grateful (*On Benefits* 2.21), although Seneca, in keeping with his Stoic philosophical purpose, defines these in moral rather than in purely social terms.[115]

Finally, it was a consistently stated ideal, though not necessarily an expectation in practice, that the individual merit of a candidate trump patronage connections in the conferring of

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[113] Konstan, "Patrons and friends," 328-342, especially 330: "Thus, friendship was not entirely assimilable to the structure of clientage, and when the two coexisted, as they often did, there was always a certain tension between them. This left room for appeals to the nature of friendship as a means of exposing the coercive aspects of contemporary patron-client relationships," and 341. For a further development of these ideas in a general study of ancient Greek and Roman friendship, in which he argues that friendship was never purely instrumental, see Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
[114] For this friendship, see below, p. 63.
[115] See below, p. 51.

civic honours.[116] This is clearly implied in Mamertinus' panegyric mentioned above, since, although Mamertinus states that his own merit is still in the future (*Pan. Lat*. 3.31-4-6), he asserts, as a point of pride, that his appointment owed nothing to canvassing and hence influence of notables but stemmed purely from the free decision of the emperor Julian (*Pan. Lat*. 3.15.5-3.20). Symmachus similarly insists on individual merit in his recommendation of candidates for adlection into the senate (*Orat*. 6.1-4, *Orat*. 7.4, *Orat*. 7.8), here alongside wealth (*Orat*. 5.4, *Orat*. 7.6, *Orat*. 7.8) and good ancestry (*Orat*. 6.1, *Orat*. 7.4). Honours represented a sphere in which patronage had an obvious role to play, with the personal patronage of the emperor, at least, openly acknowledged in the customary orations and letters of thanks for appointments (for example in Mamertinus' *Pan. Lat*. 3, especially 3.15 and 28 and in *Relat*. 1 and *Relat*. 2). All the same, it was a sphere which elite discourse was unanimous in wanting to close to other patronage influence. Here, at least, patronage was not supposed to operate, and, if only by virtue of the sources which survive, this concern appears to be particularly well-represented in the later empire.[117]

A society which was not a patronage system, as that of Symmachus was not, then, clearly created the possibility of patronage which was perceived not simply as inadequate or uncompetitive, but as illegitimate. All the same, relationships resembling patronage were sufficiently ubiquitous that it seems unlikely that anyone would have considered the mere fact of personal dependence as illegitimate in itself. What was important was that it met certain social

[116] Somewhat analogous is the late antique emphasis on seniority in the promotion of bureaucrats within their own departments. The principle was often enjoined in imperial edicts in the *Theodosian* and *Justinian Codes*, some of which predate or are contemporary with Symmachus, although it was certainly not the only operative principle in promotion. See Kelly, *Ruling the Later Roman Empire*, 39 n. 36 for a partial list of imperial edicts on seniority and 38-44 and 210-212 for the actual importance of seniority in promotion.
[117] The appointment of the consuls is, in contrast, not treated at much length in the *Panegyric* of Pliny (only 90-93).

criteria as described above – otherwise it was degrading to its beneficiaries – and that it operated in the appropriate sphere.

The social criteria for acceptable patronage were not, however, novel in late antiquity: they had been in place at least since the early Principate, though the fact that fourth-century patrons were more likely to come from outside the traditional elite led those who considered themselves part of this elite to comment more explicitly on these criteria.[118] To the extent that patronage became more of an issue in late antiquity, then – and I will argue that it did, at least for Symmachus – , it was not that the associated relations were fundamentally novel, nor even necessarily more prevalent. Krause convincingly argues that patronage was not sufficiently disruptive of the imperial administration to account for the collapse of imperial government in the West.[119] If anything, it was not that patronage had grown but that its cultural underpinnings had weakened: the treatment of office-holding in late antique sources suggests that at least some elite attitudes had become more antipathetic to personal patronage, perhaps with the rapid expansion of the imperial service, and that merit had become dissociated from and opposed to influence.[120] Patronage may not have been significantly more prevalent, but the factors that had made it acceptable were more likely to be missing; for these reasons, late antique patronage, with the exception of the patronage of the emperor himself to his officials, tends to be better represented in invective than in self-presentation.

a) *Cultus* and *Gratia*

As Anton Blok states, within the context of patronage "it is the patron who determines when and who defines what is going to be exchanged. In a word, the transaction is initiated and

[118] See Garnsey and Woolf, "Patronage of the rural poor in the Roman world," 153-167.
[119] Krause, *Spätantike Patronatsformen im Westen des römischen Reiches*, summed up in 332-336.
[120] For this sort of shift, see Blok, "Variations in patronage," 365-78, especially 373 and 376.

'directed' by the patron."[121] This directing of the transaction by the superior, however, did nonetheless allow for cultivation of the superior by the inferior in anticipation of future benefactions, as well as expressions, whether verbal or concrete, of gratitude for past benefactions, and even for specific requests addressed to the patron. Of these, it is certainly *gratia*, the offering of praise or gifts by an inferior in response to past benefactions, which is most discussed in Latin literature, above all by Seneca in his *On Benefits* (who argues, incidentally, that inferiors, even slaves, 3.18-28, and sons, 3.29-38, are capable of giving benefactions), and Valerius Maximus, who devotes a series of historical *exempla* to the grateful and ungrateful respectively (*Memorable Deeds and Sayings* 5.2 and 5.3).

Specific requests receive rather less comment and are implied to be more difficult to make. Seneca argues that a benefactor was supposed to provide benefactions before they were asked for, if possible, since it was embarrassing for the recipient to ask: "that course is better, to anticipate before we are asked, since, because a good man's mouth clams up and he is flooded with blushing, the one who remits this torment multiplies his gift" (*illud melius, occupare ante quam rogemur, quia, cum homini probo ad rogandum os concurrat et suffundatur rubor, qui hoc tormentum remittit, multiplicat munus suum*, *On Benefits* 2.1.3). He later reiterates the point: "it is a bothersome word, burdensome, to be said with a downcast face: 'I ask'" (*molestum verbum est, onerosum, demisso vultu dicendum, rogo*, *On Benefits* 2.2.1). Unlike gratitude, requests are treated, in the literature of the high empire, as difficult to express.

This does not, of course, mean that senators in the first and second centuries did not approach the emperor or other benefactors on their own initiative to seek specific benefactions. Pliny specifically praises Trajan for his accessibility to individual senators (*Pan*. 47-48) and his

[121] Blok, "Variations in patronage," 365-66.

granting, and indeed anticipating, of requests (*Pan*. 33.2). He also describes the previous need of senators to ask for dispensation from inheritance laws, with the implication that the elimination of the need to ask on this particular matter was a positive, but without any suggestion that requests were illegitimate in themselves (*Pan*. 39-40).[122] Seneca's insistence that it was better to anticipate rather than respond to requests (*On Benefits* 2.1.3, 2.2.1) also suggests that requests were in fact presented to individual senators, even by respectable individuals.

These specific requests were not themselves *cultus*, which did not necessarily aim at a particular benefaction. All the same, they implied it: it is difficult to imagine specific requests from a patron in a clientelistic model, in which the obtaining of specific resources depends on the goodwill of the patron, without cultivation of the patron. There might be *cultus* of patrons (or superior friends) without requests, but not requests without *cultus*, unless the relationship was something other than patronage. To the extent that the fact of making a request was legitimate, the associated *cultus* had also to be legitimate.

It appears, however, that the need for requests and for *cultus* had, in certain important respects, increased by the time of Symmachus. It is revealing that Seneca describes one of his contemporaries (rightly) turning away two offers of (monetary) assistance in his games (*On Benefits* 2.21), with the seeming implication that such offers routinely arrived unsolicited. In the letters of Symmachus, in contrast, there is little hint of unprompted offers of assistance in staging the same games, whereas many letters actively solicit logistical help, often from distant officials and suppliers who could not have been expected to spontaneously offer their services.[123]

[122] Eumenius, the author of *Pan. Lat*. 9 provides a Tetrarchic example of a petition by a member of the municipal elite of Autun, which liberally praises the emperor Constantius I for his past benefactions, especially in *Pan. Lat*. 9.6, in order to present a new request, here for the full restoration of a school. Presumably this was a common line of approach.
[123] See below, p. 191.

Strikingly, a large number of these letters were included in the collection clearly intended for publication by Symmachus himself, books 1-7. To the extent that the evidence is comparable, it seems that the dynamics around *cultus* and requests in senatorial games, at least, had changed since the time of Seneca.

There is also reason to believe that active cultivation of prominent friends had taken on a new importance in securing official appointments, with which senators, despite the primarily informal nature of their power, could not dispense.[124] It was not that patronage had necessarily become more important, but that the court was, for senators, much further away than previously, and the pool of senatorial candidates, enlarged at the expense of the equestrian order since Constantine, much larger.[125] Whereas Pliny, in his *Panegyric*, especially chapters 2, 3 and 54, emphasizes the adulation which stemmed from the close watch which the early emperors kept on a much smaller senate, the challenges of Symmachus' time were different.[126] Unwelcome attention might still be a danger to senators, as it certainly was during the treason trials under Valentinian I, which Symmachus describes in *Orat*. 4.13-14 and in *Ep*. 10.2.3, but so too was neglect and incomprehension. Though certain posts were virtually always given to senators, a new regime such as that of Valentinian I might have little initial contact with the senate and emperors had other supporters to reward. Senators could easily find themselves shut out of important office-holding.[127] Under these circumstances, *cultus* of the emperor and of influential

[124] For senatorial dependence on office-holding, see Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, 95.
[125] For the distance of the court, see especially Chenault, "Rome Without Emperors," 3. For a recent and insightful discussion of the enlargement of the senate, see especially John Noël Dillon, "The Inflation of Rank and Privilege: Regulating Precedence in the Fourth Century AD," in *Contested Monarchy: Integrating the Roman Empire in the Fourth Century AD*, ed. Johannes Weinand and Bruno Bleckmann (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 45-53. For the role of patronage in recruiting new senators and administrators, see Garnsey, "Roman Patronage," 52.
[126] For adulation and doublespeak in the high empire, see Shadi Bartsch, *Actors in the Audience: Theatricality and Doublespeak from Nero to Hadrian* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1994).
[127] Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court AD 364-425*, 36-40, who speaks, on p. 40, of a "clean sweep."

figures at court would have been a natural response to and would have provided needed insurance against both indifference and hostility; indeed, it was in the interests of the senate as a whole, and not simply of ambitious individuals, that it occur.

It was no longer possible, therefore, simply to respond to the attention of nearby observers: active cultivation of distant officials was necessary. In this sense, as Chenault emphasizes, senators were now in direct competition with the municipal elites;[128] they were also in competition with the more ambitious Christian bishops, who had vastly increased their expectations of the imperial government in late antiquity.[129] Some of this competition was carried out through competing attempts to persuade the court – the altar of Victory controversy is an obvious example – but much of it must have been conducted through *cultus*. Ambrose himself, Symmachus' antagonist in the case of the altar of Victory, is famous for famously confronting Valentinian II and Theodosius, but usually approached the emperors in a more deferential fashion as his *Letters* show, sometimes appealing specifically to the Christian piety of the emperors.[130] In this competition the senate had certain advantages, above all its prestige and the fact that it, as the largest and wealthiest body in the empire, could always outbid provincial bodies with its

[128] Chenault "Rome Without Emperors," 81.
[129] Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, 33-36 emphasizes that this did not take place immediately, as initially most bishops had a low social profile, the privileged status of the clergy which Constantine had conferred notwithstanding. On this question, see especially T.D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), TD. Barnes, *Constantine: Dynasty, Religion and Power in the Later Roman Empire* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), Raymond Van Dam, *The Roman Revolution of Constantine* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), T.D. Barnes, "Was There a Constantinian Revolution?" *Journal of Late Antiquity* 2 (2009), 374-84. For the influence which bishops did come to enjoy in the later fourth century, see Claudia Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 234-60, Raymond Van Dam, "Bishops and Society," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity, vol. 2, Constantine to 600*, ed. Augustine Casiday and Frederick W. Norris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 345-47, and Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, 50-52. For the case of Ambrose in particular, see McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital*, 1-52.
[130] Ambrose's *Ep*. 1 is addressed "to the most blessed augustus and most Christian emperor Gratian" (*beatissimo augusto Gratiano, et christianissimo principi*).

monetary gifts.[131] All the same, in many respects senators were left playing a game to which they were not traditionally accustomed and in which they did not have a clear upper hand.

It was also a game which was not necessarily viewed as unproblematic, certainly when used for personal advancement; here recipients of honours clearly preferred to be seen as not having cultivated their honours. Mamertinus, who was made consul by Julian in 362, argues at length (*Pan. Lat*. 3.15.5-20) in his speech of thanks for the appointment (*Pan. Lat*. 3) that the soliciting of support at court, like the canvassing of voters under the Republic, was demeaning though usually necessary to obtain honours. In his own case, he celebrates the fact that it had, exceptionally, not been necessary:

> What about the fact that it is to me while I have no hopes for the increase of honour (for not beyond the prefecture did the modesty of my wishes extend itself) that the messenger announces that I was created consul without expense, which for a long time has been given to few people, without work, which was never given, without asking, which was given to no one.
>
> *Quid quod nihil speranti mihi de honoris augmento (neque enim ultra praefecturam se votorum meorum modestia porrigebat) perfertur nuntius consulem me creatum sine impendio, quod iam diu paucis; sine labore, quod nunquam; sine petitione, quod nemini* (*Pan. Lat*. 3.15.5).

Presumably Mamertinus does not literally mean by "asking" (*petitio*) that it was normal practice to directly ask for the consulship in the fourth century, of which there is certainly no trace in the works of Symmachus, as opposed to simply cultivating those with influence. "Asking" better describes the overt canvassing of Republican electors in the following paragraph (*Pan. Lat*. 3.16), which Mamertinus assimilates with discreet contemporary canvassing of courtiers (in *Pan. Lat*. 3.19.4). In any case, it was clearly better not to have asked or engineered one's own honour.

Symmachus, similarly, implies that others pursued honours overly directly, a phenomenon which he describes as illegitimate *ambitus* (*Ep*. 2.36.3; see also the verbal form

[131] See below, p. 69.

ambire in *Ep*. 4.29.2) and as a general problem. Here again it is possible that Symmachus is describing a particularly aggressive form of courting honours, though, since he does not describe it in detail, it is not at all clear that the *ambitus* that he describes was entirely different from the sort of indirect networking that seems to have secured him the consulship of 391.[132] All this suggests that in the mid and later fourth century the cultivation of influential patrons with a view toward advancing a career, at a time when it was becoming more necessary than previously, was viewed as suspect.

The later fourth century, then, was not obviously more dominated by patronage ties than the early second century, but in the context of patronage senators could no longer rely on the strength of their position. There was a new need to cultivate the patronage of the powerful, above all the courtiers of a succession of young emperors, Gratian, Valentinian II and Honorius, in which ambitious senators needed to join. Benefactions had always been important to the functioning of the empire, but now *cultus*, previously very discreet, at least when performed by members of the senatorial order, seems to have become both more visible and more contested.

1.2 The visibility of Symmachus' *cultus*

Cultus, then, had become a more obvious necessity for a senator, and, by virtue of the publication of the works of Symmachus, if nothing else, more visible. How visible was the *cultus* of Symmachus to his follow senators and fellow Romans prior to the publication of his *Letters*? Here my focus is on the extent to which Symmachus' merited rewards and the favours which he obtained through personal relationships, above all at court, would have been public knowledge in Rome. My sources are primarily the work of Symmachus himself, particularly the *Letters*, though

[132] For Symmachus' activity maintaining friendships at court at this time, see Sogno, *Q. Aurelius Symmachus: A Political Biography*, 71-78.

also *Relat*. 10-12, on the public reaction to the death of Praetextatus.

As a prominent senator, Symmachus certainly lived a high profile life: as a giver of public games, urban prefect, and senatorial ambassador to court, he must have been well-known at court, in the senate, and among the general populace in Rome itself. As John Matthews rightly notes, the close (and volatile) connection between senators and the people is expressed on the one hand by the popular outpouring of grief at the death of Symmachus' friend Vettius Agorius Praetextatus (*Relat*. 10-12) and by the mob which burned down the house of Symmachus' father after he refused to sell his supply of wine at discounted prices (Ammianus 27.3.4).[133] This prominence of senators was due in large part to the absence of the emperors from the city, which required senators to assume some of the traditional roles – and encouraged them to imitate the display – of the emperors in Rome.[134]

That Symmachus would have been well-known in his own time in the prominent circles in which he moved and in Rome more generally, then, is a given: Symmachus must have had a public image of some sort in Rome and at court, prior to the rather late publication of his literary works. It can be assumed that his literary self-presentation not only ultimately formed but also responded to this existing public image. What was this image? One line of approach to it would be simply to inventory the actions of Symmachus which were performed in public, with particular attention to those which impacted the public in an obvious way. What in the life of Symmachus in particular would be most clearly visible to the Roman people, to the senate, and to the court?[135]

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[133] Matthews "The Letters of Symmachus," 71.
[134] See especially Chenault, "Rome Without Emperors," 172-173.
[135] I exclude the provincials whom Symmachus governed during his early career, and his rural tenants, for lack of evidence (aside from the intriguing note that Symmachus was denied an honorific statue in Carthage in *Ep*. 9.115), and for their limited relevance to the readership which Symmachus is likely to have intended for his literary self-presentation.

In terms of visibility to the Roman people, one thinks of Symmachus' public games, mentioned by Olympiodorus in connection with senatorial wealth (fr. 44). Whether or not Symmachus was personally remembered for his own quaestorian and praetorian games, which his father staged on his behalf during his childhood and adolescence, he was certainly remembered for the quaestorian and praetorian games which he staged for his son Memmius in 393 and 401 respectively.[136] It is the praetorian games that Olympiodorus highlights, and Symmachus specifically describes the quaestorian games as raising public expectations for the subsequent praetorian games: "I must overcome the reputation of my deeds, which after the consular display of our house and the quaestorian production of my son promises nothing average from us" (*vincenda est enim mihi fama exemplorum meorum, quae post consularem munificentiam domus nostrae et filii mei quaestoriam functionem nihil de nobis mediocre promittit*, *Ep*. 4.602). They would, presumably, have won Symmachus a reputation for generosity toward his fellow-citizens, which was surely their purpose.

At least as visible would be Symmachus' urban prefecture of 384-5. The prominence of the position in Rome is reflected in the fourth-century tendency to date events in Rome by urban prefectures, in both Ammianus Marcellinus and in the Calendar of 354, highlighted by Robert Chenault.[137] Even if his urban prefecture were entirely uneventful, which it certainly was not, it can be assumed that Symmachus would have gained prominence in Rome simply by virtue of holding it. Symmachus had the misfortune of holding it during a serious food shortage, during which non-residents were expelled from the city (Symmachus *Ep*. 2.7.3, Ammianus 14.6.19, Ambrose *De officiis ministrorum* 3.45-52, Themistius *Or*. 18.222a).[138] How much opprobrium

[136] For these games in particular and for late antique euergetism in general, see Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, 74, 75, 97, 99, 100, 106, 117.
[137] Chenault, "Rome Without Emperors," 70-71, 77-78, 163-167.
[138] See Sogno, *Q. Aurelius Symmachus: A Political Biography*, 33 and 53.

Symmachus personally received for this among the residents who remained is unclear, but it is a safe assumption that he was remembered for his urban prefecture.

Surely also registering in public consciousness in Rome was Symmachus' involvement in the war with Gildo in Africa 397. Symmachus gave a speech in favour of the measures of the western court, at the meeting of the senate which condemned Gildo as a public enemy, an exceptional revival of a Republican practice, mentioned in *Ep*. 4.5.[139] Insofar as the war not only led to a resented military levy but also threatened the grain supply of Rome, heavily dependent on Africa at this period, Symmachus incurred a share of unpopularity through his speech.[140] The public reaction is clear from the *Letters*: Symmachus mentions being unable to stay in Rome for some time after, until popular acclamations requested his return (*Ep*. 6.66.1).

Finally, of course, there is the question of religion. *Ep*. 1.47, *Ep*. 1.51 and *Ep*. 2.36 all attest Symmachus' dutiful attendance of the pontifical college, and *Ep*. 1.51 in particular notes the consequences of attention to or neglect of religion on a senatorial career, suggesting that it was watched: "now to desert the altars is, for Romans, a kind of canvassing" (*nunc aris deesse Romanos genus est ambiendi*). For all this, Symmachus' paganism was most clearly public during a brief period during the early to mid 380s: his involvement in a senatorial embassy on the altar of Victory and the subsidies of the Vestal virgins c. 382 (mentioned in *Relat*. 3.1) and again as urban prefect in 384, in *Relat*. 3, both certainly public, date from this time. The second of these interventions, at least, inspired bishop Damasus, apparently in a bid to assert his contested authority over the Christian population of Rome, to intervene publicly.[141] Also dating to this time

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[139] See Arnaldo Marcone, *Commento storico al libro IV dell'epistolario di Q. Aurelio Simmaco* (Pisa: Giardini, 1987),
42 and especially Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court AD 364-425*, 267-269.

[140] Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court AD 364-425*, 269 has suggested, plausibly, that Stilicho had involved the senate in order to deflect blame from himself.

[141] So Chenault, "Beyond Pagans and Christians: Politics and Intra-Christian Conflict in the Controversy over the Altar of Victory," 52-55.

is the accusation that Symmachus had arrested and tortured Christian priests as urban prefect, in connection with a decree to restore the statues of temples (*Relat*. 21). The accusation, which Symmachus refutes, must have reflected a public perception at court of Symmachus as pagan in order to appear plausible, and in any case the imperial edict on the subject would have made the specific charge public knowledge in Rome, if it was not already.[142] Whether or not there had been any strong public association between Symmachus and paganism at an earlier date, as there clearly was for his friends Praetextatus and for Flavianus Nicomachus senior, the association from the mid 380s clearly persisted, at least among some elite Christians, reflected in Prudentius' *Against Symmachus* I and II.[143] Clearly Symmachus did not associate solely or even primarily with pagans, nor did he espouse mainly pagan causes. All the same, by the later 390s Symmachus was almost certainly the most prominent remaining pagan in Rome, and was clearly recognized as such well beyond Rome.

As a result, Symmachus was undeniably an important public figure in Rome. Even members of the Roman people whose interests in the affairs of the senatorial elite were limited to bread and circuses and who were quite unlikely to have been the primary target audience of

[142] Symmachus implies that it was not, since he describes the surprise of the Roman people "warned by the edict" (*admonitus edicto*, *Relat*. 21.3). For this incident, see Rita Lizzi-Testa, "The Famous 'Altar of Victory Controversy' in Rome," in *Contested Monarchy: Integrating the Roman Empire in the Fourth Century AD*, ed. Johannes Weinand and Bruno Bleckmann (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 415.

[143] That Praetextatus had a high public profile specifically as a pagan at the time of his death is obvious from his own funeral inscription, which lists many priesthoods, from the statue as priest which the Vestal virgins proposed to erect to him, mentioned in Symmachus *Ep*. 2.36, and from the unfavourable attention which his death attracted from Jerome (*Ep*. 23.3). Lellia Cracco Ruggini, *Il paganesimo romano tra religione e politica (384-394 d.C): Per una reintepretazione del Carmen contra paganos* (Rome: Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, 1979) and "En marge d'une 'mésalliance': Prétextat, Damase et le *Carmen contra paganos*," *Comptes rendus/ Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* (1998), 493-516, supported by Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome*, 273-319, strengthens it by plausibly identifying the dying pagan prefect of the *Carmen Contra Paganos* with Praetextatus rather than Flavianus Nicomachus senior. In terms of Flavianus Nicomachus senior, his pagan public profile at the time of the usurpation of Eugenius may not have been nearly as high as what the Christian ecclesiastical historians might suggest; see here Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome*, 93-131. All the same, Cameron himself admits that Flavianus "*was* the most conspicuous (perhaps the only) pagan in Eugenius' administration. In all probability the only pagan Rufinus could name" (p. 126).

Symmachus' specifically literary self-presentation, then, would presumably have had some impression of Symmachus, either as benefactor or cause of misfortunes. In religious terms, Symmachus would also surely have been easily identifiable as a prominent pagan, especially after 384, whether or not he was known primarily for this. The available evidence suggests a generally mixed opinion of Symmachus.

As for the senate as audience, one could reasonably include in its view everything mentioned above, with the addition of Symmachus' conduct in the senate itself. In the senate, Symmachus would presumably have been known for the orations which he delivered, perhaps especially those connected with major political events such as the accession of Gratian in 375-6 and the usurpation of Magnus Maximus in 388. He mentions gaining honour (*honor*) and fame (*fama*) for his reading of the oration of Gratian to the senate (*Ep*. 10.2.1), and assumes that his friend Praetextatus would be interested in reading the text of the oration of thanks (*Orat*. 4) which he delivered on behalf of his father's consulship (*Ep*. 1.44.2). It is also clear that his friends and rivals alike remembered his panegyric to the usurper Magnus Maximus.[144]

Finally, there is Symmachus' reputation at court. It is probably fair to say that Symmachus' standing at court depended on his standing in the senate, and vice versa. The fact that Symmachus was sent on embassies to court naturally suggests a belief among his fellow senators that he had the needed standing and connections to obtain results, while the fact that Symmachus was chosen by the emperor for prominent appointments and duties, above all to read an oration of Gratian to the senate in 376, to serve as urban prefect in 384, and as consul in 391, must reflect a similar appreciation at court of his importance as a senator.[145] Symmachus would

[144] See Sogno, *Q. Aurelius Symmachus: A Political Biography*, 68-76, especially 75.
[145] Sogno, *Q. Aurelius Symmachus: A Political Biography*, 2-3 points out that the embassies were opportunities to make contact, but she also argues, p. 4, that pre-existing contacts were important for a senatorial ambassador, and highlights the pre-existing contact with Ausonius on p. 6-8; Sergio Roda, "Una nuova lettera di Simmaco ad

surely have gained some recognition from his periodic senatorial embassies, at which he delivered panegyrics, and perhaps above all the first embassy, to the court of Valentinian I at Trier, during which he spent an extended period of time in the entourage of the emperor.[146] The personal friendships which he cultivated at court, some initiated by letter and preceding any direct contact, and his private attendance at consular inaugurations, would have given him added positive visibility at court, though this was counterbalanced to some extent by the intrigues of his rivals.[147] At least at certain points in his career, then, above all c. 368-370 and again in the later 390s, Symmachus must have been quite well-known at court.[148]

Symmachus, then, was a public figure in Rome and at court. To what extent were his honours and his *cultus* public? The inherently public character of civic honours is obvious: it can be assumed that anyone to whom any literary self-presentation of Symmachus in its final form would conceivably be targeted would have known that Symmachus was consul in 391.[149] Benefactions and *cultus* might also be highly public, as when Symmachus accepted benefactions from and offered *cultus* to the emperor on behalf of the Roman people.[150] For the most part, however, the process of offering and receiving, occurring in letters or in-person exchanges, was

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Ausonio," *Revue des études anciennes* 83 (1981): 273-80, opposed by Coşkun, "Symmachus, Ausonius und der *senex olim Garumnae alumnus*: Auf der Suche nach dem Adressaten von Symm. *Ep*. 9.88," 120-128, but supported by Sogno, *Q. Aurelius Symmachus: A Political Biography*, 6-7, 6 n. 41 and 7 n. 45 and Salzman, *The Letters of Symmachus Book 1*, 37 n. 11. Since the letter does not offer precise references to the attested career of Ausonius, as Coşkun poins out, the identification remains unproven, but the addressee does correspond closely enough to Ausonius and the vagueness with which he is described are natural enough in the letters of Symmachus that he may very well be Ausonius.

[146] This is particularly true if the embassy lasted from 368 to 370, that is, if Symmachus did not return to Rome between the deliveries of *Orat*. 1 and *Orat*. 2; for the dating, see Sogno, "Barbarians as Spectacle: The Account of an Ancient 'Embedded Reporter' (Symm. Or. 2.10-12)," 134 n. 4. It was apparently at this time that Symmachus gained the title of "companion of the third order" (*comes tertius ordinis*) which appears on his funeral inscription.

[147] For friendships initiated by letter, see above, n. 35; for the enemies of Symmachus, see John Matthews, "Symmachus and his Enemies," in *Colloque Genevois sur Symmaque à l'occasion du mile six centième anniversaire du conflit de l'autel de la Victoire*, ed. François Paschoud (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1986), 163-175.

[148] For the career of Symmachus at these times, see Sogno, Q. *Aurelius Symmachus: A Political Biography*, 83-84.

[149] At the same time, anti-pagan pressures tended to reduce the prestige of priesthoods, so that these were no longer the public honours that they might once have been: in *Ep*. 1.51 Symmachus asserts that senators gained popular acclaim by avoiding the priesthoods. There were honours that were losing their public status.

[150] For a fuller discussion, see my third chapter.

surely private and discreet, though some of it would, in time, be made public by the publication of the *Letters*.

What might a fellow senator, or a member of the general public in Rome, have known or thought about the exchange of *cultus* and expressions of regard in the correspondence of Symmachus prior to publication? Private letters were intended, at least in principle, to be read by the recipient(s) only, and short of interception *en route*, the exact contents would remain private until Symmachus or his correspondent chose to publish them. In this sense, a fellow senator cannot usually have known exactly what Symmachus wrote, but it hardly mattered: Symmachus' letters are generally formulaic. If we can assume that his style of letter-writing was more or less typical and expected at the time for senators, which seems reasonable, it follows that once Symmachus was known to be friends with someone, the contents that he would communicate to that that person, though perhaps not the tone of the letter, would be clear enough to anyone.[151]

More important than who knew what Symmachus said in his correspondence, then, is the question of who knew with whom Symmachus corresponded. There is every reason to believe that the most prominent officials at court with whom Symmachus corresponded would be widely known as his friends; otherwise it is difficult to explain the fact that so many junior senators took the initiative to ask Symmachus for recommendations to them.[152] In the case of the most prominent correspondents, travel to Milan to attend their consular inaugurations (as mentioned, for example, in *Ep*. 1.101 to Syagrius) would clearly have publicized the friendship, though

[151] See Matthews, "The Letters of Symmachus," 80-91, and, building on his analysis, Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, 101-103 and Cameron, "Were Pagans Afraid to Speak Their Minds in a Christian World? The Correspondence of Symmachus," 64-108. Cameron argues, against Ratti, *Polémiques entre païens et chrétiens*, 33-49, especially 45-49, who suggests that the bland content suggests self-censorship for fear of interception, that Symmachus had nothing to hide and was simply writing as all his contemporaries did, naturally avoiding high politics. This must be substantially correct. I argue in my fourth chapter that Symmachus differentiates his particular style of epistolary *cultus*, but this is (mainly) a question of means rather than ends.

[152] For the recommendations and the ideology of seeking promotion for senators, see Roda, "Polifunzionalità della Lettera Commendaticia: Teoria e Prassi nell'epistolario Simmachiano," 177-202.

Symmachus certainly sent recommendations to courtiers to whose consular inaugurations he was invited but declined (like Ausonius, whose inauguration he declined in *Ep*. 1.20[153]) or who were never consul (like Ambrose, addressee of *Ep*. 3.30-37). By whatever means these correspondents became known as friends of Symmachus, it is clear that they were known as such, at least in senatorial circles.

Some of these friendships may also have been known outside of strictly senatorial circles, by those who were not necessarily interested in pursuing their own careers at court, as, perhaps, with Symmachus' friendship with Stilicho in 397-8. Symmachus' obvious personal unpopularity in Rome during the war with Gildo at this time, which threatened the grain supply of the city, certainly owed something to his general association with the direction of the senate at the time and almost certainly also to the speech in the senate mentioned in *Ep*. 4.5.[154] To the extent that Stilicho was publicly associated with these policies, however, which seems highly probable from his prominence in Claudian's verse panegyric on the war with Gildo, part of Symmachus' temporary unpopularity among the plebs (*Ep*. 6.61 and *Ep*. 6.66) might equally have stemmed from his close personal association with the generalissimo. The fact that Symmachus actually had reported to Stilicho on the meeting of the senate which condemned Gildo (*Ep*. 4.5) might not have been public knowledge, but one wonders whether anyone would be surprised that he would.

Whether Symmachus' friendships with senatorial peers, equally well-represented in the *Letters* but usually less crucial for the cultivation of patrons, were as well-known by others in the senate is less clear. It is clear enough that junior senators asked Symmachus for recommendations to Flavianus Nicomachus senior when the latter was quaestor of the palace at the court of

[153] For the recommendations received by Ausonius, see below, n. 305 and p. 187.
[154] See Seeck, *Q. Aurelii Symmachi opera quae supersunt*, lxix-lxxi and Matthews, "The Letters of Symmachus," 72.

Theodosius I;[155] was the close association between Flavianus Nicomachus senior and Symmachus, publicly expressed by the fact that the former's son Flavianus Nicomachus junior married the daughter of the latter, widely known previously? In the same way, there are perhaps grounds to posit a known friendship with Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, addressee of *Ep*. 1.44-55, in 384, when Praetextatus was praetorian prefect in Milan and Symmachus was urban prefect in Rome. The accusation of persecution of Christian priests in the implementation of a new decree relative to temples mentioned in *Relat*. 21 apparently assumed cooperation, which Symmachus himself denies, between Symmachus and Praetextatus on the protection of religious monuments.[156] Were Symmachus and Praetextatus, both prominent pagans, previously widely known as friends, as in fact *Ep*. 1.44-55 suggest that they were? Clearly these friendships tended to attract particular public interest above all when one correspondent found himself at court, but there is no reason to deny that at least close friendships between senators would have been widely recognized at least to some extent even when both parties were in private life. It is likely on this pre-existing knowledge of the way in which senators were connected to each other that would-be recommendees drew when they asked Symmachus for recommendations.

The friendships of Symmachus, then, though in principle private and governed by codes of private friendships, clearly accounted for much of his influence and, in a way that has rarely been recognized or articulated, for a not insignificant part of his public profile in Rome.[157] It

[155] The collection of letters to Flavianus Nicomachus senior, which takes up the entirety of the second book of the *Letters*, begins with two letters of recommendations (*Ep*. 2.1, *Ep*. 2.2) and ends with a letter of recommendation (*Ep*. 2.91)

[156] See Sogno, *Q. Aurelius Symmachus: A Political Biography*, 41, for both the friendship between Symmachus and Praetextatus and the public impression given by the simultaneous appointments of the two. See also Lizzi-Testa, "The Famous 'Altar of Victory Controversy' in Rome," 412-413 for Ambrose's association, in *Ep*. 17, of the case of the altar of Victory with that of the temple decorations, which implies that he saw a close alignment between Symmachus and Praextextatus.

[157] For the rules of friendly letter-writing, see Bruggisser, *Symmaque ou le rituel épistolarie de l'amitié littéraire*, 4-16.

seems unlikely that many of these friendships were ever purely private, and to the extent that the friendships of Symmachus threatened the wellbeing of his fellow-citizens or, conversely, presented opportunities for advancement by his peers, they might attract wider public attention. These friendships became part of Symmachus' definitive public image with the publication of the *Letters*, of course, but it can hardly be denied that they must have been part of his public image previously as well, certainly within the senate, likely at court, and also, if the case of the war with Gildo is any indication, in the population of Rome at large. Symmachus' literary self-presentation in the *Letters* is unlikely to have been addressed to the Roman people at large, but it can be assumed to respond to this existing public image of Symmachus' friendships, and hence also of his cultivation of superiors.

In conclusion, benefactions and the means by which they were solicited and acknowledged were by no means new in the fourth century: these had always been important in holding together the empire, and senators had always been part of them. What was new was that the emperors had largely abandoned Rome to the senate, as Chenault describes. Individual senators consequently had more impact on the wellbeing of the Roman people at this time than at any other time since the late Republic. Their cultivation of their superiors and the benefactions which they offered would therefore have been more scrutinized, along with their private lives generally, than under the high empire.

Symmachus himself was particularly prominent, and obviously owed some of his success to personal patronage at court, which he clearly sought out through his cultivation of palatine ministers. He was closely associated with Ausonius in the later 370s, an association which there is no reason to assume brought Symmachus anything but positive attention. He was also associated with Stilicho and his associates in the later 390s and early 400s, though he was

certainly never the simple mouthpiece of the court that Claudian was;[158] this latter relationship, although clearly beneficial to Symmachus, was apparently not always popular, above all during the unpopular war with Gildo in Africa. These (unequal) friendships might, it seems, attract notice and perhaps become issues for his senatorial peers. It is probable that the *cultus* which maintained these friendships would invite also speculation and perhaps critique.

1.3 Symmachus as an author: causes to discuss rewards and cultivation

It is one thing to practice *cultus*, which presumably all members of the elite did to some extent and had always done, or to depend on *cultus*, which fourth-century senators may have done to an unprecedented degree, or even to be seen as personally owing a very public career to it, as Symmachus probably was, insofar as friendship with magnates at court implied *cultus*, and another thing to discuss *cultus* explicitly. Roman senators had always written about public honours, and Symmachus is no exception, but there was little precedent for writing about *cultus*. Explicit discussions of the phenomenon of *cultus* do nonetheless occur in a variety of contexts, especially in the works of Symmachus but also in the works of some of his contemporaries. Here I provide an overview of the contexts in which Symmachus, as an individual author, mentions public honours on the one hand and *cultus* in view of future benefactions on the other.

In terms of honours, Symmachus' own reasons for mentioning them in his works, as a senator who was in a position to receive honours and was involved in bestowing them, are clear enough, and have many counterparts in other Latin authors. There are, first, thanks for appointments (*Relat*. 1-2 and *Orat*. 4), counterparts to conventional consular *gratiarum actiones*

[158] For Claudian as Stilicho's propagandist, see especially Alan Cameron, *Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 49 and 59 and Gillett, "Epic Panegyric and Political Communication in the Fifth-Century West," 265-266, 268-280, who argues that Stilicho and Claudian created the verse panegyric as an entirely new form of political communication.

as mentioned above.[159] Etiquette usually demanded these expressions of thanks, although Symmachus was innovating in giving thanks on behalf of his father in *Orat*. 4, as he points in *Orat*. 4.1. There are also instances in which Symmachus vaunts his own accomplishments to addressees other than those who bestowed the honours (his consulship in *Ep*. 2.62-2.64, *Ep*. 5.10 and *Ep*. 5.15), or congratulates others on their honours, above all in connection with invitations to consular inaugurations (for example, Ausonius in *Ep*. 1.20, Syagrius in *Ep*. 1.101.1, Theodorus in *Ep*. 5.5).[160] Finally, there are instances in which Symmachus argues that others ought to receive or not to receive specific honours (an honorific statue for Praetextatus as in *Relat*. 12 and the quaestorship for the son of Polybius in *Ep*. 4.29, *Ep*. 4.45, *Ep*. 5.9). Related to this, though more general, is the argument that specific honours ought not to be introduced or revived at all (honorific statues for priests in *Ep*. 2.36, the censorship in *Ep*. 4.29, *Ep*. 4.45, *Ep*. 5.9). None of these arguments, of course, are strictly demanded by etiquette; in fact, with the exception of the argument for the statue in *Relat*. 12 and perhaps *Ep*. 2.36, all are expected to surprise the reader of the letter in which they are mentioned. In sum, Symmachus mentions honours as etiquette required him to do, that is, when expressing gratitude for appointments, but he also mentions honours beyond what etiquette required. At times his remarks suggest a particular concern for propriety in honours or at least the desire to project this concern.[161]

Symmachus had similar reasons to discuss undeserved benefactions as rewards for merit. All honours received from the emperor might be treated as benefactions and were acknowledged as such, so that opportunities to discuss honours with the emperor who had conferred them, as

[159] Mamertinus' *Pan. Lat*. 3 provides a counterpart.
[160] In terms of his own appointments, a philosopher like Themistius might feel the need to defend his acceptance of them, in *Orat*. 31 and later *Orat*. 34: see *PLRE* I p. 892 Themistius I and John Vanderspoel, *Themistius and the Imperial Court* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 210, 214-215. Clearly Symmachus did not. For his treatment of his consulship, see below, n. 295 and p. 218-221.
[161] For a detailed treatment, see below, p. 211-221.

described above, were also opportunities to discuss benefactions. Recommendations of others, in turn, particularly interventions in legal or administrative cases, not only tended to name the desired benefaction in the initial letter but also, if successful, typically required a follow-up letter thanking the benefactor: *Ep*. 4.2 and *Ep*. 4.4, both to Stilicho and concerning the rehabilitation of Flavianus Nicomachus junior, respectively illustrate request and thanks. Panegyrics, finally, might well treat the benefactions of the emperor at length, though in fact the extant portions of the panegyrics of Symmachus have very little to compare to the very extensive discussions of the benefactions of Trajan in Pliny's *Panegyric* (especially 25-33). All the same, it is clear that in a functional corpus of works by an active senator like Symmachus, there was ample reason to treat benefactions.

Cultus was a different issue: Symmachus certainly often approached a distant emperor through the embassies in which he participated and the panegyrics which he delivered, and approached a variety of distant and powerful figures at court through letters. All the same, only in the rarest of circumstances would logical necessity or etiquette have required Symmachus to comment explicitly on the *cultus* which he offered; tradition apparently did not. It was perfectly possible and, one assumes, usual to engage in *cultus* without openly discussing it, and yet, as we will see, the issue emerges explicitly and repeatedly in Symmachus' works. His particular situation offers some potential reasons for this.

The situation in which Symmachus is best known for discussing *cultus*, of a rather different sort from that discussed above, is one in which he was not primarily engaged in *cultus* at all, but rather in persuasion on a specific point, that is, in his famous defense of traditional religious rites in *Relat*. 3. Insofar as specific forms of and support for *cultus* of the traditional gods, which Symmachus clearly considered necessary, had become impossible under Gratian, it was the purpose of Symmachus' intervention to seek their restoration: the possibility of future

cultus depended on what he said. Although Symmachus focusses here rather more on the specific forms which *cultus* of the gods had traditionally taken than on the fact of *cultus* itself,[162] a verbal defense of traditional religious rites would hardly have been possible without some reference to *cultus*. The defense of the altar of Victory and the subsidies of the Vestal virgins, then, provides an important opportunity for discussion of *cultus* directed toward the gods.

Symmachus also sometimes had reasons to discuss *cultus*, here to fellow humans, in the very act of offering it. When he had occasion to present the monetary gifts of the senate to the emperors, the most formal and quantifiable sort of *cultus*, these are invariably mentioned and sometimes itemized (*Orat*. 2.32, *Orat*. 3.1, *Relat*. 13.2, *Relat*. 15.2).[163] Whether or not these were usual in senatorial communications with the emperor, they find no real equivalent in the panegyrics delivered on behalf of provincial bodies in *Latin Panegyrics*, even in *Pan. Lat*. 6 and Nazarius' *Pan. Lat*. 4, both delivered on the occasion of imperial anniversaries, at which gifts might be expected.[164] Besides for simple accounting, perhaps conventional, the reason why Symmachus does mention the gifts may stem from a position of strength as the legitimate representative of the wealthiest and most prestigious body in the Roman world. Symmachus could hardly be accused of offering these gifts illegitimately (though he does contrast the gifts to bribes in *Relat*. 15.2), and he could offer them with the certainty that no rival body could offer more. In this context he was often free to openly address the question of imperial expectations, as in *Orat*. 2.32 and *Relat*. 15.2.[165]

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[162] See below, p. 150-162.
[163] See below, p. 134-150.
[164] For these gifts at imperial anniversaries, see Barrow, *Prefect and Emperor*, 82-83.
[165] This is not to say that the gift always met the expectations of the emperor; when it apparently did not, as in *Relat*. 13, which accompanies a comparatively modest monetary gift to Valentinian II, this fact generated its own discussion of *cultus*, to justify the adequacy of the gift. See below, p. 145-146.

In letters, discussions of *cultus* seem to stem from the opposite reason, not confidence but anxiety at offering too much or too little, in an environment in which *cultus* was closely scrutinized and excessive deference seen as inappropriate to a senator. If any author consciously avoided excessive deference in his letters, it was Symmachus, who always addresses his correspondents in the addressee line, regardless of rank, by their *cognomina* only, as Peter Brown points out.[166] This practice in the addressee line is sometimes explicitly underlined, when Symmachus apologizes for a scribal error which had violated the rule (*Ep*. 2.35.1) and when he asks his correspondent to abide by it (*Ep*. 4.30.3). He also defends, conversely, the infrequency of his letters with Protadius, in distant Trier, arguing that he wrote as often as circumstances allowed (especially *Ep*. 4.28 and *Ep*. 4.33), and accuses Protadius himself of writing too seldom (*Ep*. 4.25 and *Ep*. 4.30.1).[167] On both points, excessive and insufficient *cultus*, Symmachus shows a sensitivity, entirely lacking in the letters of Pliny the Younger, which may be partly personal and partly a product of his situation, in which it was necessary to correspond with distant patrons whose expectations were not always clear and whose status ought not in traditional terms to have commanded his deference.

Symmachus, then, discusses *cultus* because he had a variety of occasions to do so, as well, clearly, as a personal interest in the question; the same is clearly true of civic honours, though there the occasions were more obvious and less specific to Symmachus' own time, and of benefactions. Symmachus was certainly not the only senator to find his merits rewarded, during his own time or before, or to receive or request benefactions. Even in the case of *cultus*, however, the occasions themselves to discuss the topic were hardly unique. Symmachus cannot have been the only senator to defend traditional religion, present gifts to the emperor, or worry about correct

[166] Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, 101. See below, p. 202-206.
[167] See below, p. 196-199.

form in letter-writing. In terms of defense of traditional religious *cultus*, Symmachus was, certainly by the end of his career, in a pagan minority, but there were senatorial embassies on behalf of the altar of Victory in which he was apparently not involved, and perhaps other defenses of other aspects of pagan cult as well.[168] As for gifts for the emperors, Symmachus was certainly well-represented in Roman senatorial embassies to court at his time, but this would also be true of other prominent contemporary senators (Attalus, *PLRE* II p. 180-181, the future usurper emperor and addressee of *Ep*. 7.15-25, is one example), and Symmachus would have had many counterparts as urban prefect of Rome. Others senators must have had reason to present and may have explicitly commented on senatorial gifts to the emperors. As for letter-writing, Symmachus may have been particularly successful in cultivating ties at court, and thus particularly likely to carry on friendships at long distances – there is every reason to suppose that he was – but otherwise he cannot have been unique in this respect. Jennifer Ebbeler demonstrates that members of the Christian clergy, though they were hardly as exclusively focussed on the question as Symmachus, were also intensely concerned with correct form in letters.[169]

Symmachus cannot, then, have been unique in discussing honours or benefactions; to the extent that he appears unique in discussing *cultus*, it may simply reflect the loss of comparable material from other senatorial magnates: for virtually every work of Symmachus highlighted above one might imagine a very similar work by Petronius Probus, Praetextatus, or Attalus.

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[168] For later embassies, see Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome*, 39, 58. Lizzi-Testa, "Concluding Remarks: *Urbs Roma* Between Christians and Pagans," 399-407 argues that forms of traditional religion survived well into the next century. The intervention of Symmachus on the altar of Victory is undoubtedly the most famous work of its sort in Rome, but was hardly the only one. In any case, opponents of traditional religious *cultus*, such as Ambrose, had as much reason or more to discuss it as the traditionalists who defended it, and Ambrose does in fact discuss *cultus*, in connection with legitimate recipients, in his refutation of Symmachus' *Relat*. 3, in *Ep*. 17 and 18. God is the object of the verb *colo* in *Ep*. 17.1, 2, 7 and in *Ep*. 18.8.

[169] See Jennifer Ebbeler, "Mixed Messages: The Play of Epistolary Codes in Two Late Latin Correspondences," in *Ancient Letters: Classical and Late Antique Epistolography*, ed. Ruth Morello and A.D. Morrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 301-323 for Augustine and Jerome.

Whether or not they discussed *cultus* as explicitly as Symmachus did is, however, unknowable; if they did, there is no evidence that they published these works.[170] As it stands, Symmachus is unique in extant Latin literature in the explicit and prominent interest which he takes in *cultus*.

1.4 Conclusion

It is clear, then, that Symmachus lived his life in the public eye, with the result that the *cultus* on which his career and those of his many protégés depended was on display both in Rome and at court. There was nothing new about patronage, and the traditional moral and cultural framework within which it operated would have been largely recognizable to Cicero and Pliny the Younger, even if some of the patrons, especially bishops and distant palatine ministers, derived their power from quite novel sources. All the same, the specific patronage relations on which Symmachus depended and perceived himself to depend had been largely disrupted, above all by the withdrawal of the court and the decline of civic religion; to avail himself of them required particular attention to *cultus*, and even open defense of *cultus*, above all in the religious sphere. At the same time, it cannot be forgotten that the principle that it was inappropriate or degrading for *cultus* to pursue honours too directly, clearly enunciated in Mamertinus' *Pan. Lat*. 3.19.4 and in Symmachus' own denunciations of *ambitus* in *Ep*. 2.36.3 and *Ep*. 4.29.2, stood in obvious tension with the actual practice of Symmachus and his peers. Once he involved himself in the question, Symmachus had reason to discuss *cultus* in order to emphasize both what he did and what he did not do.

[170] The works which Praetextatus published were translations of Greek philosophical works, and included a translation of Themistius' commentary on Aristotle's *Analytics*. See *PLRE* I p. 723. Petronius Probus may also have had literary interests: Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome*, 775-778, following Jacques Schwartz, "Sur la date de l'*Histoire Auguste*," *Bulletin de la faculté de lettres de Strasbourg* 40 (1961), 174-175, suggests, not entirely implausibly, that he may have sponsored the publication of the *Historia Augusta*.

Strictly in terms of self-presentation, given his distinctive career, which relied heavily on what were likely unusually advantageous informal connections at court, was Symmachus ever under any absolute obligation to publish a defense of his *cultus*? Presumably not, any more than he was required to discuss *cultus* rather than gliding over it in most other contexts. Neither actual nor, *a fortiori*, potential criticism would necessarily call for a work of literary self-presentation in response: Petronius Probus, whom Ammianus Marcellinus describes as "for his conspicuousness of birth, his power and the extent of wealth known to the Roman world, through nearly the whole of which he held scattered properties, whether justly or not is not for our paltry judgement" (*claritudine generis et potentia et opum amplitudine cognitus orbi Romano, per quem universum paene patrimonia sparsa possedit, iuste an secus non iudicioli est nostri*, 27.11.2), is not attested as having left any work of self-presentation. All the same, publications of orations and letters were hardly new: the *Letters* of Jerome would have provided a recent example in Rome. Symmachus had the opportunities and encouragements to address the question of *cultus* that few of his predecessors and relatively few of his contemporaries would have had, and he made use of them. In the following chapters I examine how he did so.

CHAPTER 2

Cultus and public honours in Symmachus' exemplary material

Summary:

This chapter is a literary complement to the historical argument of the previous chapter that Symmachus had reason to defend as well as to practice his cultivation. It seeks to confirm the general importance of cultivation and of the non-clientelistic principle of merit, in more or less direct opposition to it, as themes which are explicitly discussed in the works of Symmachus. Indeed, it seeks to demonstrate that these themes are among the most frequently and explicitly discussed themes in these works, must have been intended to be noticed, and merit literary analysis, which I will supply in the subsequent two chapters. It also seeks to move beyond the conclusions of the first chapter by demonstrating that Symmachus explicitly highlights cultivation and merit in a wide variety of rhetorical contexts and for a variety of reasons, not simply for self-presentation. In this respect, this chapter anticipates the argument of my third chapter, that Symmachus first developed a discourse of *cultus* in a rather different, more immediately practical context.

The respective importance of the cultivation of benefactions and of the meriting of rewards in the rhetorically developed passages of Symmachus will be suggested by inventorying and examining a particular corpus of rhetorically developed passages, namely those passages which incorporate historical and legendary material. This material provides a manageable corpus of passages to analyze, and has the distinct advantage for the purposes of this chapter that it is almost always extraneous to the matter immediately at hand in the works of Symmachus. When it is included, it is strongly correlated with rhetorical elaboration. I will first provide an initial overview of the historical material in the works of Symmachus and the ways in which it can be categorized, as Roman and non-Roman, by period, and by rhetorical use. I will demonstrate that

cultus and merits are well-represented in most types of these categories and rhetorical contexts, and actually dominate certain of these.

Introduction

Cultus is an odd topic to discuss explicitly at length in published works, and yet Symmachus had reasons to do so, as established in the previous chapter. How can we qualify his treatment of it? How prominent is it in relation to other topics which Symmachus explicitly discusses? A study of all the topics treated in the entire oeuvre of Symmachus would be outside the scope of this project; here I limit myself to a smaller corpus of passages which nonetheless promises to provide a reasonable sample of what is most literary, rhetorically elaborate and self-consciously Roman in the works of Symmachus, namely, his passages which highlight historical material. These passages appear as ornaments, aids to argumentation, and ultimately as guides to appropriate Roman conduct; some are general customs or legal precedents, but many are literary *exempla*, that is, citations of a specific "historical" instance of a particular quality or course of action, taken from earlier Latin literature.[171] To the extent that gifts (offered as *cultus* and

[171] The classic definition in Latin is that of Livy: "this is that which is especially wholesome and profitable, that you gaze at the learning opportunities of every instance assembled in a conspicuous monument; from here you can take what to imitate for yourself and your commonwealth, from here what, foul in its beginning and foul in its end, you should avoid" (*hoc illud est praecipue in cognitione rerum salubre ac frugiferum, omnis te exempli documenta in inlustri posita monumento intueri; inde tibi tuaeque rei publicae quod imitere capias, inde foedum inceptu foedum exitu quod vites*, Livy *praef*. 10). See Jane Chaplin, *Livy's Exemplary History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). For *exempla*, see especially Adolf Lumpe, "*Exemplum*," *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 6 (1966): 1229-57, Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik*, 2nd edition (Munich: Hüber, 1973), Bennet J. Price, "*Paradeigma* and *Exemplum* in Ancient Rhetorical Theory" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1975); Kristoffel Demoen, "A Paradigm for the Analysis of Paradigms: The Rhetorical *Exemplum* in Ancient Imperial Greek Theory," *Rhetorica* 15.2 (1997): 125-158. For *exempla* as ethical models in a Roman context, see especially Matthew B. Roller, "Exemplarity in Roman Culture: The Cases of Horatius Cocles and Cloelia," *Classical Philology* 99.1 (2004): 1-56 and Rebecca Langlands, "Roman *Exempla* and Situation Ethics: Valerius Maximus and Cicero *de Officiis*," *Journal of Roman Studies* 100 (2011): 100-122. For the literary transmission of *exempla*, Clive Skidmore, *Practical Ethics for Roman Gentlemen: The Work of Valerius Maximus* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996), 3-27 is helpful. For the Greek context in which the literary *exemplum* originated, see especially Michel Nouhaud, *L'Utilisation de l'histoire par les orateurs attiques* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1982).

benefactions) and honours are prominent among these passages, they can be assumed to be similarly prominent as explicit objects of discussion in the works of Symmachus more generally.

It must immediately be said that the *cultus* described in these passages cannot be expected to be necessarily representative of the *cultus* which Symmachus in fact offered, much of it discreet, or even fully representative of Symmachus' thought about *cultus*. What a senator might think about *cultus* and what he would find useful to say about it in letters and orations might well be different. All the same, the mere fact of discussion of *cultus*, and especially frequent and prominent discussion, would certainly be significant insofar as *cultus* is not a particularly prominent topic of discussion in earlier Roman literature.

I begin with a general review of the material by time period (1), in which I will particularly highlight instances in which Symmachus contrasts Roman and foreign, and old and new material, as well as specific eras of Roman history. I will then describe the anecdotes inventoried by the purpose for their inclusion (2). Having done this, I will discuss the relative prominence in this material both of gifts (3.1), that is, benefactions and *cultus*, and, as a close comparison for it, of public rewards (3.2).

2.1 Material by period

What, then, is the historical material that Symmachus cites? It is varied in the extreme. Even excluding the distant past, usually but far from exclusively Roman, to which Symmachus attaches old customs, the history which he cites in the different works of his corpus ranges from Greek mythology and legend, sometimes described as exaggerated or distorted,[172] classical and

[172] *Orat*. 2.21 (giants piling Pelion on Ossa), *Ep*. 4.33.2 (Prometheus), *Relat*. 4.2 (Salmoneus of Elis), *Ep*. 9.111 (the labours of Hercules), *Orat*. 2.8 (the Greek landing at Troy), *Orat*. 2.26 (Achilles battling the Xanthus), *Ep*. 3.11.1 (the old age of Nestor), *Ep*. 3.13.2 (the old age of Nestor), *Ep*. 3.74.2 (Achilles playing music for relaxation), *Orat*. 2.19 (the Trojan horse), *Ep*. 8.23.1 (the Laestrygones), *Ep*. 7.16.3 (the sirens and lotus eaters), *Ep*. 1.47.1 (the lotus tree, the cup of Circe, and the sirens- on the identification of the latter, see Jean-Pierre Callu, *Symmaque I*. Paris:

Hellenistic Greek history,[173] Roman regal and Republican history,[174] and the Roman Principate to Marcus Aurelius,[175] to recent administrative rulings or other recent imperial actions.[176] The latter, which can hardly be described as literary *exempla* and which are cited mainly in the *Relations*,

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Belles Lettres, 1972, 110 n. 3), *Ep*. 9.82 (Phaeacian apples), *Ep*. 8.22.2 (Homer recited by lesser poets), *Ep*. 1.53.2 (Hesiod meeting the Camenae), *Ep*. 7.20 (the rejuvenation of Hesiod). Symmachus describes the stories of the giants piling Ossa on Pelion in *Orat*. 2.1, the story of the Greek heroes landing at Troy in *Orat*. 2.8 and the story of Achilles battling the Xanthus in *Orat*. 2.26 as exaggerated or distorted.

[173] *Ep*. 3.11.3 (Lycurgus and Solon), *Ep*. 1.4.2 (Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle), *Ep*. 9.115.2 (Heraclitus), *Ep*. 9.84 (Platonic nectar), *Ep*. 3.6.3 (Pericles), *Ep*. 2.46.1 (Socrates), *Relat*. 5.2 (Aristotle, Carneades, Clitomachus), *Ep*. 6.45 (Hippocrates), *Ep*. 1.29 (Phidias' Olympian Jupiter, Myron's calf, and Polyclitus' basket bearer), *Ep*. 2.2 (the reputation of Apelles and Zeuxis), *Orat*. 3.5 (the art of Zeuxis and Apelles, Alexander, Antiochus V, Ptolemy V- for the identification of the latter two, see Callu, *Symmaque V*, 25 n. 2), *Orat*. 3.7 (the entourage of Alexander), *Ep*. 9.72 (Alexander complaining that Achilles had a Homer), *Ep*. 1.20.2 (Alexander honouring Aristotle, Pyrrhus honouring Cineas, and Mithridates honouring Metrodorus), *Orat*. 2.18 (Archimedes defending Syracuse), *Ep*. 4.33.2 (the demise of the oracles).

[174] *Relat*. 15.1 (king Tatius and New Year's gifts), *Relat*. 7.1 (the antiquity of New Year's gifts), *Ep*. 2.36.2 (Numa as the founder and Metellus as the preserver of Roman religion), *Relat*. 4.3 (the display of Tarquin, the chariot of Camillus, the humility of Publicola), *Ep*. 3.6.3 (M. Horatius at the death of his son), *Orat*. 2.32 (complexities of Roman religion), *Ep*. 3.11.3 (arms borrowed from the Samnites, standards from the Etruscans, laws from the cities of Lycurgus and Solon), *Ep*. 4.34.3 (the prophecies of the Marcii), *Relat*. 3.9 (the Senones repulsed from the Capitoline and Hannibal from the city), *Orat*. 3.7 (Fulvius and his tutor Accius, the younger Scipio Africanus and Panaetius), *Ep*. 1.20.2 (Fulvius honouring Ennius, the younger Scipio Africanus honouring Panaetius, Rutilius honouring Opillus), *Orat*. 1.16 (Scipio Africanus spending time in Sicily, Lucullus enjoying Pontic luxury, Antonius dallying with the queen of Egypt), *Ep*. 1.4.2 (the poverty of Curius, the severity of Cato, the gens Fabia, the distinction of the Scipiones), *Ep*. 1.5.8 (Atilius the farmer consul), *Ep*. 7.15 (Cato and Atilius), *Ep*. 3.44.2 (Cato beginning speeches by invoking Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Cicero using more up-to-date formulae), *Ep*. 10.3.2 (Publilius Pellio, Ambivius, Aesop, Roscius), *Ep*. 3.23.2 (the erudition of Scaevola), *Orat*. 1.4.5 (the near-death of Marius), *Ep*. 9.115.1 (Verres overturning the monuments of Marcellus, rivals not sparing the trophies of Marius), *Ep*. 2.46.2 (Spartacus), *Ep*. 2.60.1 (the constructions of Lucullus), *Ep*. 6.70 (the constructions of Lucullus), *Ep*. 7.36 (the constructions of Lucullus), *Orat*. 2.5 (Crassus and his son), *Orat*. 3.8 (the youth of Pompey), *Ep*. 1.1.5 (Hortensius and Cicero), *Orat*. 1.1 (Cicero and Caecilius), *Ep*. 4.60.3 (advice of Cicero for public spending), *Ep*. 4.18.4 (Caesar's description of Gaul), *Ep*. 1.25 (quote from Sallust), *Ep*. 4.24.1 (quote from Sallust), *Ep*. 5.68.2 (remark and character of Sallust), *Orat*. 1.9 (republican elections), *Orat*. 4.7 (republican elections).

[175] *Orat*. 1.16 (Augustus, Tiberius, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius at leisure), *Ep*. 1.13.3 (virtues of Nerva, Trajan, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius), *Orat*. 4.8 (principate in general), *Orat*. 4.5 (character of earlier emperors in general), *Ep*. 9.112 (civilian consulships rare for a long time), *Orat*. 5.3 (character of previous reigns), *Orat*. 2.29 (eloquence long silenced), *Orat*. 3.2 (eloquence long silenced), *Relat*. 3.11-12 (even greedy emperors kept subsidies for vestal virgins), *Relat*. 9.3 (bogus triumphs that would have happened in the past), *Orat*. 1.11.2 (previous emperors feared to create colleagues).

[176] *Relat*. 3.3 (recent religious practice), *Relat*. 32.3 (the sum of imperial rescripts still in force), *Relat*. 34.11 (the sum of imperial rescripts still in force), *Ep*. 9.133.1 (the sum of imperial rescripts still in force), *Relat*. 39.3-5 (Constantine), *Relat*. 40.2 (Constantine), *Relat*. 40.2 (Constans), *Relat*. 40.2-4 (Constantius II), *Relat*. 3.4 (Constantius II), *Relat*. 3.6-7 (Constantius II), *Rela*t. 34.2 (Constantius II), *Relat*. 34.5-6 (Constantius II), *Ep*. 9.150.1 (Constantius II), *Relat*. 34.5-6 (Julian), *Relat*. 40.2-4 (Julian), *Orat*. 4.9 (Valentinian I), *Orat*. 4.10-12, 14 (rule of Valentinian I), *Ep*. 10.2.2-3 (rule of Valentinian I), *Relat*. 3.1 (Valentinian I), *Relat*. 3.19 (Valentinian I), *Relat*. 14.2 (Valentinian I), *Relat*. 21.4 (Valentinian I), *Relat*. 27.1 (Valentinian I), *Relat*. 34.5-6 (Valentinian I), *Relat*. 3.1 (rule of Gratian), *Relat*. 34.5-6 (Gratian), *Relat*. 34.11 (Gratian), *Relat*. 41 (Gratian), *Relat*. 34.9 (Gratian), *Relat*. 13.2 (Valentinian I and Gratian), *Ep*. 9.150.2 (Valentinian I and Gratian), *Ep*. 4.67.2 (Valentinian I and Gratian), *Ep*. 4.4.2 (Theodosius I), *Ep*. 4.51.1-2 (Theodosius I).

begin with Constantine and are very much dominated by the rulings of the Christian emperors, reflecting a centrality of these rulings in late antique jurisprudence, although the rulings of Julian are also mentioned.[177] The legal rulings must usually be drawn from the administrative archives of the urban prefecture, to which Symmachus would have had access as urban prefect in 384-5, though some recent history likely derives from senatorial oral tradition (Constantius II's tour of Rome in *Relat*. 3.7) or personal memory (perhaps Valentinian I's decision to reverse his own decree after popular opposition in Rome, in *Relat*. 14.2-3).[178]

As an inventory of the historical references of an orator and letter-writer, this material contains few surprises. It shows an impressive range and quantity of material, albeit likely drawn from a limited number of Latin sources, especially Valerius Maximus, Cicero and Livy.[179] Not at all surprising is the obvious prominence of Roman Republican history, whose traditional importance in Roman literary culture has recently been studied by Alain Gowing and Andreas Felmy.[180] The two noteworthy features are the prominence of the Hellenistic period for Greek history, not particularly well-represented in Valerius Maximus, and the abundance of post-Constantinian administrative material, which would hardly have figured here if Symmachus had not been urban prefect in 384-5 and responsible for enforcing conflicting legal rulings. This is, however, naturally largely confined to the *Relations*, addressed to the emperor as urban prefect,

[177] This centrality is also suggested by the fact that the somewhat later Theodosian Code similarly excludes rulings prior to those of Constantine. In the case of the Theodosian Code, the existence of the Gregorian and Hermogenian Codes, dating to the reign of Diocletian, provide a rationale for beginning with Constantine, but religion must also have been an important factor, though one whose exact influence is difficult to assess, as noted by Jill Harries, "Constantine, Christianity and the Code: Introductory Note," in *The Theodosian Code*, ed. Jill Harries and Ian Wood (London: Duckworth, 1993), 95-96.
[178] For the tour of Rome, see especially Chenault, "Rome Without Emperors," 93-102.
[179] See Kroll, *De Q. Aurelii Symmachi Studiis Graecis et Latinis*, 1-98, especially 60-76 and 82-88 for verbal parallels with Cicero and with the *Memorable Deeds and Sayings* of Valerius Maximus respectively.
[180] Alain Gowing, *Empire and Memory: The Representation of the Roman Republic in Imperial Culture* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005) and Felmy, *Die Römische Republic im Geschichtsbild der Spätantike*. Felmy studies the way in which particular *exempla* from the Roman Republic were used in late antiquity and transformed by Christian authors.

and it should be noted that even early imperial history from literary sources is cited only in works addressed to the emperors or occasionally their ministers, that is, the *Relations*, early *Orations* and a handful of letters. Unlike the *exempla* of the Republic, they are not put to general use. All things considered, given that Symmachus was a Roman senator of the later fourth century who sometimes addressed the emperors, sometimes with technical requests, the history cited is more or less what one would expect.

a) Contrasts

More potentially revealing of Symmachus' particular priorities are the contrasts and comparisons which he draws in the passages cited above. All historical *exempla* are necessarily contrasted with or compared to the present object of discussion, but Symmachus sometimes also provides comparisons between Roman or Italic and foreign material (usually Greek, but also Persian and Egyptian), between past and present, and between different historical periods. These contrasts promise to reveal what the past and legitimate Roman practice were and were not in general terms, at least for the purposes of the particular passages in which they were cited.

The idea of paired internal (Roman) and external (foreign) *exempla* is hardly novel, since it structures the *Memorable Deeds and Sayings* of Valerius Maximus, in which a series of internal *exempla* for a particular category, such as gratitude (*De Gratis*, *Memorable Deeds and Saying* 5.2), are followed by a series of external *exempla*. Valerius Maximus includes both internal and external material for virtually every category for which he includes *exempla*, allowing a user of the collection to easily assemble paired Roman and non-Roman instances for every topic; Symmachus seems to have actually done so in the case of the models of Pericles, Anaxagoras and M. Horatius in *Ep*. 3.6.3, which almost certainly draws on Valerius Maximus 5.10.2 and 5.10 ext.1.

In terms of contrasts or at least juxtapositions of Roman and non-Roman material, there are ten instances (*Orat*. 3.7, *Relat*. 4.2-3, *Relat*. 5.2, *Ep*. 1.4.2, *Ep*. 1.45.2, *Ep*. 3.6.3, *Ep*. 4.28.4, *Ep*. 4.34.3, *Ep*. 5.67-*Ep*. 5.68.2, *Ep*. 9.115.1-2). Here Symmachus compares learned entourages of Alexander and of Fulvius and Scipio Africanus (*Orat*. 3.7), juxtaposes the Greek model of ostentation Salmoneus of Elis with Roman models of both ostentation and of simplicity, Tarquin, Camillus, and Publicola (*Relat*. 4.2-3), juxtaposes the reception of foreign philosophers in both Athens and Rome (*Relat*. 5.2), lists the Greek and Roman subjects of Varro's *Hebdomades* side by side (*Ep*. 1.4.2), compares Spartan, Athenian and Roman models in brevity of expression (*Ep*. 1.45.2), juxtaposes Pericles, Anaxagoras and M. Horatius as models for stoic responses to grief (*Ep*. 3.6.3), compares the writing materials of the Aborigines and the Egyptians (*Ep*. 4.28.4), compares the materials on which the oracles of the Marcii and the oracles of Cumae were written to Persian silk (*Ep*. 4.34.3), arguably contrasts across two letters the hunting of the Marsi and Sabines (*Ep*. 5.67) with Greek pastimes (*Ep*. 5.68.2), in any case contrasted with the rural pursuits of the farmer consul Atilius (*Ep*. 5.68.2), and juxtaposes the rather different models of Roman experience of loss of honours, of Marcellus and Marius, with Greek philosophical indifference to public acclaim (*Ep*. 9.115.1-2). Some of these comparisons, though apparently drawing their force from being comparisons of internal and external material, have internal material which is not Roman, but simply local, drawn from the Marsi and Sabines (*Ep*. 5.67) and from the Aborigines (*Ep*. 4.28.4). The internal material is therefore somewhat less narrowly defined than that in Valerius Maximus; the themes illustrated, conversely, are rather narrower, tending to be confined specifically to questions of education (*Orat*. 3.7, *Relat*. 5.2), leisure (*Ep*.

5.67 and *Ep*. 5.68.2), literary culture, always letter-writing (*Ep*. 1.45.2, *Ep*. 4.28.4, *Ep*. 4.34.3) and philosophical resolve in the face of setbacks (*Ep*. 3.6.3, *Ep*. 9.115.1-2).[181]

These instances in Symmachus break down into two broad categories, that is, direct comparisons between Roman/Italic and foreign (Greek, Persian or Egyptian) customs on the one hand (*Ep*. 1.45.2, *Ep*. 4.28.4, *Ep*. 4.34.3, *Ep*. 5.67/*Ep*. 5.68.2) and simple juxtapositions of individual Greeks and Romans on the other (*Orat*. 3.7, *Relat*. 5.2, *Ep*. 1.4.2, *Ep*. 1.20.2, *Ep*. 3.6.3, *Ep*. 9.115.2).[182] In both cases, comparisons and juxtapositions tend to be balanced, with Roman/Italic and foreign elements analogous to each other and equal or near equal in number.[183]

In the case of Roman *exempla* paired with non-Roman *exempla*, there is *Orat*. 3.7, *Ep*. 1.20.2, *Ep*. 1.4.2, *Ep*. 3.6.3, and *Relat*. 5.2. Of these five instances, two are pairings of Republican statesmen and Hellenistic kings: Fulvius and the younger Scipio Africanus appear alongside Alexander in *Orat*. 3.7 in connection with their learned entourages, and a longer version of the same list includes Alexander, Pyrrhus and Mithridates together with Fulvius, the younger Scipio Africanus, and Rutilius in *Ep*. 1.20.2 in connection with rewards for tutors. Another three are pairings of Republican statesmen with Greek philosophers, when Symmachus describes Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle with Curius, the Catones, the Fabii and the Scipiones as

[181] Incidentally, relatively few of these comparisons actually draw both (or either) point of comparison from Valerius Maximus. *Ep*. 3.6.3 draws from the *Memorable Deeds and Sayings* 5.102 and 5.10.ext.1 (those who endured the deaths of their sons stoically) and *Ep*. 9.115.1-2, from *Memorable Deeds and Sayings* 3.7.ext.2 (self-confidence) and 9.2.1 (vices). See Kroll, *De Q. Aurelii Symmachi Studiis Graecis et Latinis*, 84, 85, 88.

[182] *Relat*. 4.2-3 is a problematic passage, since the foreign Salmoneus of Elis is juxtaposed with exemplars of inappropriate Roman conduct (Tarquin and Camillus), like him cited for ostentation, but is also implicitly contrasted, as they are, with Publicola as a model of appropriate Roman conduct, here moderation in display. The fact that Salmoneus of Elis is foreign is therefore obviously relevant, as it is not in other juxtapositions of Roman and foreign *exempla*. This passage is, however, unique in this respect.

[183] The exceptions are the juxtaposition of the precocity of the Hellenistic kings Antiochus V, Alexander, and Ptolemy V in *Orat*. 3.6 with that of Pompey in *Orat*. 3.8, of the Greek Salmoneus of Elis (*Relat*. 4.2) with the Romans Tarquin, Camillus and Publicola (*Relat*. 4.3). For the identification of Antiochus and Ptolemy, see Callu, *Symmaque V*, 25 n. 2. Also unbalanced are *Ep*. 9.115.2, which mention Marius and Verres on the one hand and Heraclitus on the other in rather different contexts, the juxtaposition of the Roman Horatius with the Greeks Pericles and Anaxagoras in *Ep*. 3.6.3, and the addition of Roman style to an otherwise balanced comparison between Spartan and Athenian style.

subjects of Varro's *Hebdomades* in *Ep*. 1.4.2,[184] and when he juxtaposes Marius with Heraclitus (*Ep*. 9.115.2), and Anaxagoras (and Pericles) with Marcus Horatius (*Ep*. 3.6.3) with respect to their misfortunes and responses to them.[185] Finally, in a somewhat different comparison, Symmachus also juxtaposes Athenian and Roman honours for the foreign Carneades and Clitomachus on the one hand and Zaleucus on the other in *Relat*. 5.2.[186] In any case, all of these pairings are simple juxtapositions, with the Roman and non-Roman exemplars roughly equally admirable and exemplifying the same general qualities, whether stoic responses to setbacks (*Ep*. 3.6.3 and *Ep*. 2.46.1),[187] but also the connection between power and learning (*Orat*. 3.7), and public honours for learning (*Relat*. 5.2) or their absence (*Ep*. 1.20.2). Here, clearly, Symmachus does not define Roman models against Greek models: Roman-ness as such is not at issue, and the qualities illustrated are at least as associated with Greek as with Roman models.

The case of customs and institutions (*Ep*. 1.45.2, *Ep*. 4.28.4, *Ep*. 4.34.3, *Ep*. 5.67/*Ep*. 5.68.2) is rather different. Here Symmachus compares Aboriginal with Egyptian writing materials (*Ep*. 4.28.4), the writing materials employed by Roman and Italian oracles with Persian writing materials (*Ep*. 4.34.3),[188] and attaches Roman fullness of expression to a comparison between Spartan brevity and Athenian prolixity (*Ep*. 1.45.2). Finally, Italic leisure in *Ep*. 5.67 and Greek leisure in *Ep*. 5.68.2, mentioned in two closely related letters to the same addressees,

[184] For Varro's work, see Salzman, *The Letters of Symmachus: Book 1*, 15 n. 7.
[185] In a similar passage Symmachus compares himself to Socrates for his acceptance of fate, a comparison which has no fitting Roman counterpart, unless one considers the comparison of his would-be gladiators to Spartacus for their unwillingness to accept their fate (*Ep*. 2.46.1).
[186] One might also mention the inclusion of the Greek Salmoneus of Elis immediately before an extended series of purely Roman series of *exempla* in *Relat*. 4.2-3, in which Symmachus compares the ostentation of Tarquin and Camillus with the respect which Publicola showed for the Roman people. This is not a comparison of Roman and foreign material on equal terms, but it is a passage in which both figure.
[187] In *Ep*. 9.115.1, in contrast, the Roman exemplars, unlike their Greek counterparts in *Ep*. 9.115.2, do not illustrate acceptance but simply experience of loss; it is Symmachus, who recognizes their experiences, who is able to accept loss.
[188] Symmachus also mentions both the oracles of Cumae and Dodona in a comment on the cessation of the oracles (*Ep*. 4.33.2), but here he does not identify Cumae as domestic or Dodona as foreign.

might be considered to be compared, at least in the published edition. All of these are contrasts of some sort, all structured around the notion of simplicity and lack of pretension, either in forms of writing (*Ep*. 1.45.2, *Ep*. 4.28.4 and *Ep*. 4.34.3), or in education (*Ep*. 5.67/*Ep*. 5.68.2).[189] With the exception of *Ep*. 1.45.2, which contrasts Roman fullness of expression with excessive Spartan brevity, all at least implicitly associate Roman or Italic customs with simplicity and their foreign counterparts with excess and luxury; this is explicit in the description of the "indefatigable Marsian and brave Sabine" (*Marsus impiger et fortis Sabellus*, *Ep*. 5.67) and the direct contrast of the training of youths with Greek amusements to that "by lively exhaustion and the innocent joys of daring," *alacri fatigatione et innocentiis audaciae gaudiis*, *Ep*. 5.68.2). Unsurprisingly, in these cases the Roman and foreign customs are not equally admirable: invariably, the Roman or Italian model is preferred.

Symmachus' juxtapositions of Roman and foreign *exempla*, then, tend to be unconnected to arguments about proper Roman behaviour and are simply generated by learned or philosophical topics; his contrasts between Roman and foreign customs, on the other hand, though also connected to cultured leisure (often specifically to letter-writing) do establish proper Roman behaviour. These contrasts and juxtapositions, then, which are inherently learned, are usually directly connected to learned topics; when they establish a distinctively Roman model, it is most often in learned pursuits.

Another sort of comparison, always a comparison and never a simple juxtaposition, is between the present (described as "now," *nunc*, or as "the most recent time," *proxima aetas*[190])

[189] The question of simplicity is, in contrast, much less well-represented in the juxtapositions of *exempla* examined above, confined to forms of public display in *Relat*. 4.2-3.

[190] Thus Symmachus affirms that "now it is a kind of currying favour with the Romans to abandon the altars "(*nunc aris deesse Romanos genus est ambiendi*, *Ep*. 1.51), and refers to the "decay of the most recent age" (*rutuum proximae aetatis*, *Ep*. 1.4.2) which his father commemorates. The paucity of virtue in the present age may be described as affecting the emperors themselves, as when Symmachus praises Gratian for modelling virtue while not living in a good age: "good Nerva, energetic Trajan, blameless Pius, dutiful Marcus were helped by their times,

and the (Roman or Italic) past, both defined broadly, in terms of widely disseminated *mores* and a particular sort and calibre of people.[191] Naturally, all historical *exempla* describe a present person or situation with reference to past material, but the comparison is usually specific and generalizations about either the past or the present are rare; it is these generalizations which are at issue here. Symmachus makes comparisons between past and present literary styles (*Ep*. 3.11.1-2), feminine pursuits (*Ep*. 6.67.2), the terms of loans (*Ep*. 7.69.1), ease of performing religious duties (*Ep*. 1.51), the merit of priests (*Ep*. 2.36.2), imperial virtues (*Ep*. 1.13.3), senatorial

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which then knew no other mores: here it is the nature of the emperor that is praiseworthy, there the gift of an ancient time" (*bonus Nerva, Traianus strenuus, Pius innocens, Marcus plenus officii temporibus adiuti sunt, quae tunc mores alios nesciebant: hic in laude est natura principis, ibi priscae munus aetatis*, *Ep*. 1.13.3). A paucity of contemporary virtue, though not specifically contrasted with the past, is also implicit in *Relat*. 10.1, where Symmachus comments that Praetextatus was "a man of all the virtues, both at home and in the public sphere, in whose place it is extremely difficult even for your eternity, who knows how to choose the best, to propose as a substitute someone similar" (*vir omnium domi forisque virtutum, in cuius locum Vestrae quoque Aeternitati quae optimos novit eligere nimis arduum est similem subrogare*, *Relat*. 10.1). Praetextatus, unsurprisingly, is elsewhere described as "equal to the ancients, a man of all the virtues," *veteribus parem virtutum omnium virum*, *Relat*. 11).

[191] Not included here are comparisons between the past and the present era narrowly defined, in terms of the moral climate which emanated from the reigning emperor and within which palatine officials operated. This is best illustrated by the remark, to the recently promoted Gallic palatine minister Siburius that "you enjoy an era friendly to virtue, to which, if each excellent man does not provide glory, it is the fault of the man, not of the time. You see indeed that the very man who presides over Roman affairs [the emperor Gratian] was born for the public good, that there is no need for you to strive against a contrary stream; it is by the current, so to speak, that the good arts and virtues are borne along" (*habes saeculum virtuti amicum, quo nisi optimus quisque gloriam parat, hominis est culpa non temporis. Vides certe: ut ille ipse qui Romanis rebus antistat, ad bonum publicum natus est, non tibi adverso nunc amne nitendum est, secundo, ut ita dicam, cursu probae artes et virtutes feruntur*, *Ep*. 3.43.2). The era constituted by the reign of the emperor appears to be the sense in which Symmachus normally uses the terms *tempus* and *saeculum*.

For *tempus*: good times (*bon[a] tempor[a]*, *Ep*. 2.31), the glory of the brightest times (*serenissimorum temporum gloria*, *Ep*. 9.1), the glory of the times (*temporum gloria*, *Relat*. 3.2), the reputation of the times (*fama temporum*, *Ep*. 9.86.1), the justice and reputation of good times (*bonorum temporum iustitia et fama*, *Ep*. 5.34.2), the justice of the times (*iustitia temporum*, *Ep*. 4.66), the justice of the times (*iustitia temporum*, *Ep*. 1.64.2), the mercy of the times (*temporum clementia*, *Ep*. 4.67.1).

For *saeculum*: The fates of the new age (*novi saeculi fata*, *Ep*. 1.13.2), a very pure age (*castissimum saeculum*, *Ep*. 9.148), an age friendly to virtue (*saeculum virtuti amicum*, *Ep*. 3.43.1), the happiness of the age (*saeculi beatitudo*, *Ep*. 1.40), instruments of a good age (*instrumenta ... boni saeculi*, *Ep*. 4.4.3), the human feeling of the age (*saeculi ... humanitas*, *Ep*. 5.39), the human feeling of the age (*humanita[s] saeculi*, *Ep*. 7.49).

Note that most of these references are hortatory in requests for benefactions (*Ep*. 1.40, *Ep*. 3.43.1, *Ep*. 4.66, *Ep*. 5.34.2, *Ep*. 5.39, *Ep*. 7.49, *Ep*. 9.1, *Ep*. 9.148), though some are connected to the praise of the emperors and their closest advisors (*Ep*. 1.13.2 and *Ep*. 4.4.3) or of others (the Mauretanian bishop Clemens in *Ep*. 1.64.2 and an unidentified addressee in *Ep*. 9.86.1), and several to self-presentation, in connection with the aftermath of the usurpation of Magnus Maximus (*Ep*. 2.31), as the writer of a recommendation (*Ep*. 4.67), or as a senatorial recommendation (*Relat*. 3.2). In the narrow sense, the present era is usually defined by imperial virtues, particularly mercy (*clementia*, *Ep*. 4.67.1), kindness (*humanitas*, *Ep*. 5.39, *Ep*. 7.49) and justice (*iustitia*, *Ep*. 1.64, *Ep*. 4.66, *Ep*. 5.34.2). If it is contrasted with the past, the opposition is usually with the reigns of emperors who were either inimical to virtue (*Orat*. 4.5-6) or whose virtues were not picked up by all of their ministers (*Orat*. 4.13-15).

achievement (*Ep*. 1.4.2), military achievement (*Relat*. 47.1), the giving of honours (*Relat*. 12.2), and availability of business to discuss (*Ep*. 2.35). In all these cases, with the exception of *Ep*. 7.69.1, in which Symmachus expresses gratitude for the wealth of the present, which allowed him to keep the horses he had been lent beyond the agreed upon term, the comparison is to the advantage of the past. In the present, as defined in this way, the traditional delegation of priestly duties no longer functions (*Ep*. 1.51), the revival of the ancient censorship (*Ep*. 4.45, *Ep*. 5.9.1) and the voting of most new honorific statues (*Relat*. 12.2, *Ep*. 2.36.2) would be inappropriate, works of praise (*Ep*. 1.4.2) or even letters with real news (*Ep*. 2.35.2) are difficult to write, literary taste is almost universally bad (*Ep*. 3.11.1-2), and imperial virtue unexpected (*Ep*. 1.13.3). These comparisons are not necessarily, or even usually, to the disadvantage of a particular contemporary person, as we will see below in discussions of rhetorical use, but they do generally assume the superiority of the past on a wide variety of points.[192]

In these passages, the ideal past is most often mentioned in connection with honours (*Ep*. 4.45, *Ep*. 5.9.1, *Relat*. 12.2, *Ep*. 2.36.2), or the availability of senatorial achievement (*Ep*. 1.4.2), imperial virtue (*Ep*. 1.13.3) and military achievement (*Relat*. 47.1) to praise; also related to public business is the ease of performing religious duties in *Ep*. 1.51. Purely private business is less well-represented, connected to loans (*Ep*. 7.69.1), feminine pursuits exemplified by a gift (*Ep*. 6.67.2), and, as with several of the passages which contrasted Roman and foreign models, the contents (*Ep*. 2.35.2) and style (*Ep*. 3.11.1-2) of letter-writing. Symmachus' contrasts between

[192] The (generally) ideal past point of comparison, when it is specifically characterized, may be identified with several periods of Roman history. Most obvious is the Republic, as in *Ep*. 1.4.2, which refers to Curius, Cato, the Fabii and the Scipiones, and probably also in *Ep*. 2.35.2, referring to an age in which public business was written about in letters. Symmachus also, however, references king Numa alongside the Republican pontifex Metellus (*Ep*. 2.36.3) in a contrast with his own present time, and elsewhere evokes the time of king Tatius (*Relat*. 15.1-2). Finally, and more surprisingly, he remarks on the good morals of the time of the Antonine emperors (*Ep*. 1.13.3).

past and present, then, although they overlap with his comparisons and contrasts of Roman and foreign material, tend to be much more obviously connected with Roman public affairs.

Finally, after contrasts between Roman and foreign and between the Roman past and the Roman present, there is a third, considerably rarer, sort of historical contrast in the works of Symmachus, between different eras of Roman history. It should not be expected that a past reflected in discrete *exempla* and descriptions of customs would necessarily be periodized, let alone periodized consistently across discrete works, and the historical mentions in Symmachus generally are not. All the same, at certain points Symmachus does contrast periods in the past. I will examine first the contrast between the regal period and the Republic (*Relat*. 4.3), then the contrast between the Republic and the Principate (*Orat.* 1.16 and especially *Ora*t. 4.7-8), and finally, between pre-Christian past and the present (*Relat*. 3.3).

The first, and least marked, of the historical transitions of Symmachus is that between the regal period and the Republic, which appears only once, in *Relat*. 4.3, and even then only indirectly. There are, in all, only four references to the regal period specifically, to the abduction of the Sabine women (*Relat*. 9.6), to king Tatius as the first to receive New Year's gifts (*strenae*, *Relat*. 15.1), to Numa Pompilius, paired with the pontifex maximus of 243 BC Lucius Caecilius Metellus, as the founder and preserver of religious rites respectively (*auctor and conservator religionum*, *Ep*. 2.36.3), and to Tarquin, paired with Camillus, who was also exiled for arrogance (*Relat*. 4.3). Although the last two of these both pair kings with Republican statesmen, in *Ep*. 2.36.3 Numa and Metellus are distinguished by successive contributions to Roman religion which clearly allude to the order in which they came, but not by the values which their eras embodied. *Relat*. 4.3, in contrast, does allude to these values:

> Your own Rome does not suffer a spur to arrogance, remembering its good ancestors whom Tarquinian haughtiness and the chariot of Camillus himself offended: for that great man a white four-horse team produced grim banishment. But, on the other hand, it was

> lowering of authority that brought glory to Publicola, for he lowered his consular axe before the assembly of his fellow citizens and broke the peak off of his own honour in order to raise up the freedom of the citizenry.
>
> *Inritamentum superbiae Roma vestra non patitur memor scilicet bonorum parentum quos Tarquinius fastus et ipsius Camilli currus offendit. Nam tanto illi viro albentes quadrigae exilium triste pepererunt. At contra Publicolae decus tribuit inclinatio potestatis; submisit enim contioni civium consularem securem et honoris sui culmen infregit, ut libertatem civitatis erigeret* (*Relat*. 4.2-3).

Clearly Symmachus does not directly contrast the regal period and the Republic in general terms, and indeed he does contrast two statesmen of the Republic, Camillus and Publicola: Tarquin, the last king, is simply attached to that better-developed contrast. All the same, it is clear that Tarquin did not need to be explained as a negative *exemplum* in same way that the hero Camillus did.[193] The simple the fact of mentioning both Tarquin, the last king, and Publicola, the first consul in the same passage, and of highlighting a particularly Republican act in the latter case, the deference of a magistrate to the assembly, and a particularly regal act, ostentatious display, in the former, clearly evokes the contrast. Although the strictly temporal contrast between the regal period and the Republic is at best secondary here, Symmachus does clearly define regal and Republican behaviour in opposition to each other.

In terms of the transition from Republic to Principate, although Symmachus cites many Republican *exempla* in his works and a lesser but still considerable number of *exempla* from the Principate, the latter are confined to works addressed to emperors and imperial ministers, and there are only two instances in which he directly juxtaposes these *exempla*. These are in the paired strings of Republican statesmen and emperors in *Orat*. 1.16 and a general contrast of the way in which the consulship was bestowed in the two periods in *Orat*. 4.7-8. Although

[193] Felmy, *Die Römische Republic im Geschichtsbild der Spätantike*, 125-159 highlights the positive light in which Camillus tended to be cited in late antique Latin *exempla*.

Symmachus does not in either case actually describe the process by the Principate was created, in both cases he does mark a break.

Orat. 1.16, in an almost but not quite symmetrical pairing of three Republican statesmen and four emperors, situates this break quite precisely between Marc Antony and Augustus:

> Let Africanus glory in his Punic spoils, but for a long time he wandered about in Sicily wearing a Greek cloak. Let Lucullus boast in Mithridatic plunder, but, almost a victor, he slackened off in Pontic luxury. Let Antonius display the trophies of the East, but among Egyptian marriage torches he wasted away in royal love. These are men who won triumphs, often busy with dainty affairs, constantly pursuing the pleasantest shores and the richest lands. Do you wish me to seek the models of the next age? Look, Augustus claims Baiae for himself from the open sea, and the expense of the empire is strained by Lucrine breakwaters. Tiberius is worshiped while swimming and boating in island retreats. Pius pursues Caietan rests. Marcus, in a rather relaxed mood, is heard in the Lyceum and the Academy.
>
> *Iactet se Punicis Africanus exuuiis, sed diu in Sicilia palliatus erravit. Mithridaticis spoliis Lucullus exultet, sed in Pontico luxu paene victor elanguit. Orientis tropea ostentet Antonius, sed inter Aegyptias taedas regio amore diffluxit. Hi sunt triumfales viri, delicatis negotiis frequentibus occupati, amoena litorum terrarumque opima sectantes. Vis petam proximae aetatis exempla? Ecce Baias sibi Augustus a continuo mari vindicat et molibus Lucrinis sumptus laborat imperii. Tiberius in devorsiis insularum natans et navigans adoratur. Pius otia Caietana persequitur. In Lycio et Academia remissior Marcus auditur* (*Orat*. 1.16).

The transition between the earlier period and the most recent age (*proxima aetas*) is placed between *exempla* of the defeated and victorious parties at Actium. Symmachus does not, however, allude to a violent break, and indeed in terms of qualities illustrated by these *exempla*, the leisure of active men, the two periods are presented as forming a continuity. Symmachus does not, that is, actually compare the Republic and the age of the emperors, although he acknowledges that there is a comparison which could be made.

In *Orat*. 4.7-8, in contrast, celebrating the award of the consulship to his father, Avianius Symmachus, Symmachus does define a transition between Republic and Principate in qualitative terms, with reference to the way in which the consulship was awarded:

> Let it be right for me, senators, to call antiquity into a contest with present affairs. Let antiquity call forth tribes tainted with the dregs of freedmen and the commons; let us call forth patricians. Let it call forth as supporters the (census) classes and let us call forth emperors. Your colleague had such electoral supporters as antiquity had candidates. Let us understand the benefits of our age! Base wax, the sorting of voting tablets tainted by the ranks of clients, the voting urn for sale, are gone. It is among the senate and emperors that elections are conducted: equals choose and superiors confirm. The same thing pleases the military camp as the senate house. Who would not suppose this to be the judgment of the whole world? 8. If these things are too disused and shrivelled up, let's examine the following age. The original imperial government had learned how to bestow those fasces as gifts and, in order not to be compelled to provide other generosity, sheltered its treasury under the pretext of an honour. It was custom for others to place the long-disdained burdens of the consular garb on the shoulders of private individuals for a short time.
>
> *Sit mihi fas, patres conscripti, in certamen praesentium vetustatem citare. Illa tribus evocet libertina ac plebeia faece pollutas, nos patricios; favisores classis illa, nos principes. Tales collega vester suffragatores habuit quales antiquitas candidatos. Intellegamus nostri saeculi bona! Abest cera turpis, diribitio corrupta clientelarum cuneis, sitella venalis. Inter senatum et principes comitia transiguntur: eligunt pares, confirmant superiores. Idem castris quod curiae placet. Quis hoc non putet orbis terrarum esse iudicium? 8. Si haec nimis obsoleta adque arida sunt, sequentem scrutemur aetatem. Fasces istos largiri didicerat prisca dominatio et, ne ad aliam munificentiam cogeretur, obtentu honoris tegebat aerarium. Aliis mos fuit fastidita diu onera praetextae privatorum umeris paulisper inponere* (*Orat*. 4.7-8).[194]

Here the break between antiquity (*vetustatem*, *Orat*. 4.7) and the following age (*sequentem [...] aetatem*, *Orat*. 4.8), although not explicitly situated in time, is described in terms of two different and contrasting ways of awarding the consulship. Neither way is idealized, but there is nonetheless a clear distinction, and one which was not unique to the works of Symmachus. Mamertinus (*Pan. Lat*. 3.19), who like Symmachus contrasts Republic and Principate, includes similar passages in his works. It can be assumed that this sort of contrast was usual in speeches of thanks for the consulship, in which the speaker thanked the emperor for improving on the models of those who had previously awarded the office.[195]

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[194] Symmachus describes the Republic similarly when he declares "have for yourself, antiquity, the frequently-bought centuries, the electoral divisions of Quirites subject to influence, and the tribes usually available for a price" (*tibi habe, vetustas, redemptas saepe centurias et gratiosas Quiritium classes et tribus plerumque venales*, *Orat*. 1.9). Here, however, there is no explicit general contrast with the model under the emperors.

[195] For the *gratiarum actio*, see above, p. 66-67.

As for the contrast between the pre-Christian past and the age of Christian emperors, it is certainly most clearly marked in the remark that "indeed there is a distinction among emperors of either sect, of either opinion: the earlier portion of them cultivated the rites of the ancestors, the more recent portion did not displace them" (*certe dinumerentur Principes utriusque sectae, utriusque sententiae: pars eorum prior caerimonias patrum coluit, recentior non removit*, *Relat*. 3.3). This clear religious transition, described in terms of a contrast in religious affiliations, involves a contrast between active participation in and passive acceptance of continuing religious institutions. Unlike in the case of the awarding of the consulship, another continuing institution, it seems quite unlikely that this particular contrast was a commonplace, although Symmachus need not necessarily have invented it himself.

These descriptions of historical transitions, then (*Relat*. 4.3, *Orat*. 1.16, *Orat*. 4.7-8 and *Relat*. 3.3) share certain similarities, in that all are concerned with public life, whether specifically in Rome (*Relat*. 4.3, *Relat*. 3.3) or not (*Orat*. 1.16, *Orat*. 4.7-8); they have this in common with most of the general comparisons between past and present. One difference, however, is that whereas Symmachus does present Republican modesty as more legitimately Roman than regal display, he treats Republican and imperial treatments of the consulship and pagan and Christian imperial treatments of traditional Roman religion as each more or less equally Roman, simply different. In this respect these latter two contrasts are unlike the general contrasts between past and present and between Roman and foreign customs and more like the simple juxtapositions of Roman and foreign *exempla*, since they do not privilege a particular element of the past over another. It is also clear that in neither of the last two contrasts is simplicity at issue, although it is at issue in terms of public display in *Relat*. 4.3, and was regularly at issue with general Roman/foreign contrasts and with several of the past/present contrasts.

Taken as a whole, to what extent do the passages listed above highlight and define what is genuinely old and Roman against what is not? With the obvious exceptions of certain contrasts between eras (*Orat*. 4.7-8 and *Relat*. 3.3) and virtually all of the simple juxtapositions between individual Roman and non-Roman *exempla*, they identify both Roman or Italic customs and the distant and ideal past above all with simplicity, both in public life and in letter-writing, and genuine achievement. These are not surprising identifications, and Symmachus was certainly not the first to make them, but the focus on letter-writing alongside public life and especially honours as the spheres to which simplicity and authenticity are applied is striking.

2.2 Rhetorical use

So much for the historical material itself; for what purposes were these passages cited? Here it is useful to return to the general corpus of passages containing historical material and not simply to the passages which discuss contrasts. Several passages simply offer information, always to the emperor, and always for the purposes of securing a legal ruling (*Relat*. 27.1, *Relat*. 39, and *Relat*. 40); here Symmachus refers to the rescripts of recent emperors with no specific objective of his own and with no apparent preference as to the outcome.[196] Most passages, however, have a clearer objective, the three which suggest themselves in this material being self-presentation, praise or (occasionally) disparagement of another person or thing, and persuasion, though naturally these are not always mutually exclusive. I will treat the three rhetorical

[196] The first of these cites a general law of Valentinian I on succession to medical positions, which Symmachus asks whether he should follow in a particular case (*Relat*. 27.1). In the second case (*Relat*. 39.3-5) he cites, in a discussion of an inheritance case, the statues of limitations of Constantine; the question is whether the law applies to this particular case. Finally, in *Relat*. 40, in a discussion of the respective rights of Tarracina and Puteoli to portions of the annona, he cites conflicting decisions made by or under Constantine (*Relat*. 40.2), Constans (*Relat*. 40.2), Constantius II (*Relat*. 40.2-4) and Julian (*Relat*. 40.2-4). The material cited here is uniformly technical in nature, and has no real counterpart in the letters.

objectives in the order listed above, detailing in each case the history on which Symmachus draws and the use which he makes of it.

First, Symmachus sometimes cites historical material in order to present himself and his own actions in a particular light, mostly in the *Letters*, drawing on a variety of different models. In terms of Greek models, he cites the Laestrygones as gluttons whose model he did not follow while in Formiae, reputed to have been their city (*Ep*. 8.23.1), Salmoneus of Elis as an example of public display which he did not want to follow (*Relat*. 4.2), Heraclitus as a model for pleasing a few rather than a crowd, which he intended to follow (*Ep*. 9.115.2), Pericles, Anaxagoras (and M. Horatius) as models for fortitude under adversity which he could not follow (*Ep*. 3.6.3), Socrates as a model which he was following in response to adversity (*Ep*. 2.46.1), Hippocrates, whose saying that minor misfortunes were no longer acutely felt in the face of major setbacks he applies to his own situation (*Ep*. 6.45), and the infrequency of the oracles as a model for his slowness to write (*Ep*. 4.33.2). In terms of Roman models, he cites the prophecies of the Marcii as examples for his unpublished letters (*Ep*. 4.34.3), Cato's and Cicero's respectively old-fashioned and up-to-date opening formulae as models rejected and adopted for his letters-technically deliberative (*Ep*. 3.44.2), Publilius Pellio, Ambivius, Aesop, and Roscius as models for his reading the work of another, here the emperor Gratian, to the senate (*Ep*. 10.3.2), the monuments of Marcellus and Marius, victims of the jealousy of their opponents, as models for the monuments denied to Symmachus in Carthage (*Ep*. 9.115.1), the advice of Cicero for public spending, which Symmachus followed in his euergetism (*Ep*. 4.60.3).[197] It is clear that these models belong to classical Greek history and the Roman Republic – rarely to Greek legend and never to Hellenistic or imperial Roman history – in roughly equal measure.

[197] On might arguably also include *Relat*. 32.3, in which Symmachus presents himself as having followed the sum of imperial rescripts still in force in a particular legal case.

Naturally, Symmachus does underline his identification with Rome specifically: in three cases (*Ep*. 1.45.2, *Ep*. 4.28.4, *Ep*. 4.34.3) he presents himself as following local (or partly local and partly foreign) as opposed to purely foreign customs, always in letter-writing. Thus he presents himself as following a Roman and Athenian as opposed to Spartan model in the length of his letters (*Ep*. 1.45.2), and wishing to follow the model of the Aborigines as opposed to the Egyptians in writing materials (*Ep*. 4.28.4). The model of the Roman Marcii, with which Symmachus identifies himself as a writer of ephemeral letters, appears alongside a mention of Persian silk scrolls, to which he does not wish to see his letters entrusted (*Ep*. 4.34.3). All of these present Symmachus as making choices appropriate for a Roman in his letter-writing.

Symmachus also presents himself in connection with broad contrasts between past and present, in four cases (*Ep*. 1.51, *Ep*. 2.35, *Ep*. 3.11.1-2, *Ep*. 7.69.1). In the first, Symmachus describes his dutiful execution of priestly duties which, given the current lack of interest of others, he would have been unable to delegate as the ancients had been able to (*Ep*. 1.51). The other three examples listed above present Symmachus rather differently, drawing on contemporary circumstances in order to offer excuses for actions which he did not present as defensible in themselves. Thus he excuses his (accidental) use of an elaborate addressee line, to be avoided in letters, by explaining that it provided material to discuss, no longer provided by civic matters (*Ep*. 2.35). Thus also he excuses his use of contemporary diction in his letters, which he could not help in the present time (*Ep*. 3.11.1-2), and excuses himself for retaining horses which he had borrowed for the moment, citing the liberality of the age in contrast to a past time when a man had been sued for taking a borrowed pot slightly past the town mentioned in the contract (*Ep*. 7.69.1). Symmachus thus presents himself in all four instances as making choices which, though only obviously creditable in *Ep*. 1.51, were appropriate for a person of his era.

Symmachus, then, throughout his oeuvre, uses a variety of historical anecdotes, both Greek and Roman, to present himself and his own actions in particular lights. Although Symmachus is famous for his traditionalism as a Roman senator and he emphasizes his awareness of the appropriate models, it was clearly not always his intention in these passages to underline his adherence to specifically Roman norms, nor even to present himself as a traditionalist in practice.

Secondly, and much more commonly, in addition to self presentation Symmachus uses his historical material to praise the character or achievements of another person.[198] Often this is the emperor. Greek models are rather well-represented in this context: Symmachus cites the giants piling Pelion on Ossa as a comparison which Valentinian I surpasses as a builder (*Orat*. 2.21), the Greek landing at Troy as a model which he and his army surpass in crossing the Rhine (*Orat*. 2.8), Achilles battling the Xanthus as a model for his bridging the Rhine (*Orat*. 2.26), the builders of the Trojan horse, the founders of Carthage (*Orat*. 2.17), Epius and Daedalus as models for Valentinian I as a builder (*Orat*. 2.19), Zeuxis and Apelles as models for the painter who might have depicted the adlection of Gratian as emperor (*Orat*. 3.5), Alexander, Antiochus V, Ptolemy V as models for Gratian as a young ruler (*Orat*. 3.6), the learned entourage of Alexander as a model for that of Gratian (*Orat*. 3.7), Archimedes' defense of Syracuse as a model for Valentinian I's fortress-building (*Orat*. 2.18). The abundance of these *exempla* in the context of praise of the emperor reflects the importance of praise in the rhetorically elaborate works which contain historical material, but it is important to note that it is confined to two panegyrics (*Orat*. 2 and *Orat*. 3), especially the former.

[198] Praise may occasionally be combined with self-deprecating self-presentation, as in *Ep*. 3.11.1-2, in which Symmachus describes himself as a product of his own time and his correspondent Naucellius as a product of an earlier age.

Represented in a somewhat wider sample of works of praise of the emperors are *exempla* from the Roman Republic. There is the cult which the Roman pantheon received as a contrast for that which Valentinian I and Gratian received (*Orat*. 2.32), Fulvius and his tutor Accius, the younger Scipio Africanus and Panaetius, in conjunction with Hellenistic kings, as models for Gratian and his tutors (*Orat*. 3.7), Scipio Africanus in Sicily, Lucullus and Pontic luxury, Antonius with the queen of Egypt as models surpassed by the always active Valentinian I (*Orat*. 1.16), the near-death of Marius at Minturnae as a model for the near-death of Valentinian I at Rheims (*Orat*. 1.45), the advice of Crassus to his sons before battle as applicable to the campaign of Valentinian I across the Rhine (*Orat*. 2.5), the youth of Pompey as a model for Gratian as a young emperor (*Orat*. 3.8), Cicero's disparagement of the training of Caecilius as inapplicable to Valentinian I (*Orat*. 1.1), Republican elections as models surpassed by the election of Valentinian I by the army (*Orat*. 1.9), and Republican elections as models surpassed by Gratian's and the senate's choice of the father of Symmachus as ordinary consul (*Orat*. 4.7). These passages, clearly, are drawn entirely from the late Republic; like the Greek passages mentioned in the previous paragraph, they are confined to the *Orations*, but they appear in *Orat*. 1 and 4 as well as *Orat*. 2 and 3.

In terms of models of earlier emperors used to praise current emperors, there is the transition between Republic and the rule of emperors in *Orat*. 4.7-8, used in order to praise the emperor Gratian, here for surpassing both Republican and imperial models in awarding Symmachus' father with the consulship. The other instance in which the transition between Republic and the rule of emperors is marked is when mentioning, alongside Republican statesmen, Augustus, Tiberius, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius at leisure as models surpassed by the always active Valentinian (*Orat*. 1.16). In terms of later emperors, there is the merit of Nerva, Trajan, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius as good emperors in a good age as

surpassed by Gratian (*Ep*. 1.13.3), the rewarding of imperial favourites by earlier emperors as a contrast for Gratian's rewarding of the father of Symmachus with the ordinary consulship (*Orat*. 4.8), the character of earlier emperors in general as a contrast for that of Gratian (*Orat*. 4.5), the character of previous reigns as a contrast for that of Gratian (*Orat*. 5.3), the long silence of eloquence under previous emperors in contrast to present freedom (*Orat*. 2.29 and *Orat*. 3.2), bogus triumphs which would have been celebrated in the past in contrast to a recent imperial gift of horses which prefigured a future triumph (*Relat*. 9.3), or the lack of triumphs entirely making a current triumph more remarkable (*Relat*. 47.1), and previous emperors who feared to create colleagues, in contrast to Valentinian I's adlection of his brother Valens (*Orat*. 1.11.2). In terms of very recent emperors, there is Valentinian I, whose unintentional misgovernment is cited in praise of his son Gratian, who ended it (*Orat*. 4.9), and the model of the generosity of Theodosius I toward Flavianus Nicomachus junior, which his son Honorius is praised for following (*Ep*. 4.4.2). Most of these points of comparison, and all of those found in the panegyrics and state papers, are at least partly negative, denigrating past emperors in order to exalt the current emperor. The two exceptions, the purely positive models of Nerva, Trajan, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius in *Ep*. 1.13.3, inferior to Gratian only insofar as their virtue did not require particular effort on their part, and Theodosius I in *Ep*. 4.4.2, are in the letters.

Praise through historical comparisons is not limited to the emperors, also being found in relative abundance for the private addressees of Symmachus' letters, though here he occasionally adds an element of (gentle) blame which naturally never figures in communications with the emperor. Thus Symmachus blames Praetextatus for lingering in Campania by identifying the place with the dissipation of Hannibal and by comparing it to the charms of Circe, the lotus, and the sirens (*Ep*. 1.47.1). More positively, in terms of other non-Roman material, he describes the old age of Nestor as a model for that of the elderly Naucellius (*Ep*. 3.11.1, *Ep*. 3.13.2), Achilles

playing music for relaxation as a model for Promotus (*Ep*. 3.74.2), Homer recited by lesser poets as a model for Andronicus whose works will be circulated by Symmachus (*Ep*. 8.22.2), Hesiod meeting the Camenae as a model for Praetextatus in his cultured leisure (*Ep*. 1.53.2), Varro's praise of Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle as surpassed by Symmachus' father's praise of recent senators, given his less promising material (*Ep*. 1.4.2), the Homer whose absence Alexander lamented as a model for an anonymous addressee as panegyrist (*Ep*. 9.72), Aristotle, Cineas and Metrodorus, in their honours by Alexander, Pyrrhus and Mithridates respectively, as models for Ausonius as honoured by Gratian (*Ep*. 1.20.2).

In terms of Roman material, Symmachus praises his addressee by citing the Romans who adopted laws of Lycurgus and Solon and borrowed weapons from the Samnites and standards from the Etruscans are models for Naucellius as a translator of a Greek poem about constitutions (*Ep*. 3.11.3), Ennius, Panaetius, Opillus, in their honours by Fulvius, the younger Scipio Africanus and Rutilius respectively, as models for Ausonius as honoured by Gratian (*Ep*. 1.20.2), Varro's praise of the poverty of Curius, the severity of Cato, the *gens Fabia*, the distinction of the Scipiones as surpassed by Symmachus' father's praise of recent senators, given his less promising material (*Ep*. 1.4.2), Atilius leaving his farm to assume the consulship as a model for Petronius Probus' return the office (*Ep*. 1.58), Cato and Atilius leaving his farm to assume the consulship as models for Attalus on public business (*Ep*. 7.15). Thus also a disparaging remark of Sallust on hunting is described as not detracting from the credit due to Olybrius and Probinus as hunters (*Ep*. 5.68.2). A remark on the longstanding rarity of civilian consulships as increasing the fame of an anonymous addressee in receiving one (*Ep*. 9.112.1) is a lone reference to recent history.[199] The history cited here does not otherwise extend past Actium, and even the Republican

[199] Seeck, *Q. Aurelii Symmachi opera quae supersunt*, xxv n. 49 argues, probably correctly, that this must be Petronius Probus.

material, given the repeated mentions of the farmer consuls, tends to be earlier than that used in praise of the emperors. Otherwise the two sets of material are similar in range.[200]

There are also, though more occasionally, historical models in praise of a third party, always taken either from Greek history or the Roman Republic. One recommendee is compared to Phidias' Olympian Jupiter, Myron's calf and Polyclitus' basket bearer (*Ep*. 1.29), another to Apelles and Zeuxis (*Ep*. 2.2), and the father of the philosopher Celsus to Aristotle (*Relat*. 5.2). Two other recommendees are compared to the man (Jugurtha) praised as worthy of his addressee (king Micipsa) in a letter by Scipio Africanus mentioned in Sallust' *Jugurtha* 9.2 (Symmachus *Ep*. 1.25 and *Ep*. 4.24.1). Although these sorts of comparisons tend to be confined to letters of recommendation, another third party, Flavianus Nicomachus junior, is praised as having the charms of the sirens and lotus eaters in *Ep*. 7.16.3.[201] There is also occasional invective against third parties, always associated with Symmachus' own self-presentation as philosophical in the face of adversity: the comparison of his enemies to those of Marcellus and Marius (*Ep*. 9.115.1) and his gladiators to Spartacus (*Ep*. 2.46.2) are examples.

In general, it is clear with the passages of praise and blame discussed above that Symmachus praises the emperors, both in panegyrics and state papers, and private addressees, in letters, for a relatively wide range of laudable qualities and actions, with a relatively wide range of historical references and contrasts. Here ancient *exempla*, drawn from Greek and especially Roman republican history but also from the age following Augustus in the case of passages

[200] One string of anecdotes, the learned associates of Republican statesmen and Hellenistic kings in *Ep*. 1.20.2 and *Orat*. 3.7, is in fact shared between passages in which Symmachus praises the ruler (*Orat*. 3.7) and his tutor (*Ep*. 1.20.2).

[201] Related to this praise of third parties, finally, is the praise of places and things.
Praise of places: *Ep*. 7.20 (the rejuvenation of Hesiod), *Ep*. 1.1.5 (Hortensius at Baiae).
Praise or description of things: *Ep*. 9.82 (Phaeacian apples), *Relat*. 15.1 (king Tatius and New Year's gifts), *Relat*. 7.1 (the antiquity of New Year's gifts), *Ep*. 2.60.1 (the constructions of Lucullus), *Ep*. 6.70 (the constructions of Lucullus), *Ep*. 7.36 (the constructions of Lucullus), *Ep*. 4.18.4 (Caesar's description of Gaul).

addressed to the emperors, are either equalled or surpassed. This is Symmachus' most common reason for citing history.

Finally, in addition to self-presentation and praise or blame, Symmachus also cites history either as models to follow or as evidence when proposing particular courses of action. Thus, in terms of early Roman history, he cites the honours paid to the foreign philosophers Carneades, Clitomachus in Rome and Athens respectively as models for those which should be paid to the philosopher Celsus (*Relat*. 5.2), the honours not paid to Numa as the founder and Metellus as the preserver of Roman religion as not to be paid to Praetextatus as a priest (*Ep*. 2.36.2), the display of Tarquin and the chariot of Camillus as examples to be avoided and the humility of Publicola as examples to be adopted by the urban prefect (*Relat*. 4.3), the repulse of the Senones from the Capitoline and Hannibal from the city as demonstrations of the power of traditional religion (*Relat*. 3.9).

In terms of Roman history of the imperial period, Symmachus appeals to the inflation of honours in his own era in general to oppose the reintroduction of the censorship (*Ep*. 4.29, see also *Ep*. 4.45, *Ep*. 5.9.1). In more specific terms, he cites the subsidies which even greedy emperors paid to the Vestal virgins as to be paid by Valentinian II (*Relat*. 3.11-12), the religious policy of the Christian emperors before Gratian to be retained (*Relat*. 3.3), and previous cases in which exceptions to the marriage law had been made demonstrating that a similar exception can be made for Symmachus' protégée (*Ep*. 9.133.1). More often, he cites specific imperial decrees issued since Constantine decrees, and the sum of imperial rescripts still in force as exonerating him of the debts of his father-in-law to the Roman wine treasury (*Relat*. 34.11, *Ep*. 9.150.2). In the latter case Symmachus specifically highlights actions taken under Gratian (*Relat*. 34.6) and a decree of Gratian (*Relat*. 34.9, 11). In terms of the other decrees or actions of specific emperors, there is the decision of Constantius II to remove the altar of Victory, an action later reversed, and

his conduct on a tour of Rome, to be imitated (*Relat*. 3.4, 6-7), the model of Valentinian I who revoked his own decree because it was unpopular in Rome, to be imitated by his son (*Relat*. 14.2), Valentinian I's favourable judgement of Symmachus, which ought to lead Valentinian II to support him (*Relat*. 21.4), the kind examples of Valentinian I and Gratian which Symmachus hopes that Valentinian II will follow in the case of a ruined senator, with the intervention of the addressee (*Ep*. 4.67.2), and the kindness of the late Theodosius I to Flavianus Nicomachus junior to be continued (*Ep*. 4.51.1-2). Valentinian I and Gratian also appear, more passively, as recipients of gifts (*Relat*. 13.2).

It should be clear that Symmachus, when he cites specific history primarily in order to persuade his audience, is always treating public affairs in Rome, and almost always addressing the emperor (in the *Relations*) or his ministers. It is therefore fitting that all of these passages draw on material which is either partially or entirely Roman, though it ranges from the first kings to recent emperors. The Roman past on which Symmachus draws is the past of public deeds, though some of these deeds had primarily private effects, as with imperially sanctioned exemptions from the marriage law (*Ep*. 9.133.1). Otherwise, both the past models and the contemporary situations to which Symmachus applies them, are purely public, whether related to civic religion (*Ep*. 2.36.2, *Relat*. 3.3, *Relat*. 3.4, *Relat*. 3.6-7, *Relat*. 3.9, *Relat*. 3.11-12), public honours (*Ep*. 2.36.2, *Relat*. 5.2),[202] the public face of the urban prefecture (*Relat*. 4.2-3), or appointments (*Relat*. 21.4). The virtually exclusive use of Roman material here is not surprising: it is simply more relevant.

[202] Here the nature of the Roman present, specifically the inflation of honours, is also highly relevant: it is at issue when Symmachus opposes a statue for Praetextatus dedicated by the Vestal virgins (*Ep*. 2.36) and the revival of the censorship (*Ep*. 4.29; see also *Ep*. 4.45, *Ep*. 5.9.1), and, conversely, when he insists, in *Relat*. 12.2, that the senatorial state for Praetextatus which he asks the emperor to approve remained a valid honour, the inflation of honours notwithstanding.

There was no particular reason, in contrast, to suppose that the addressee would be swayed by exclusively Greek models in these public Roman contexts, though Symmachus does occasionally cite Greek models in conjunction with Roman material, pointing to the ostentation of Salmoneus of Elis as a model to be avoided in *Relat*. 4.2 alongside that of Tarquin and Camillus in *Relat*. 4.3 and juxtaposing the reception of Clitomachus at Athens with that of Carneades in Rome in *Relat*. 5.2. Symmachus, clearly, was not averse to using Greek material for persuasion when it was easily available to him, but he makes limited use of it.

Two of Symmachus' contrasts between particular eras of Roman history are also connected to attempts to advocate particular courses of action in Roman public affairs. In *Relat*. 4.3, the contrast between the display of Tarquin (and Camillus) and the modesty of Publicola, that is, between regal period and Republic, is used to persuade the emperor to remove a (regal) state carriage, thus reversing a previous imperial decision. In the same way, in *Relat*. 3.3 Symmachus draws on a contrast between the earlier pagan and later Christian emperors in order to emphasize that there were specifically Christian as well as pagan models for upholding the traditional religious *status quo* in Rome and thus to persuade the emperor to reverse another imperial decision, the removal of the altar of Victory.

Persuasion, then, directed very largely at the emperors and their ministers, inspires some of Symmachus' use of history in his works, and the large majority of his use of very recent history. It is here that Symmachus is most exclusively Roman and most obviously interested in purely public affairs. Though Symmachus did write persuasive works for the senate (as mentioned, for example, in *Ep*. 4.29, *Ep*. 4.45, *Ep*. 5.91 and *Ep*. 4.5.3) and for the pontifical college (as mentioned in *Ep*. 2.36.3), the fact that the persuasive works that survive are addressed to the emperors and their ministers reflects the importance of the court as the real centre of decision-making.

In summary, self-presentation, praise and persuasion all attract a share of the historical material in the works of Symmachus, though praise of another person remains easily the best represented of these, especially outside of the *Relations*. The predominance of praise is not surprising: the most elaborate rhetoric in Symmachus, and hence that which makes the most use of historical material, with the exception of *Relat*. 3, is found in his oratory, and the oratory of Symmachus, like the oratory of the imperial period generally, is mainly epideictic.[203] His letters, in turn, very often compliment the recipient or praise third-party recommendees, and sometimes draw on historical models to do so. Although the letters certainly do not draw on this historical material with the same regularity as the orations, in the context of Symmachus' abundant correspondence, this nonetheless makes for a large number of historical comparisons. Even the *Relations* may draw on historical material to offer praise: *Relat*. 9 is an obvious example. Praise is thus the single thing to which Symmachus devotes the most elaborate rhetorical attention in his extant works, and the purpose for which he draws on the most varied literary material.

Self-presentation, in contrast, is the least well-represented rhetorical use for historical *exempla*, represented almost purely in the private *Letters*, that is to say, in relatively short works which did not usually lend themselves to *exempla* as oratory did. Symmachus' self-presentation is in connection with both public and private matters in which a senator would normally be engaged, and the historical *exempla* on which he draws in this connection, including several Greek philosophers, are far from exclusively Roman. All the same, it is clear and unsurprising that Symmachus does present himself as Roman, and that he defines his *Romanitas* through literary material predating Actium. The prominence of the *Letters* for Symmachus' self-

[203] See, for example, Russell, "The Panegyrists and their Teachers," 24-25. For a detailed study of epideictic oratory, concentrating on the second sophistic, see both volumes of Pernot, *La Rhétorique de l'éloge dans le monde gréco-romain*.

presentation has a counterpart in the *Letters* of Pliny the Younger, which clearly have more self-presentation than his *Panegyric*. I will return to the *Letters* of Symmachus as a work of literary self-presentation in my fourth chapter.

Persuasion, finally, accounts for an entirely different sample of works, often in the *Relations* and usually addressed to the emperors or their ministers. When putting historical material to persuasive purposes, unlike when using it for praise or self-presentation, Symmachus, not surprisingly for a Roman senator, is always dealing with Roman public affairs and drawing almost exclusively on Roman history, especially the recent emperors.

a) Benefactions and *cultus*

After this long excursus, it is possible to consider Symmachus' discussion of the themes of clientelistic or friendly *cultus*, benefactions, and expression of gratitude, as well as of non-clientelistic merited honours, in perspective, beginning with *cultus* and benefactions. There are twenty-nine works or passages which contain historical material which is connected to these (*Orat*. 2.32, various passages in *Relat*. 3, *Relat*. 4, *Relat*. 7.1, *Relat*. 9.3, *Relat*. 9.6, *Relat*. 13.2, *Relat*. 15.1, *Relat*. 47, *Ep*. 1.4.2, *Ep*. 1.13.3, *Ep*. 1.20.2, *Ep*. 1.45.2, *Ep*. 1.51, *Ep*. 2.35, *Ep*. 3.11.1-2, *Ep*. 3.11.3, *Ep*. 3.44.2, *Ep*. 4.4.2, *Ep*. 4.28.4, *Ep*. 4.33.2, *Ep*. 4.34.3, *Ep*. 4.51.1-2, *Ep*. 5.67, *Ep*. 5.68.2, *Ep*. 6.67.2, *Ep*. 9.82, *Ep*. 9.133.1, *Ep*. 10.2.2). What sort of historical material is used to illustrate these themes, and to what ends?

The first observation to make, which supports the contention that gifts, cultivation and benefactions are important themes in the works of Symmachus, is that this material is relatively abundant, though it is also clear that, when discussing benefactions and *cultus*, Symmachus does not draw equally on the full range of historical material at his disposal. The relative absence of Greek exemplars, well-represented in other contexts, is noteworthy, though the *Odyssey* supplies

some models for particular gifts, that of apples in *Ep*. 9.82, described as Phaeacian, and of a third person in *Ep*. 7.16.3, described as siren-like in his charms, and the cessation of the oracles provides a point of comparison for the lack of epistolary gifts in *Ep*. 4.33.2.[204]

Cultus and benefactions are, in contrast, much better represented when Symmachus draws on local material, and especially well-represented when he defines local against foreign models: all of the instances in which he contrasts internal and external customs (*Ep*. 1.45.2, *Ep*. 4.28.4, *Ep*. 4.34.3, *Ep*. 5.67 and *Ep*. 5.68.2), in which the internal custom is always simpler, relate somehow to friendly gifts. Most relate specifically to the epistolary gifts. Thus Symmachus opposes Roman and Athenian to Spartan models for longer letters (*Ep*. 1.45.2), the wooden tablets of the Aborigines to Egyptian papyrus as representative of simple and elaborate letters respectively (*Ep*. 4.28.4), and the prophecies of the Marcii on perishable material as models for ephemeral, unpublished letters to preservation on Persian silk scrolls (*Ep*. 4.34.3). The two remaining examples (*Ep*. 5.67 and *Ep*. 5.68.2) relate at least to the activity, hunting, Marsic and Sabine (*Ep*. 5.67) and not Greek (*Ep*. 5.68.2) which made a particular gift, of game meat, possible. These examples suggest the importance of the legitimately Roman or Italian character of the gifts which Symmachus offered or received.

Religious *cultus*, imperial gifts and Roman gratitude are all well-represented in the abundant regal, Republican and early imperial material. In terms of religious *cultus*, there is the longstanding complexity and expense of Roman religion (*Orat*. 2.32), the protective function of religion in warding off the Senones and Hannibal (*Relat*. 3.9), and the fact that even greedy

[204] Much better represented among the Greek *exempla* is the rarer theme of posthumous commemoration, loosely related to public rewards, which Symmachus illustrates in large part from Greek history, especially from artists. For the theme of commemoration in Greek *exempla*, see *Ep*. 2.2 (the reputation of Apelles and Zeuxis), *Orat*. 3.5 (the art of Zeuxis and Apelles), *Ep*. 9.172 (Alexander complaining that Achilles had a Homer). The honouring of conspicuous beyond their own lifetimes Romans with images (*Relat*. 12.2) and the use of the consular lists to perpetuate the names of those who held the office (*Relat*. 12.4) provide Roman counterparts for commemoration, but these are rarer.

emperors maintained subsidies for the Vestal virgins (*Relat*. 9.3.11-12). In terms of benefactions by superiors, there is the antiquity of New Year's gifts (*Relat*. 7.1; as *cultus* in *Relat*. 15.1), Scipio Africanus' recommendation of Jugurtha in Sallust' *Jugurtha* 9.2 (*Ep*. 1.25 and *Ep*. 4.24.1), the gifting of the consulship by previous emperors (*Orat*. 4.8), and the failure of previous emperors to offer horses as gifts, using them for bogus triumphs instead (*Relat*. 9.3). In terms of gratitude, finally, there is the abduction of the Sabine women at horse races, as a historical reason for the Roman people to be grateful for horse races (*Relat*. 9.6). The prominence of the Republic and early Principate in illustrations for these themes follows in the tendency, remarked on earlier, to illustrate discussions of Roman public affairs with Roman history.

The themes of religious *cultus* and gifts of the emperors are similarly well-represented among the post-Constantinian deeds and rulings cited, which include many specific gifts of a financial or legal nature. There are gifts to individuals in the form of favourable rulings (*Ep*. 9.133.1) or legal rehabilitation (by Theodosius I in *Ep*. 4.4.2 and *Ep*. 4.51.1-2). There are also imperial gifts from the Roman *annona* to Campanian cities (by Constantine, Constans, Constantius II and Julian in *Relat*. 40.2-4), an ill-advised gift of Gratian of a new state carriage to the urban prefecture (*Relat*. 4.4). These references are unsurprising given the *ad hoc* nature of much of Roman government and Symmachus' involvement in it as urban prefect.[205] In terms of *cultus*, there is one mention of *cultus* directed toward the emperors, in the form of anniversary gifts to Valentinian I, Valens and Gratian (*Relat*. 13.2), and several mentions, all in *Relat*. 3, of religious *cultus* which the emperors permitted. Here Symmachus treats the religious policy of the emperors in general (*Relat*. 3.3), and of Constantius II (*Relat*. 3.4, 3.6-7), and Valentinian I

[205] For the nature of Roman government, see especially Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World, 31 BC – AD 337*.

(*Relat*. 3.19) in particular.[206] Together *cultus* and gifts account for a substantial though heterogeneous portion of the mentions of the recent emperors.

Gifts, finally, are represented among broad contrasts between past and present, in *Relat*. 15, *Ep*. 2.35, *Ep*. 3.11.2, and *Ep*. 6.67.2). In one of these cases, the contrast between Symmachus' idealized past and the present era is actually a contrast between two sorts of gifts, of tree boughs and of gold, in *Relat*. 15. More often the contrast is, rather, between different contexts for the same gifts and rewards, which made it impossible (as with a letter in the ancient style, in *Ep*. 3.11.2) or at least more difficult to offer a particular gift (weaving in *Ep*. 6.67.2, news in *Ep*. 2.35).

What can be said about the rhetorical context of this historical material, in terms of praise, self-presentation and persuasion? Hardly surprisingly, it is the first that is best represented: it is natural that Symmachus tends to mention historical models for the thing offered as a gift, for the activity which produced it, or for the gift-giving itself, either in offering by or to his addressee, most often in works of praise of these addressees, with sixteen instances in all (*Orat*. 2.32, *Relat*. 7.1, *Relat*. 9.3, *Relat*. 9.6, *Relat*. 15.1, *Relat*. 47, *Ep*. 1.4.2, *Ep*. 1.13.3, *Ep*. 1.20.2, *Ep*. 3.11.3, *Ep*. 4.4.2, *Ep*. 5.67, *Ep*. 5.68.2, *Ep*. 6.67.2, *Ep*. 9.82, *Ep*. 10.2.2). This is roughly one quarter of all his uses of historical material for praise; the proportion is considerably lower in the panegyrical *Orat*. 1-3,[207] but considerably higher in certain specific circumstances, notably when Symmachus is contrasting past and present in his praise, accounting for all five instances (*Relat*. 15, *Relat*. 47,

[206] Although Symmachus stresses unbroken or virtually unbroken continuity of practice throughout *Relat*. 3, notably by the emperors (*Relat*. 3.3 and *Relat*. 3.11) and a similar continuity of divine benefactions, unbroken until recently, in *Relat*. 3.17, the lack of specific models for religion between the time of Hannibal (*Relat*. 3.9) and Constantius II (*Relat*. 3.4, 6-7) reveals a tendency to concentrate both on very early Roman history on the one hand and recent history on the other.

[207] For a discussion of the relatively limited explicit highlighting of *cultus* in the panegyrics, see below, p. 122-134.

Ep. 1.4.2, *Ep*. 1.13.3, *Ep*. 6.67.2).[208] Praise for gifts, their givers, and their recipients, was clearly important for Symmachus.

Naturally in works of praise connected with gift-giving Symmachus praises the gift which he has received. Sometimes he attaches prestigious associations to the gift, as when he describes a gift of apples as Phaeacian (*Ep*. 9.82) or praises a poem on constitutions of various cities, the translation of a Greek work, by comparing it to the ancient borrowings of the Romans from their neighbours (*Ep*. 3.11.3). In terms of prestige from dynastic practice rather than literary culture, *Ep*. 4.4.2, in turn, describes the benefactions of Honorius toward a particular senator, Flavianus Nicomachus junior, as completing the benefactions of Theodosius I toward the same person. These remarks all praise the giver by establishing the importance of the gift received.[209]

Elsewhere, conversely, Symmachus praises the gift by contrasting it favourably to ordinary gifts. Thus he praises the New Year's gifts of the emperors Theodosius and Arcadius as departing from ancient practice by arriving early (*Relat*. 7.1). In a more negative appraisal of past practice, he praises an imperial gift of horses for games to the Roman people through a contrast with routinely bogus triumphs by other (*alii*), earlier emperors (*Relat*. 9.3). The distinction between ordinary practice and prestigious models for gifts is not, however, absolute, since the small token gifts of Alexander, Mithridates, Fulvius, the younger Scipio Africanus and Rutilius toward their tutors and learned protégées (*Ep*. 1.20.2) could be considered as either. These distant

[208] Thus Symmachus describes gifts of gold to his addressees, Valentinian II, Theodosius I and Arcadius, as fitting in a wealthy age (*Relat*. 15), a friendly imperial letter to the senate as remarkable in an age lacking in imperial virtue (*Ep*. 1.13.3), spectacles as remarkable in an age devoid of triumphs (*Relat*. 47), poetry as remarkable in an age lacking appropriate subjects (*Ep*. 1.4.2), and weaving as remarkable during an age characterized by more luxurious pastimes (*Ep*. 6.67.2). In two of these instances (*Ep*. 1.4.2 and *Ep*. 6.67.2), the focus is not on the gift-giving itself, but on the activity which produced it, literary virtuosity and weaving respectively; elsewhere the theme of benefactions (*Ep*. 1.13.3 and *Relat*. 47) or of *cultus* (*Relat*. 15) is clear.

[209] Symmachus takes a slightly different approach in *Ep*. 5.67, *Ep*. 5.68.2, and *Ep*. 6.67 in which it is not the gift itself, of game meat in the first two cases and of weaving in the second, which is praised but the activity of hunting or weaving which produced it, in both cases associated with ancient virtue.

models, with which Gratian breaks by awarding the consulship to his tutor Ausonius, in fact illustrate the normal upward limits of a universal practice of rewarding learned men: the answer anticipated by the preceding question "to whom will there come such a fortunate student or such a mindful debtor?" (*cui eveniet aut tam felix discipulus aut tam memor debitor*, *Ep*. 1.20.2), is naturally "to no one." In these ways, Symmachus describes the gifts which he, his city or his friends have received, always from the emperor, as exceptional.

Symmachus does not, however, content himself with only describing the gifts. He also sometimes praises his honorand and the gift by describing himself and those whom he represented as grateful recipients. In *Relat*. 9.6 he describes the Roman people's reasons for gratitude for the gift of horses mentioned above in terms of its reminiscences of the rape of the Sabine women, which provided wives, and ancient triumphs and ovations, thus praising the emperor Theodosius I who offered the gift. Symmachus similarly compares his own position as chosen reader of the letter of the emperor Gratian to the senate to that of Republican actors gaining fame by reciting the works of others (*Ep*. 10.2.2) in order to express his thanks to the emperor. The gratitude which Symmachus professes is described in both cases, at least in part, as stemming from consciousness, his own or that of the Roman people which he represented, of historical models. In this way too Symmachus draws on history to praise his and the Roman peoples' benefactors, here the emperors.

Finally, Symmachus sometimes praises his addressee, in both cases the emperors, as frugal and modest recipients of *cultus*, either like or in contrast to past models. Thus he favourably compares the simplicity of the *cultus* which Valentinian I was prepared to accept from the senate to the longstanding complexities of Roman religious *cultus* (*Orat*. 2.32), and, conversely, the lavishness of the senate's New Year's gifts to Theodosius I and Arcadius, reflecting the wealth of the time, to the ancient simplicity of the New Year's gifts given to king

Tatius (*Relat*. 15.1). Here historical *cultus* provides either a simpler (in *Relat*. 15.1) or a more lavish (*Orat*. 2.32) comparison to what is now offered to the recipient; the common point is that in both cases the recipient is said to have modest requirements, and thus to be satisfied by little (in *Orat*. 2.32) or embarrassed by though deserving much (in *Relat*. 15.2). Although *cultus* could certainly be flattering to the recipient without this sort of comment, clearly it was possible to praise the emperor not only as deserving of but also as a recipient of *cultus*.

In this way, whether Symmachus finds counterparts for the giver, for the gift itself, for the activity which made it possible, or for the attitude of the recipient, gifts, both benefactions to inferiors and *cultus* of superiors, are conspicuous and explicitly highlighted in many of the passages in which he uses his full rhetorical powers to praise his addressees. Praise is an important reason to mention gifts, and discussions of gifts, conversely, are prominent enough in Symmachus' works of praise.

Given this prominence of gift-giving as a theme in the more literary passages of works of praise, it would not be entirely surprising if Symmachus sometimes presented himself as a gift-giver in similarly elaborate works, as indeed he does (*Ep*. 1.45.2, *Ep*. 1.51, *Ep*. 2.35, *Ep*. 3.11.1-2, *Ep*. 3.44.2, *Ep*. 4.28.4, *Ep*. 4.33.2, *Ep*. 4.34.3).[210] These eight passages used for self-presentation accounts for considerably fewer than the thirteen passages used for praise discussed above, but passages which can be primarily analyzed in terms of self-presentation are rarer overall. Remarkably, a slight majority, eight out of fifteen, of all passages whose primary purpose is to situate Symmachus himself with respect to historical models are connected to his attitudes toward

[210] *Ep*. 4.34.3 deals not with the gift itself, of letters, but with attempts to immortalize it through publication. Related to the passages cited above though not included is *Ep*. 4.60.3, which describes Symmachus as taking the advice of Cicero for generosity in public spending, a form of giving, civic euergetism, though not voluntary gift-giving as such.

gifts or *cultus*.[211] Most of these are historical contrasts of some sort, and they account for all of the instances in which Symmachus situates himself with respect to local as opposed to foreign customs, (Spartan versus Athenian and Roman letters, *Ep*. 1.45.2, wooden blocks of the Aborigines versus Egyptian papyrus, *Ep*. 4.28.4, *Ep*. 4.33.2, Marcii and Persian silk, *Ep*. 4.34.3), and three out of four instances in which he situates himself with respect to past and present (in terms of religious *cultus* in *Ep*. 1.51, in terms of the style of his letters in *Ep*. 3.11.1-2, and in terms of the material to discuss in *Ep*. 2.35).[212] It might be said that Symmachus' self-presentation as both Roman and contemporary, in his extant works, is connected primarily to gift-giving, above all letter-writing, and to a lesser extent religious *cultus*.

Finally, Symmachus also uses historical models and evidence in order to persuade the emperors or their ministers to offer (*Ep*. 9.133.1, *Ep*. 4.51.1-2) or withdraw (*Relat*. 4) certain benefactions and to accept (*Relat*. 13.2) or allow (*Relat*. 3) certain sorts of *cultus*, in five of of the twelve works in which he draws on history or precedent for persuasion). We see *Relat*. 3, in which Symmachus draws on many examples of imperial conduct and demonstrations of the utility of religion in order to secure the return of the altar of Victory and the subsidies of the Vestal virgins, and *Relat*. 4, in which he seeks the removal of a gift of Gratian to the urban prefecture based on ancient models for proper public presentation of the urban prefect. There is also *Relat*. 13.2 in which he urges Valentinian II to accept a smaller anniversary gift than he had asked for on the basis of past gifts, *Ep*. 9.133.1, in which he seeks dispensation from the marriage law for a protégé on the basis of past dispensations, and *Ep*. 4.51.1-2, in which he seeks the legal

[211] Those which are not tend to be connected to philosophical responses to hardship or setbacks: Hippocrates and pain (*Ep*. 6.45), Pericles, Anaxagoras and M. Horatius responding to grief (*Ep*. 3.6.3), Socrates and response to hardship (*Ep*. 2.46.1; contrasted to Spartacus in *Ep*. 2.46.2), Heraclitus wishing to please one friend only and indifferent to honours (*Ep*. 9.115.2, following Marcellus and Marius as examples of loss of honours in *Ep*. 9.115.1). The only exception is the role of the censor in supervising construction and repairs (*Ep*. 1.12).
[212] The fourth instance of temporal contrasts used for self-presentation, *Ep*. 7.69.1, deals with the terms of a loan.

rehabilitation of his son-in-law as a fulfilment of the intention of the late Theodosius I).[213] The most elaborate of these is certainly the famous *Relat*. 3, on religious *cultus*, the single longest intact work of Symmachus and the most elaborate of his extant attempts to use historical *exempla* to any persuasive use. It is here that we find one of the rare contrasts between periods of Roman history in the works of Symmachus, between the era of pagan and Christian emperors, cited in order to point out a continuity in *cultus* which nonetheless existed and to argue for its necessity (*Relat*. 3.3). All of these works can be seen as belonging to a particular and not insignificant subset of Symmachus' attempts to secure particular imperial decisions in Roman public life, either directly in the *Relations* or through members of the court, in private letters. In all cases he draws on the same general store of literary Roman *exempla* and recent imperial actions and rulings suitable to this sort of persuasion.[214]

Discussions with historical *exempla* of *cultus* and benefactions, or at least of the gifts of which they made use, then, are, despite the relatively low profile of *cultus* in Latin literature generally, plentiful enough in the works of Symmachus. First, there are works which seek to persuade the emperors about particular points related to public *cultus* in Rome or imperial benefactions to Rome, its magistrates, or individual Romans. The prominence of religious *cultus* among the interventions of Symmachus in Roman public affairs is almost entirely due to *Relat*. 3, but at least some of his focus on benefactions was natural enough given the nature of Roman government. Secondly, there are works which present Symmachus' epistolary *cultus* and to a lesser degree his involvement in civic religion in a certain (Roman and often specifically simple) way. Works of praise for benefactions and laudatory presentations of *cultus*, finally, form a less

[213] Related to persuasion but separate is *Relat*. 40.2-4, in which Symmachus asks the emperor to decided whether imperial gifts to Puteoli or Tarracina should take precedence.
[214] See above, p. 99-101.

distinct category, although those which praise the emperor tend, like most of the passages which discuss Roman public life, to draw on Roman material. These passages account for a considerably smaller number of laudatory passages of praise than the panegyrics, *Orat*. 1-3, which have relatively little rhetoric of benefactions or *cultus*, but they are far from insignificant. The result is that benefactions and *cultus*, then, although they belong to a phenomenon of patronage which tended to operate discreetly and could very well be offered without comment, are in fact, in a variety of distinct ways, quite visible in much of the more explicit and elaborate rhetoric of Symmachus.

b) Public rewards

Is the same true of public rewards? Honours, that is, statues and prestigious appointments, above all to the ordinary consulship, were never given discreetly, and Symmachus had every reason to advertise any honours that he received, though this did not necessarily require him to define them in historical terms, which he never does. He also had reason to reflect on honours more abstractly insofar as he thanked the emperor for official appointments, in *Relat*. 1 and 2 as well as *Orat*. 4, though this again produces only a few of his discussions of honours in historical terms; praise of the honours of others (*Ep*. 1.20.2, *Ep*. 9.112) and arguments about appropriate honours for others (*Ep*. 2.36, *Ep*. 4.29, *Ep*. 4.45, *Ep*. 5.9) make up the rest.

Insofar as the honours which Symmachus received are themselves Roman, it is unsurprising that the material cited here is always partially and usually entirely Roman.[215] There are, admittedly, half-Greek pairs or strings of *exempla* in *Relat*. 5.2 (the Athenians' and Romans' adlection of the foreign philosophers Clitomachus and Carneades respectively into their council

[215] For the tendency to discuss Roman institutions with Roman historical material, see above, p. 100-101.

and citizenship), and *Ep*. 1.20.2 (Alexander's, Pyrrhus', Metrodorus', Fulvius', Scipio Africanus' and Rutilius' comparatively ungenerous rewarding of their respective tutors, that is to say, not with public honours such as the consulship).[216] Here, however, the Greek and Roman *exempla* illustrate the same course of action and these do not, therefore, present a distinctively Greek approach to honours, which is never at issue for Symmachus. In any case these passages are overshadowed in number, though rarely in elaboration, by passages with purely Roman material. Thus we see images as rewards for ancient men of merit (*Relat*. 12.2), the lack of public statues of Numa and Metellus as priests (*Ep*. 2.36.2), triumphs as conspicuous Roman honours (*Relat*. 9.6), the overturned monuments of Marcellus and Marius (*Ep*. 9.115.1), and the consulship bestowed by Republican elections (*Orat*. 1.9, *Orat*. 4.7), or awarded by earlier emperors (*Orat*. 4.5). Finally, there is the vague comment in *Ep*. 9.112 that civilian consulships had been rare for a long time, a mention of Constantius II's filling of vacant priesthoods (*Relat*. 3.7) and the description of Valentinian I as an unerring judge of character as a giver of rewards in a report to his son Valentinian II (*Relat*. 21.4). Most of this material is Republican, and some of it refers to specifically Republican models for honours, or, conversely, to models specific to the rule of emperors; the contrast between the two is made explicit, for the consulship, in *Orat*. 4.7-8.

A contemporary model in the giving of honours, that is, the inflation of honours since Constantine, is very much of interest in at least the *Letters* of Symmachus, as I argue in my fourth chapter.[217] Symmachus does not illustrate it with specific instances, the specific instances which he does highlight from this period, Constantius II's filling of vacant priesthoods (*Relat*. 3.7) and

[216] These account for two out of seven juxtapositions of internal and external *exempla*, and the only theme to appear twice, with youthful kingship (*Orat*. 3.6, 3.8), learned entourages (*Orat*. 3.7), ostentation (*Relat*. 4.2), achievements generally (*Ep*. 1.4.2), and endurance of hardship (*Ep*. 3.6.3) as the other themes treated.
[217] See below, p. 211-221. For an insightful recent treatment of the inflation of honours, see Dillon, "The Inflation of Rank and Privilege: Regulating Precedence in the Fourth Century AD," 42-66.

the description of Valentinian I as an unerring judge of character as a giver of rewards (*Relat*. 21.4), appearing as purely positive models. The inflation of honours is, however, cited as a broader contemporary phenomenon in *Relat*. 12.2, *Ep*. 2.36.3, and *Ep*. 4.29.

As for rhetorical use, praise, the purpose of the *gratiarum actio* and very well-represented among the works of Symmachus generally, is unsurprisingly well-represented reason for discussing historical models for honours, in five passages (*Ep*. 1.20.2, *Orat*. 1.9, *Orat*. 4.7, *Orat*. 4.5, *Ep*. 9.112). Here he praises Ausonius for his receipt of the consulship from Gratian, a reward which neither Alexander nor Pyrrhus, Metrodorus, Fulvius, Scipio Africanus or Rutilius offered their respective tutors (*Ep*. 1.20.2), and praises Valentinian I for his election as emperor, surpassing that of the Republican consuls (*Orat*. 1.9), and Gratian and the senate for together surpassing the Republican electors (*Orat*. 4.7) and bad emperors (*Orat*. 4.5, 8) in their award of the consulship to his father. Finally, he uses the remark in *Ep*. 9.112 that civilian consulships had been rare for a long time to praise a recent recipient of one as remarkable. In each case Symmachus praises the recipient of honours in question as remarkable, a point which he argues based on the contention that the givers of the honours in question exceeded the givers of ancient honours in gratitude (*Ep*. 1.20.2) or in judgement (*Orat*. 1.9, *Orat*. 4.7, *Orat*. 4.5, 8), or simply based on the contemporary rarity of the honour for senators (*Ep*. 9.112).

Not all of the discussions of models for honours, however, are used to praise the recipients or givers of honours. A remarkably high proportion of the works in which Symmachus discusses public honours with historical material are in fact used for persuasion, not only to offer but also to refrain from offering particular honours. The passages at issue are *Relat*. 3.7, *Relat*. 5.2, *Relat*. 12.2, *Relat*. 21.4, *Ep*. 2.36.2-3, and *Ep*. 4.29.2. Here Symmachus cites the Athenians' and Romans' adlection of the foreign philosophers Clitomachus and Carneades respectively into their council and citizenship as models to imitate in the case of the contemporary professor

Celsus (*Relat*. 5.2), images as rewards for ancient men of merit as models to imitate in a proposed honorific statue of Praetextatus (*Relat*. 12.2), and the lack of public statues of Numa and Metellus as priests as reasons to reject another proposed statue of Praetextatus (*Ep*. 2.36.2). He also mentions Constantius II's filling of vacant priesthoods as models which Valentinian II might fittingly imitate (*Relat*. 3.7) and describes Valentinian I, under whom Symmachus received his first appointments, as an unerring judge of character in order to request personal support and acquittal on a false charge from his son Valentinian II (*Relat*. 21.4). For the most part Symmachus argues in the cases above that particular public honours either should or should not be offered to particular recipients (or at all, as in *Ep*. 2.36.2-3 and in *Ep*. 4.29.2) based on positive models for the honours (usually Roman) or lack thereof, or changed circumstances.[218] Usually Symmachus directs his persuasion at the emperor, as mentioned previously, which accounts for the fact that all but two of the examples above are taken from the *Relations*. *Ep*. 2.36, however, relates a case in which Symmachus sought to persuade the pontifical college, and *Ep*. 4.29 introduces the text of an oration delivered in the senate, both to absent friends whom Symmachus also attempts to persuade of the point which he had argued.[219] All these suggest a real concern with honours, not strictly limited to his own honours or to his term as urban prefect in 384-5.

A clear indication of the importance of public rewards as a matter about which Symmachus seeks to persuade his addressee is the fact that in all examples in which he makes a general contrast between an ideal past and a debased present in order to persuade his addressee of any course of action (*Ep*. 2.36.2-3, *Ep*. 4.29.2, *Relat*. 12.2), ancient public rewards and the contemporary inflation of honours are always at issue. This is true whether Symmachus argues

[218] *Relat*. 21.4, which argues from past honours for present support which is not itself an honour, is the sole exception.
[219] I will discuss their inclusion in the *Letters*, and thus in Symmachus' literary self-presentation, in my third chapter, p. 194-195.

against an honorific statue (*Ep*. 2.36.2-3) or the revival of the censorship (*Ep*. 4.29.2), on the grounds that these would provide prizes for contemporary *ambitus*, or in favour of a (conventional) honorific statue, despite its cheapening through the inflation of honours (*Relat*. 12.2). Symmachus uses this temporal contrast both for praise and self-presentation on other issues, but when his aim is genuinely persuasive, the contrast always refers to the inflation of honours since Constantine and is used only to ensure that the honours offered in a particular case be appropriate.

It is surprising, then, that models for public honours, in contrast to their prominence in praise and especially persuasion, are only once cited primarily for Symmachus' own self-presentation. This is in *Ep*. 9.115.1, which describes the overturned monuments of Marcellus and Marius as models of the impermanence of honours, toward which Symmachus affects indifference. Honours, that is, appear only as something about which Symmachus did not personally care, and receive very little of the elaborate literary treatment in the works of Symmachus that gifts do. This is not, of course, to say that public honours were not an important part of his self-presentation outside of his literary works – one need only think of his funerary inscription, which, in typical fashion, lists all of his honours[220] – but simply that his honours spoke for themselves in a way that gifts did not, and were in any case already public.

Public honours, then, were necessarily important to Symmachus' presentation of himself as a senator to his fellow-citizens, but his own honours, unlike the gifts which he gave and received, virtually never receive elaborate treatment in his works. All the same, public honours remain important as explicit themes in certain works of praise – including the consular *gratiarum actio* and works giving thanks for the consular inaugurations of others such as *Orat*. 4 and *Ep*.

[220] See above, p. 3.

1.20 in which gifts and honours are naturally treated side by side – and in several works of persuasion. Honours are, like gifts, a topic about which Symmachus argued, and this is reflected in the frequency with which he uses historical models to illustrate precisely these topics.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter took as its subject the incidence of gift-giving and public rewards for merit as subjects of discussion in the more elaborate rhetoric of Symmachus generally, as measured by the frequency with which it appears in discussions drawing on historical material. By this measure, the importance of both gift-giving and rewards appears considerable, particularly when Symmachus contrasts different historical epochs and different histories, that is, when he defines what is genuinely Roman and suitable in his own age in general terms. Clearly, gift-giving and civic merit did not simply provide contrasting frameworks within which Symmachus actually operated as a late antique senator, but were also the frequent object of his explicit discussion, to the extent that anything was. If the argument in the previous chapter that Symmachus' patronage and *cultus* were open to question in Rome among a public attached to the principle of merit is correct, these discussions of proper *cultus* (or at least gift-giving) and merit are perfectly explicable as responses to it. Symmachus' cultivation of Stilicho might well have been on his reader's mind whether or not Symmachus had explicitly highlighted it, but the fact that he does highlight this sort of activity so often strongly suggests that it was meant to be noticed and merits literary analysis, to be supplied in the subsequent two chapters.

CHAPTER 3

The usefulness of a discourse of *cultus* for offering public *cultus*

Summary:

This chapter explores a particular sort of *cultus* in public life different from that emphasized at the end of the first chapter. This is *cultus* which did not simply secure advantages in the public sphere for individuals but was actually offered on behalf of Rome collectively, which thereby avoided some of the concerns surrounding merit discussed in the first chapter. The relevant extant works (*Orat*. 1-3, *Relat*. 3, 4, 7, 9, 13 and 15) are all addressed to the emperor and were delivered while Symmachus represented the interests of the senate and Roman people in official capacities, relatively early his career. I argue that Symmachus' discourse of *cultus* was supposed to highlight points on which the senate and court could, and usually did, agree, that securing this agreement was itself a "traditional" objective, but that Symmachus' decision in these works to highlight imperial (and divine) benefactions as benefactions and also, less self-evidently, to highlight or downplay Roman *cultus* as *cultus*, was a central and distinctive feature of his particular approach to ensuring continued benefactions for Rome.

In a general way, this chapter, together with the next, helps to confirm the importance of *cultus* and benefactions as objects of explicit discussion in the works of Symmachus, at least somewhat beyond what would have been automatically expected in the types of works which he writes, here panegyrics and state papers and there letters. The particular contribution of this chapter is to demonstrate that works from the middle and, to a lesser extent, the early part of Symmachus' career contain their own discourse of *cultus* and benefactions, albeit one which, unlike that in the *Letters*, engages very little with the notion of merit and which can best be considered in terms of immediate practicality. If the late dating for the *Letters* advanced in my fourth chapter is correct, this suggests that an explicit discourse of *cultus* and benefactions was

already a distinctiveand important part of Symmachus' literary repertoire and political strategy before he wrote the *Letters*.

The contention of this chapter will be demonstrated through close reading of those works of Symmachus which address the emperor with the primary purpose of cultivating him (*Orat*. 1-3, *Relat*. 13, 15), or of acknowledging (*Relat*. 7, *Relat*. 9) or politely refusing (*Relat*. 4) his benefactions. I will highlight their common features, and will demonstrate the general consistency across these works in Symmachus' description of benefactions and especially *cultus* as particular tokens of general esteem. This explicit discourse of *cultus* and benefactions was, as I will demonstrate, potentially useful in each of the particular cases in question. All the same, available *comparanda* suggest that it was hardly a given that he would draw on the discourse as often as he does; this appears to be a personal choice. I demonstrate that this was a choice that he did not make in all circumstances in the close reading of the famous *Relat*. 3 with which I close the chapter. Here I will argue that Symmachus explicitly defends particularly instances of *cultus* (of the traditional gods) which are not, in themselves, entirely different from those described above. Insofar as the discourse of *cultus* described above would prove a liability rather than an asset and Symmachus had a broader range of objections to counter in this situation, however, I will argue that Symmachus opts to defend this *cultus* mostly in terms of points only incidentally connected with *cultus* itself. This suggests that Symmachus was equally aware of the advantage of masking as of highlighting his *cultus*; both are important to his discourse of *cultus*.

Introduction

In this chapter, I move from Symmachus' rhetoric of appropriate cultivation in general to its practical application, at a comparatively early stage of his career, to the problems of imperial-

senatorial relations.[221] At issue are public *cultus* and public benefactions, public both in the sense that what Symmachus himself offered, or at least what he commented on, were offered in public, and also in the sense that Symmachus usually formally represented his city, or his city and the emperor simultaneously, while offering or accepting them. The phenomenon of gift-giving in these public contexts was far from new, and the works which I examine mostly figure at, or at least comment on, occasions on which gifts were routinely offered and had long been offered, such as imperial anniversaries, consular inaugurations, and New Year's.[222] The explicit discussion of the significance of the gifts, however, which makes the gifts themselves more publicly visible, appears to be unique to Symmachus, if only by virtue of the loss of other contemporary senatorial material.

Included here are what are described as formal exchanges of *cultus* and benefactions between the emperor and Rome (*Orat*. 1-3, *Relat*. 4, 7, 9, 13 and 15), and, for comparison, the exchange between Rome and the traditional gods (*Relat*. 3); in each case the (Christian) emperor is the primary addressee.[223] I exclude from my discussion attempts to secure imperial benefactions for Rome, above all emergency grain shipments during shortages in Rome, through private cultivation of palatine ministers as personal friends in the *Letters*, which belongs to a rather different phenomenon. Since, in the works which I treat, Symmachus acts not in his own

[221] For these relations, see especially Chastagnol, *La préfecture urbaine à Rome sous le bas-empire*, Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court AD 364-425*, and Chenault, "Rome Without Emperors."
[222] For the ceremonies which accompanied these court occasions, see MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity*.
[223] It should be noted that the relatively consistent rhetoric of cultivation treated here does not always, or even usually, reflect a reality in which freely chosen patrons were cultivated with spontaneous gifts. The "gift" which accompanied the panegyrics (mentioned in *Orat*. 2.1, 2.32, *Orat*. 3.1) and which Symmachus describes in *Relat*. 13 is the *aurum oblaticium*. This was the late antique senatorial counterpart to the *aurum coronarium* presented by provincial communities at imperial anniversaries, which continued an ancient Near Eastern and Hellenistic practice; it was in effect a tax. See Klauser, "Aurum Coronarium," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Römische Abteilung = Bullettino dell'Istituto Archeologico Germanico, Sezione romana* 59 (1944): 129-153 for the practice, especially p. 129 and 142-143 for the offerings of the senate.

capacity but as a representative of the senate and of the emperor, I do not focus on his self-presentation as giver of cultivation or recipient of benefactions, even when, as often in the panegyrics and in *Relat*. 7, he speaks in the first person singular. I leave this question largely to the following chapter, in which, as I will argue, a consistent and truly personal self-presentation is at issue.

The works which I do treat in this chapter belong to two discrete times and places, Trier from 368-370 (*Orat*. 1-3) and Rome in 384-385 (*Relat*. 3, 4, 7, 9, 13 and 15) and present or react to a wide variety of gifts offered under a variety of different albeit mostly routine circumstances. The *cultus* at issue accordingly ranges from the entirely unobjectionable (panegyrics to the legitimate emperor, in *Orat*. 1-3) to the highly suspect (pagan sacrifice, in *Relat*. 3), though the latter is very much the exception. In examining these works it is important to distinguish between several factors, namely the underlying agenda of the work, the message articulated, and the explicit description of gifts as tokens of affection or loyalty. The agenda ultimately advanced in virtually all these works is that of Rome and the senate (*Relat*. 7, an exchange purely between Symmachus as urban prefect and the emperor which does not concern the senate, is the exception). This is not to say that Symmachus is necessarily always defending senatorial causes, although he certainly does so, notably in *Relat*. 3, but that, at the minimum, successful cultivation of the emperor was a senatorial objective. The discourse which explicitly figures in these works, in turn, tends to be the message of the court itself, which Symmachus simply repeats back (especially in *Orat*. 1-3); where, as in *Relat*. 3 and *Relat*. 4, he presents a distinctively Roman perspective at odds with the message of the court, he minimizes the differences. The explicit description of gifts as limited tokens of unlimited affection or loyalty, finally, though very much in line with the agenda of both senate and court, appears to be unique to Symmachus himself, and may in fact have been developed by him; at the very least he does make consistent and obtrusive

use of it in all of the works in question in which senatorial and imperial priorities were basically aligned, above all in those delivered as urban prefect.

In this chapter I treat first the (mainly disguised rather than overt) senatorial cultivation of the emperor through praise in the panegyrics *Orat*. 1-3, in which the presentation of gifts is relatively little emphasized (section 1). I then treat the explicit discussions of appropriateness or inappropriateness of tokens of affection either to or from the emperor as a superior in *Relat*. 4, 7, 9, 13 and 15, in which monetary gifts, gifts in kind or honours (statues or magistracies) are involved (section 2). Here I discuss cases in which the emperor's tokens are accepted as appropriate (*Relat*. 7 and *Relat*. 9), in which the emperor is presented with tokens described as appropriate (*Relat*. 9, *Relat*. 13 and *Relat*. 15), and in which the emperor's tokens of affection are actually refused (*Relat*. 4). Finally, I treat the defense of the traditional cultivation of the gods in *Relat*. 3, in which Symmachus develops an entirely new series of arguments and attaches a fundamentally different importance to the tokens of *cultus*, all the while continuing to assert agreement between senate and court (section 3).

3.1 Panegyrics and cultivation through discourse: *Orat.* 1-3

Panegyrics, the most familiar kind of communication directed toward the emperors, can be understood both as works of *cultus* – they have no other purpose – and as works whose primary subject matter is always the merit of the recipient, not the the *cultus* offered by the speaker. Symmachus delivered three panegyrics to the emperors which are now extant: how did these function as works of *cultus*? In the following section I discuss the way in which Symmachus does highlight monetary gifts in at least some of these panegyrics, as useful and important addendums to these works; here my focus is on the way that Symmachus cultivated a

distant court by endorsing its agenda, which had little to do with cultivation and benefactions to Rome.

First, it is clear that the *cultus* of panegyrics and the benefactions to which they responded were part of an inherently unequal exchange of favours between the emperor and the senate, as discussed in the introduction. The emperor, who provided the *annona* and a considerable portion of the entertainments in Rome, certainly offered far more to Rome than he received from it in return.[224] This was always the case: although some imperial courts were certainly in a stronger position vis-à-vis the senate than others – Matthews has argued, persuasively, that the court of Valentinian II which appointed Symmachus as urban prefect of Rome in 384 was vulnerable in the face of the threat of Magnus Maximus, and depended on senatorial support[225] – , it can hardly be doubted that the senate, which Symmachus from time to time represented, would have always been regarded as the cultivating party and the emperor as the benefactor.

Flattering words were offered in both directions, not simply by senatorial representatives to the emperor: as well as senatorial panegyrics delivered at court, there were imperial addresses to the senate and Roman people. The emperor very occasionally came to Rome in person (as Constantius II did in 357 and Theodosius I in 389[226]); more often he sent orations to be read by the urban prefect or one of the senators in his absence. Symmachus mentions a favourable imperial oration of Gratian on his accession in *Ep*. 1.13.1-3, conveying the emperor's "eagerly desired kindness" (*exoptata pietas*, *Ep*. 1.13.3), and a second, which Symmachus himself had been charged with reading, in *Ep*. 10.2. He also mentions a verbal message which accompanied

[224] In this respect Rome was quite different from most provincial communities, which were taxed. The contrast is particularly clearly drawn in connection with exactions and distributions of grain in Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply in the Greco-Roman World: Responses to Risk and Crisis*, with Rome treated in 218-43 and the rest of the empire in 244-68.
[225] Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court AD 364-425*, 179-180.
[226] See especially Chenault, "Rome Without Emperors," 92-109, 259.

the New Year's gifts which Theodosius I and Arcadius had sent to Symmachus as urban prefect late in 384 in *Relat*. 7.2, described as making the emperor almost physically present. It is likely enough that the tone of these particular messages was benevolent, though, to judge by the extant senatorial proceedings at the receipt of the Theodosian Code, even communications which were technical and not obviously affectionate in tone might nonetheless be greeted as benefactions and with expressions of devotion, as seen both in the acclamations and in the introduction and following *sententia* of Anicius Achillius Glabrio Faustus.[227] Clearly, it was a senatorial commonplace, at least, that imperial addresses could communicate general goodwill toward the senate.

Much more visible in the works of Symmachus, however, were senatorial communications to the emperor. These included, of course, direct responses of the senate, in the form of decrees and acclamations, to the sorts of imperial communications mentioned above, like the responses to the Theodosian Code described in the previous paragraph. Some of these decrees are summarized in the state papers which Symmachus would send as urban prefect: *Relat*. 9, to be discussed in the next section, is one of these. The most elaborate senatorial communications to the emperor were, however, the panegyrics which senatorial ambassadors personally delivered at court, including the fragmentary *Orat*. 1, 2 and 3, presented to Valentinian I and Gratian in Trier, to which I now turn.[228]

[227] Faustus invites the senate to mark its acceptance of the imperial decree "with unanimous loyalty" (*consentanea devotione*) before it is read, and one of the acclamations of the decree is "worthy offerer of such benefactions" (*Tantorum beneficiorum dignus perlator*).
[228] For the visit (or visits) to Trier which these panegyrics represented, see Sogno, "Barbarians as Spectacle: The Account of an Ancient 'Embedded Reporter' (Symm. *Or*. 2.10-12)," 134 n. 4.

i) *Orat.* 1

Oration 1, delivered for the five-year anniversary of Valentinian I's rule, likely on February 26, 368, is fragmentary: both the beginning (one *folium*) and the end (six *folia*) are missing, and there are major lacunae of one *folium* each between paragraphs 3 and 4 and between paragraphs 10 and 11.[229] The treatment of Valentinian I, at least in the text as extant, is chronological, treating the education of the emperor (1.1-3), a particular incident in his military career (1.4-5), his election as emperor by the army (1.6-10), his cooptation of his brother Valens (1.11-13), his campaigns on the Rhine (1.14-1.17), and the fact that he prioritized the defense of the empire over suppression of the rebellion of Procopius (1.18-22). The final extant paragraph (*Orat*. 1.23) shifts to the senate and its involvement in the new regime, and it is here that the text breaks off; how far Symmachus pursued this theme is unclear.

It is hardly surprising in a panegyric that Symmachus describes Valentinian I in highly approving terms: he compares the emperor to God for his knowledge of the entire empire (*Orat*. 1.1), and, favourably, to Cicero' Caecilius (*Orat*. 1.2) for his military education, and to the heroes of the *Aeneid* (9.746; 12.478; 5.810, in *Orat*. 1.4) and to Marius (*Orat*. 1.5) for his good fortune in escaping at Rheims. His election is favourably compared to that of Darius and the Republican consuls (*Orat*. 1.9), and his devotion to duty to that of the younger Scipio Africanus, Lucullus, Marc Antony, Augustus, Tiberius, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius (*Orat*. 1.16). Finally, there are repeated comparisons to the sun (*Orat*. 1.5, 1.7, 1.13), both to the rising sun (*Orat*. 1.5, 1.7), appropriate for the founder of a new dynasty, and to the harmony of the sun and moon as a comparison for Valentinian I and Valens (*Orat*. 1.13).

[229] For the dating and the reconstruction of the text, see Callu, *Symmaque V*, xxii.

It must be underlined, however, that Symmachus describes Valentinian I not, at least in the text as extant, as the senate might wish him to be, but as he was, as a product of a military family, with an entirely military education, engaged solely in military campaigns and owing his power to military men. It is this that Symmachus praises. He certainly describes the emperor as selfless and devoted to duty, above all in connection with his tireless campaigns on the Rhine, favourably compared to the leisure which Republican commanders and earlier emperors allowed themselves (*Orat*. 1.16) and his focus on public over private enemies with the rebellion of Procopius (*Orat*. 1.17-21). This treatment of the emperor was certainly not incompatible with an emphasis on generosity to Rome, which may well have figured in the missing portion at the end of the panegyric, but generosity is not a theme which Symmachus treats in the work as extant. It is, instead, the legitimacy and suitability to rule of a military emperor that Symmachus emphasizes. The panegyric clearly reflected the priorities of the emperor and his court at least as much – far more in its extant portion – than the priorities of Symmachus and the senate. What Symmachus offers, then, is primarily praise and approval for these policies.[230]

ii) *Orat*. 2

Orat. 2, also to Valentinian I and delivered at his consular inauguration in Trier on January 1 370, is rather more complete. Only a few lines are missing at the beginning, and the ending is intact, though there is a gap between paragraphs 4 and 5 (one *folium*), and between paragraphs 27 and 28 (three *folia*). Enough survives that a chiastic structure is apparent:

A1 notes on the consulship as a reward (*Orat*. 2.1-2; several lines missing before *Orat*. 2.1)

[230] This was typical for panegyric, though here as elsewhere the agenda of the honorand was adopted as "the price the panegyrist paid in order to win a sympathetic hearing," as noted by Gillett, "Epic Panegyric and Political Communication in the Fifth-Century West," 281.

B1 the crossing of the Rhine (*Orat*. 2.4-9; one missing *folium* between *Orat*. 2.4 and 2.5)

C1 the beneficence of Valentinian I towards the Alamanni (*Orat*. 2.10-16)

D the outpost which Valentinian I founds on the Neckar (*Orat*. 2.17-22)

C2 the beneficence of Valentinian I towards the Alamanni (*Orat*. 2.22)

B2 the re-crossing and subjection of the Rhine (*Orat*. 2.23-28; three missing *folia* between *Orat*. 2.27 and 2.28)

A2 notes on the consulship as a reward and a monetary gift (*Orat*. 2.31-32)

This panegyric has a more limited scope than *Orat*. 1, since instead of the entire career and reign of the emperor it focusses on a single expedition across the Rhine and on the construction of a single fortress, both of which Symmachus had personally witnessed. The contrast is underlined in *Orat*. 2.3, in which he describes his subject matter as "things that I attested" (*quae probavi, Orat. 2.3*). Symmachus emphasizes his status as an eyewitness again for both the campaign, which "I saw" (*vidi*, *Orat*. 2.6), and the construction, at which "I was present" (*interfui*, *Orat*. 2.18).[231] Also in contrast, the *exempla* cited, which in *Orat*. 1 are virtually all Roman, here tend to be Greek, drawn especially from the Trojan war and Greek mythology, perhaps for the sake of variation in two panegyrics of the same honorand delivered before essentially the same audience.[232]

As with *Orat*. 1, it is clear that the panegyric generally follows and praises the priorities of the emperor rather than of Symmachus or the senate. These are, again, military. The beginning and the end of the oration treat gifts and honours to the emperor, but there is no treatment of the

[231] See also the remarks that, with respect to the new fortress of Valentinian I, "I personally captured" (*ipse ... deprehendi*, *Orat*. 2.22) the reaction of the barbarians and "we saw" (*vidimus*, *Orat*. 2.23) the reaction of the Rhine.
[232] Symmachus mentions the landing at Troy in *Orat*. 2.8, the foundation of Carthage in *Orat*. 2.17, Archimedes' defense of Syracuse in *Orat*. 2.18, Daedalus and Epius, builder of the Trojan horse, in *Orat*. 2.19, the giants piling Ossa on Pelion in *Orat*. 2.21, and Achilles battling the Xanthus in *Orat*. 2.26.

generosity of the emperor himself, at least in the extant portion of the panegyric. Robert Chenault may, however, be correct in arguing that Symmachus dwells on Valentinian I's crossing and bridging of the Rhine in *Orat*. 2.23-28 because he is responding to the emperor's gift of a new bridge over the Tiber in Rome, a practical token of goodwill to the senate mentioned in Ammianus Marcellinus 27.3.3 and attested in inscriptions.[233] If this is the case, and the argument is plausible, it would seem that Symmachus does in fact acknowledge imperial generosity in his panegyric, albeit without directly describing it as generosity, at least in the text as extant.[234]

Symmachus, then, comments on the senatorial gifts which he presents (*Orat*. 2.31-32) and highlights the consulship (*Orat*. 2.1-2), an honour which the senate did not actually confer but which the Roman state, more broadly considered, notionally did. He also offers, at much greater length and more typically for panegyrics, a verbal gift in the form of praise for the activities in which Valentinian I was actually engaged on the frontier, presented with flattering comparisons to important figures of Greek myth and legend. Finally, he indirectly (possibly directly in the missing portion of the text) marks approval for the bridge which the emperor was building in Rome.

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[233] For the inscriptions, see Chenault, "Rome Without Emperors," 183 n. 9 and 184 n. 10; for the bridge in general and its inauguration, Lizzi-Testa, *Senatori, Popolo, Papi*, 399-411 and Chenault, "Rome Without Emperors," 182-5, and for Symmachus' discussions of bridges in *Orat*. 2 and 3 in connection with it, see 188-9. The suggestion is attractive, though one would suppose that mention of the bridge would more naturally belong in *Orat*. 1, delivered in 368, soon after the inauguration of the bridge – and it may have been mentioned in that panegyric, in the missing portion at the end – than in *Orat*. 2, delivered a full two years later and perhaps during a second visit. The fact that a particular, albeit substantial, benefaction remained a current concern two years later would suggest the infrequent nature of imperial benefactions.

[234] Whether or not Symmachus was entirely persuaded by the show of force which he had seen on the frontier is a separate question, which Cristiana Sogno addresses in her "Barbarians as Spectacle: The Account of an Ancient 'Embedded Reporter' (Symm. *Or*. 2.10-12)," 140-141. It seems unlikely, however, that the expression of Symmachus' real opinion on the security of the frontiers was central or even particularly relevant to the panegyric. See Pernot, *La rhétorique de l'éloge dans le monde gréco-romain, Vol. 2*, 722-723 on the relative absence of hidden messages and critique epideictic oratory of the imperial period, insofar as the genre focussed on reaffirming elite consensus.

iii) *Orat.* 3

Orat. 3, finally, was delivered to the young emperor Gratian at an unknown date between early 368 and early 370.[235] Here again the end survives complete, though there are several lines missing at the beginning, and five missing *folia* between paragraphs 6 and 7. Like *Orat*. 1, *Orat*. 3 describes both the elevation as emperor and the education of its honorand, though in this case the elevation as emperor is, appropriately enough given his age when he was made *Augustus*, described first. Symmachus begins by presenting token gifts of gold (*aurea … munuscula*, *Orat*. 3.1), then deals with his election as emperor at an early age (*Orat*. 3.2-6). The text which follows a long lacuna, and presumably also some of the missing text, deals with his education, which combines a military education such as his father had received with literary studies (*Orat*. 3.7). Symmachus then continues, in what he acknowledges to be a digression, with the youthful military command of Pompey (*Orat*. 3.8) and the Virgilian golden age (*Orat*. 3.9). He closes with a discussion of Gratian as an emperor who will achieve military greatness under his father's command (*Orat*. 3.10-12), with a contrast to Alexander (*Orat*. 3.10).

Besides for some token gifts, mentioned in *Orat*. 3.1, what Symmachus offers Gratian is above all his reasons for devotion (*devotionis causa*, *Orat*. 3.1) to him. Unsurprisingly, for a child emperor, these reasons all amount to appreciation for the wisdom of the court of Valentinian I, in elevating Gratian at a young age in expectation that he would eventually actively serve under his father, and in providing him with the appropriate education. Early elevation, literary education

[235] Gratian's actual five-year anniversary (April 18, 369) is a tempting possibility, and would indicate that Symmachus represented the senate at court on three entirely separate occasions, whether as part of a single extended stay in Trier or not. Dates closer to the anniversary of his father, Valentinian I, in February 368, or to his father's consulship in January 370 are, however, equally possible, and would avoid the need for a very extended stay at court or three separate trip. This stage of Symmachus' career is not well-enough attested to rule out any of these options. April 18, 369 is the possibility favoured by Callu, *Symmaque V*, 60-61 = p. 24 n. 1, although Callu p. xxiii lists both it and January 3rd 370 as possibilities. The third possibility, that both *Orat*. 1 and 3 were delivered in February 368, is suggested by Lizzi-Testa, *Senatori, Popolo, Papi*, 447-454. Sogno, "Barbarians as Spectacle: The Account of an Ancient 'Embedded Reporter' (Symm. *Or*. 2.10-12)," 134 n. 4 leaves the question open.

and expected command under Valentinian I all occasion flattering comparisons to Alexander, in *Orat*. 3.6, 7, and 10. It should be noted, however, that none of these reasons are related to generosity to Rome: Symmachus' focus is, again, on imperial rather than on senatorial priorities.

a) The panegyrics of Symmachus as political communication

In all these cases, the praises which Symmachus offers the emperors in his panegyrics are clearly tokens of senatorial loyalty to a new dynasty, endorsing both imperial actions and particular strains of contemporary court propaganda, in the case of the association between Gratian and the Virgilian golden age.[236] All these were, presumably, offered in the hope of cultivating a positive relationship with the court. This was the *raison d'être* of the panegyrics, and of panegyrics generally.

These works offer a certain sort of *cultus*, but provide little explicit discussion of senatorial *cultus* (outside of the comparison of the *cultus* of Valentinian II and Gratian to that of the gods in *Orat*. 2.32 and the mention of gifts in *Orat*. 3.1), and none at all of imperial benefactions, at least as extant. The remark in *Orat*. 3.1 that frames the panegyric to Gratian as offering reasons for senatorial loyalty (*devotio*) could be applied to all the panegyrics, and *devotio* is indeed the emotion which *cultus* is said to express in the works which will be considered below. The perspective which the panegyrics adopt is nonetheless usually that of an individual observer, using the first person singular; the first person plural which clearly refers to the senate as a whole, though found in each panegyric (*Orat*. 1.12, 1.23, *Orat*. 2.2, 2.32, *Orat*. 3.2-3), is the exception rather than the rule. Whether by accidents of transmission, since the

[236] Bruggisser, "*Gloria novi saeculi*: Symmaque et le siècle de Gratien (*epist*. 1.13)," 134-149.

panegyrics are all fragmentary, or by Symmachus' original design, there is little explicit discourse of *cultus* in any of these works.

None of this is particularly surprising in a panegyric, which was, after all, a very well-established literary form by Symmachus' time, and whose conventions Symmachus follows.[237] Nothing would have prevented Symmachus from developing the themes of *cultus* and benefactions at greater length had he wished, but it can hardly have been necessary. As with any sort of *cultus* offered to the emperor (aside from personal bribes mentioned in *Relat*. 15.3), the action itself was indisputably legitimate and did not require comment. Certainly the notion that a senatorial ambassador would praise the emperor in a panegyric was not a point which needed to be defended: it was a given, and could only be called into question if the emperor's own legitimacy was disputed, and then only in retrospect, after his defeat. Symmachus, of course, did find it prudent to deliver an apology for his panegyric to Magnus Maximus after his defeat by Theodosius (*Ep*. 2.31), but it seems unlikely that the legitimacy of his *cultus* figured prominently in the initial panegyric any more than in any of the *Latin Panegyrics*. The cultivation of the emperor in a panegyric might conceivably need to be explained after the fact, but not at the time, at least not for a senator speaking on behalf of Rome.[238]

Another reason not to discuss explicit *cultus*, more specific to primarily verbal praise, is the fact that the degree of *cultus* offered was unlikely to be at issue or require explanation. Unlike for monetary gifts, as we will see, there was never, in panegyric, any compelling reason not to offer the highest praise remotely plausible in a given situation. The particular qualities praised were invariably qualities which the emperor actually possessed, but the greatness of the emperor

[237] See above, n. 86 and 203.
[238] For a philosopher like Themistius, who had more reason to avoid a reputation for flattery, there was more to explain, as noted by Vanderspoel, *Themistius and the Imperial Court*, 210, 214-215.

was something to be illustrated rather than proved for a skeptical audience. Valentinian I, then, is compared favourably to Marius (*Orat*. 1.5), to the younger Scipio Africanus, Lucullus, Marc Antony, and to Augustus, Tiberius, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius (*Orat*. 1.16), to Daedalus (*Orat*. 2.19), and to the giants of Greek mythology (*Orat*. 2.21), while his son Gratian is compared to Alexander the Great (*Orat*. 36, 7, 10) and his age to the Virgilian golden age (*Orat*. 3.9). Symmachus even compares Valentinian I and his brother Valens favourably to the sun and the moon (*Orat*. 1.13), and, in *Orat*. 2.32, to the Roman pantheon, as frugal gods, and Valentinian I personally to God seeing everything (*Orat*. 1.1). For Symmachus, as for the Latin Panegyrists, it appears that no flattering point of comparison was off-limits; Symmachus, clearly, did not ration his praise.

Insofar as the highest praise made for the best *cultus*, then, and it clearly did, and insofar as it required only a command of oratory which a panegyrist could be assumed to possess, there was no reason not to offer it, and hence, since it was always offered, no reason to apologize for or explain its absence. At the same time, there was little reason to stress the fact of offering what was offered: since the highest praise was always offered, and the *Latin Panegyrics* make this abundantly clear, contemporary praise could hardly be compared to what was offered to previous emperors in terms of degree. What might be stressed was the sincerity of contemporary praise: Pliny in his *Panegyric* emphasized that his praise to Trajan was genuine whereas praise to Domitian had been empty flattery delivered under compulsion (*Pan*. 2, 54).[239] This became a commonplace in late antique panegyrics which followed the reigns of tyrants, that is, emperors whose legitimacy was no longer accepted.[240] Symmachus may well have made this point in his later apology for his panegyric to the usurper Magnus Maximus, but circumstances in 368-370

[239] For flattery, see especially Bartsch, *Actors in the Audience: Theatricality and Doublespeak from Nero to Hadrian*.
[240] See *Pan. Lat*. 2.2, which describes the usurper Magnus Maximus as a *tyrannus*.

were different. Valentinian I and Gratian followed Julian and Jovian, emperors whom both senate and court had accepted and still accepted as legitimate, and the senate had never cultivated the recent usurper Procopius, whose activities had, as Symmachus emphasizes, been confined to the East (*Orat*. 1.17-21). The aftermath of tyranny, in its late antique definition, was a special case, which did not apply to Roman-senatorial relations in the late 360s and early 370s. There was therefore no particular necessity to emphasize the sincerity of praise in *Orat*. 1-3 any more than to emphasize its abundance.

Finally, and most importantly, panegyrics were a sufficiently normal form of political communication that the *cultus* which they offered was unlikely to pass unrecognized or to be misinterpreted. Valentinian I had not personally received a literary education and had little obvious sympathy with the Roman senate, but his court was learned enough and apparently had no idiosyncratic expectation of panegyrics.[241] Symmachus would have had every reason to suppose that his verbal endorsement of the regime of Valentinian I in *Orat*. 1-3 would be accepted as senatorial *cultus* of the emperors and would cement the relationship between senate and court. His panegyrics did not require an explicit discourse around the *cultus* which they offered, though it was to Symmachus' advantage to call attention to the (presumably substantial) monetary gifts offered (*Orat*. 2.32 and *Orat*. 3.1).

Thus, it seems that any competently delivered panegyric which respected the rules of the genre was an appropriate and acceptable offering of *cultus*, though there must necessarily have been better or worse panegyrics. To judge by the extant evidence, any points which Symmachus made about *cultus* in the panegyrics which he delivered in Trier must have been very much subordinate to the successful offering of *cultus* itself; the same must also be true of any cultural

[241] For the learning of the court of Valentinian I, see Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court A.D. 364-425*, 48-54.

propaganda for the centrality of Rome, the paradigm within which Robert Chenault considers them in his thesis.[242] In the same way, presumably, any favourable communication from the emperor would have been naturally accepted as a benefaction and a confirmation of imperial regard for the city or for its particular recipient, although the senate could hardly have been indifferent to the specific content of the communication if it was in any way substantive. In the context of imperial-senatorial relations, that is, favourable words could successfully communicate devotion or affection simply by virtue of being offered.

3.2 Discussions of monetary gifts and honours as *cultus* and benefactions

A priori, one would expect that what was true of words would also be true of monetary gifts or gifts in kind and public honours, that is, that anything could potentially communicate devotion or affection between Rome and the emperors. Here, particularly in terms of gifts, there are fewer contemporary *comparanda* for the remarks in Symmachus, but at least in the works of Symmachus himself discussions are not lacking. We have already see that Symmachus does highlight the (presumably substantial) monetary gifts which he presented to the emperors (*Orat*. 2.32 and *Orat*. 3.1), mentions which, incidentally, have no counterparts in the *Latin Panegyrics*. Other relevant works are *Relat*. 4, 7, 9, 13 and 15, and these will be the subject of discussion here.

Before treating these works it detail, it must be said that one of the points made above about words could not reasonably be expected to apply to gifts and public honours, namely that words are limitless. This difference is particularly and obviously marked in the case of monetary gifts or gifts in kind: whatever affection or devotion they professed, neither the emperor nor the

[242] Chenault, "Rome Without Emperors," 190-203.

senate had unlimited resources to spend on each other. Whether or not senatorial or imperial gifts had substantially increased since the early empire is difficult to determine. In terms of imperial gifts, it seems that they had not, though the gifts offered were certainly substantial. The emperors had actually increased the number of commodities provided as part of the *annona* since the early empire (the *Historia Augusta* mentions the addition of oil under Septimius Severus, *Sev*. 18.3, and pork and subsidized wine under Aurelian, *Aurel*. 35.2, 48.1). At the same time, however, the number of recipients in Rome, roughly a third of the residents of the city, had certainly fallen since its peak along with the population of the city itself.[243] Conversely, there were more recipients elsewhere, above all in Constantinople (a city which Symmachus never once mentions directly in his extant works).[244] Grain still occasionally arrived in Rome from the East (from Macedonia in *Ep*. 3.55 and *Ep*. 3.82) or was at least requested (*Relat*. 9.7), but these shipments had become exceptional. Imperial gifts to Rome remained substantial and often spectacular, continuing to include lavish games and building projects like the bridge of Valentinian I mentioned above, but must, as a percentage of imperial expenses, certainly across the whole empire, have been below their peak in the high empire.

The extent to which senatorial gifts to the emperors had increased or decreased either in absolute terms or as a percentage of senatorial expenses is less clear, though in his own time they

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[243] For the Roman *annona* in general, see Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply in the Greco-Roman World: Responses to Risk and Crisis*, 218-68, of which 218-43 deals with distributions in Rome, and 244-68 with exaction and distribution of grain elsewhere in the empire. See also Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, 110-113. For the reduction in the population of Rome, maintained under the early empire at a very level by a constant influx of people for ideological reasons as a result of competition from the army and the church, see Van Dam, *Rome and Constantinople: Rewriting Roman History During Late Antiquity*, 24-28. For the population of Rome, see especially Santo Mazzarino, *Aspetti sociali del quarto secolo* (Rome: Bretschneider, 1951), 217-47 and Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, 110. Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply in the Greco-Roman World: Responses to Risk and Crisis*, 242 remarks that food riots became more dangerous in late antiquity, but ties this to the absence of imperial authority rather than the greater fragility of the supply chain.

[244] See Roger Rees, "Bright Lights, Big City: Pacatus and the *Panegyrici Latini*," in *Two Romes*, ed. Lucy Grig and Gavin Kelly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 203-222 and Gavin Kelly, "Claudian and Constantinople," in *Two Romes*, ed. Lucy Grig and Gavin Kelly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 241-264 for some contemporary examples of (subtle) disparagement of Constantinople by Latin authors.

were substantial enough that the notion that they could be onerous was perfectly conceivable, as Symmachus highlights when he raises the possibility "that we would bring in more than we are able" (*plus quam possumus ingeramus*, *Relat*. 13.3) and when he specifies that a particular gift was such that "our wealth is not burdened" (*nec noster census oneratur*, *Relat*. 15.2). Especially vivid is *Ep*. 2.57.2, in which Symmachus recounts that "the amount asked for exceeded the resources of the treasury. When the matter was known, sudden astonishment imposed deep silence on everyone" (*quantitas postulata aerarii excessit opulentiam. Re cognita vastum silentium cunctis stupor subitus imperavit*).[245] Under these circumstances, actual contributions, at least for important imperial anniversaries, might fall below imperial demands, as is clear in *Relat*. 13, despite the obviously spectacular wealth of the fourth-century senate, highlighted by Olympiodorus fr. 41 and Ammianus Marcellinus 27.11.1 alike.[246] The presence of multiple courts would, in turn, have required more gifts. Whether the senate was genuinely financially strained or simply miserly, as John McGeechy in particular has suggested, it apparently perceived itself to spend close to its limits on at least some gifts and contributions to the emperor.[247] It is clear, then, that both imperial gifts to Rome and senatorial gifts to the emperor might be substantial, but both were necessarily limited.

In terms of honours, the issues with increases were slightly different. Honours necessarily existed on a relative scale, and it was a given that both Rome and the emperor started at the top. This fact, and the strongly traditional character of honours in the later fourth century, the honorific magistracies invariably dating back to the Republic, would have made it relatively

[245] For a discussion of the process by which the amounts of gifts were set, see Chastagnol, "Le sénat dans l'œuvre de Symmaque," 87-89.
[246] See Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, 16-17.
[247] See McGeechy, "Q. Aurelius Symmachus and the Aristocracy of the West," and Paschoud, *Roma Aeterna: Études sur le patriotism romain dans l'occident latin à l'époque des grandes invasions*, 71-109.

difficult to invent new honours at whim to use as tokens of particular affection.[248] All the same, Symmachus does describe honours, especially statues, as tokens of this sort: the offer of a statue to the father of Theodosius I as described in *Relat*. 9.4 provides a clear example of senatorial honours for the emperor supposed to convey individual affection. New imperial honours to Rome and its magistracies might also be desirable, in order to prevent Rome from falling behind in the proliferation of honours to Constantinople, members of the imperial administration, and bishops.[249] The offer by Gratian of a more elaborate state carriage to the urban prefect of Rome, described in *Relat*. 4, and to be compared with recent honours to the urban prefect of Constantinople and the bishop of Rome, is to be interpreted in this light.[250]

So much for the reality: how does Symmachus discuss concrete gifts and honours? Here there is considerable variety since, in his extant works, he finds reason, far more than in the case of simple praise, to discuss the quantity or quality of both honours and especially gifts, whichever way they were offered. Imperial benefactions might be gratefully accepted as appropriate tokens of imperial affection for Rome in *Orat*. 4 (the consulship offered to Symmachus' father at the senate's request), *Relat*. 7 (New Year's gift arrives early), and *Relat*. 9.3, 5-6 (horses offered for spectacles). *Orat*. 2.1 (consulship) and *Orat*. 2.32 (monetary gifts), *Relat*. 9.4 (honorific statues), *Relat*. 13 (monetary gifts) and *Relat*. 15 (gold tokens), conversely, present particular senatorial gifts as apt though always inadequate means to convey the senate's regard for the emperor. Finally, in a rare but important demonstration that the specific tokens mattered, *Relat*. 4 shows a particular token of affection (a new carriage for the urban prefect) recognized as such even as it

[248] Symmachus in *Orat*. 2.1 therefore describes the ordinary consulship, which he treats as being in the gift of the state in general, if not of the Roman senate in particular, as inadequate to reward Valentinian I.
[249] For the inflation of honours, see especially the recent contribution of Dillon, "The inflation of rank and privilege: regulating precedence in the fourth century AD," 42-66, who rightly points out that this inflation since Constantine, which vastly expanded the senatorial order, diminished the relative importance of certain honours but did not necessarily diminish the privileges which accompanied them.
[250] Callu, *Symmaque V*, 85 n. 1.

was refused on the grounds of its associations with regal ostentation. Clearly the gifts might be profitably discussed as tokens.

a) Imperial benefactions

In terms of the passages in which Symmachus expresses gratitude for tokens of imperial affection for Rome, accepting them as appropriate, there is *Relat*. 7 and *Relat*. 9. *Relat*. 7, like *Relat*. 15, introduces New Year's gifts, here from the emperor rather than from Rome. The passage is short enough to cite in full:

> Antiquity dedicated the Kalends which are auspices of the year, by which the recurrence of the months is opened, to offering gifts (*strenae*), lord emperors Theodosius and Arcadius, famous, victors and triumphators, forever Augusti. The usage of this practice you anticipate with the haste of your generosity, supposing late a liberality which is applied to established times. Happy indeed is the time in which the emperors do not know how to keep back for long the things to be offered to their loyal subjects, since they hesitate to demand what is owed to themselves. (2) What, therefore, should I first, what should I especially declare? Is it the timely and swift generosity of your godhead, or your mindful care for those who are absent, or that you increased the sacred gift with the honour of your words? I would say, as is the fact, that your clemency took care that, as if placed in front of you, I might enjoy the address of emperors and might worship the august faces in the gifts themselves. When will it be my lot to gain clear and living joys from you instead? How great is the goodness of the truth, whose appearance and image is remarkable! (3) I therefore give thanks and am grateful and my part, which I not able to acquit, I give over to the heavenly virtues. May they reward your clemency with worthy successes; we cultivate, we love what you know to be more outstanding than all things, who for this reason healthily regulate the commonwealth, so that you may earn these things alone.
>
> *Kalendas anni auspices quibus mensium recursus aperitur inpertiendis strenis dicavit antiquitas, Domini Imperatores Theodosi et Arcadi inclyti, victores ac triumphatores semper Augusti. Huius institui usum munificentiae festinatione praevertitis, seram putantes liberalitatem quae statutis temporibus admovetur. Felix me hercule saeculum quo Principes cohibere diu nesciunt tribuenda devotis, cum sibi debita cunctentur exigere (2) Quid ergo primum, quid potissimum praedicem? Promptamne Numinis Vestri et celerem largitatem, an circa absentes memorem diligentiam, an quod sacrum munus auxistis honore verborum? Dicam, ut res est, curasse Clementiam Vestram ut, tamquam coram locatus, et adloquiis Principum fruerer et augusta in ipsis donis ora venerarer. Quando mihi eveniet expressa potius et viva gaudia capere de Vobis? Quantum veritatis est bonum cuius species et imago mirabilis est! (3) Ago igitur atque habeo gratias et meam vicem, qui solvendo non sum, caelestibus delego virtutibus. Illae Clementiam*

Vestram dignis processibus munerentur; nos colimus, nos amamus quod scitis omnibus rebus esse praestantius, qui ideo salutariter rem publicam regitis, ut haec sola mereamini (*Relat*. 7.1-3).

Symmachus does not describe the (routine) gift itself, other than the fact that it was accompanied by a written message (*Relat*. 7.2); it is this message and the early arrival (*Relat*. 7.1) that he emphasizes. Given that Symmachus clearly marks his gratitude and thanks the emperor in a personal capacity, using the first person singular and anticipating, in *Relat*. 7.2, the moment when he will see the emperor in person, unlike in *Relat*. 9, as we will see, the gift is best understood as a gift to Symmachus personally as urban prefect.[251] Thus, although the gift is described as conveying the generosity (*liberalitas*, *munificentia*, *Relat*. 7.1, *largitas*, *Relat*. 7.2) of the emperor, it ought to be identified as a relatively small token gift, necessarily much smaller than the gift of horses and elephants to the Roman people described in *Relat*. 9, as we will see. The generosity of the gifts is, after all, demonstrated in large part by its early arrival. The written message, in turn, is described as producing some semblance of the impression of that Symmachus was speaking with the emperor as if physically in his presence (*tamquam coram locatus*, *Relat*. 4.2), in the same way that late antique friendly letters were routinely said to do with the friend.[252] Despite the emphasis on the presence and generosity of the emperor, Symmachus does not emphasize imperial affection toward him as such, besides for the brief mention of imperial care (*diligentia*, *Relat*. 7.2): the New Year's gift described is presented as an appropriate benefaction, but affection, in this state paper (*nos amamus*, *Relat*. 7.3), is felt toward, not by, the emperor.

[251] Callu, *Symmaque V*, 88 n. 1, indeed, suggests that the message of Theodosius I might have announced or hinted at the intention to enrol Symmachus personally in his court (*comitatus*) in Constantinople, and that it is this encounter that Symmachus expects. If so, the intention apparently remained abortive.
[252] See Ebbeler, "Pedants in the Apparel of Heroes? Cultures of Latin Letter-writing from Cicero to Ennodius," 106-150, who describes a "textualized body" presented in friendly letters, here as there only a partial substitute for physical presence.

Another expression of gratitude for specific imperial benefactions, here clearly offered on behalf of the senate and Roman people, is found in *Relat*. 9, similarly addressed to Theodosius I and Arcadius in Constantinople. Here Symmachus thanks the emperors for a gift of horses and elephants, made on the eve of what he anticipates will be a Persian campaign (*Relat*. 9.3), a gift which Valentinian II would match shortly afterward by sending Sarmatian captives.[253] Symmachus begins by stressing the difficulty of adequately expressing gratitude for imperial benefactions (*gratias beneficiis vestris agere*) on behalf of the Roman people (*Relat*. 9.1). This note resembles remarks found at the beginning of Pacatus' panegyric to Theodosius I (*Pan. Lat*. 2.1), though Symmachus' focus on the difficulty of representing a collective body, with the note that "no speech fills the role of the Roman people" (*personam Populi Romani nulla inplet oratio*) as well as adequately praising the emperor is distinctive to this work. He continues by thanking the emperor for his generosity in offering gifts which the imperial administration itself might have used (*Relat*. 9.2), and which previous emperors might have used in bogus triumphs, contrasted with the real Persian triumphs which Theodosius I expects (*Relat*. 9.3). This discussion both begins and ends with remarks on the prompt generosity of the emperor to Rome. Symmachus then turns to the enthusiastic popular response to these gifts, beginning with the equestrian statues of the father of Theodosius I voted by the senate (*Relat*. 9.4), then the eagerness of the Roman people to see the gifts as they arrived (*Relat*. 9.5-6). Here he emphasizes that the Roman people was favourably disposed by its history to receive horses as gifts (*Relat*. 9.6). Symmachus finally asks for a further imperial gift, of grain shipments from Egypt, whose similarly enthusiastic reception he imagines (*Relat*. 9.7), and closes with a final expression of

[253] Although Symmachus anticipates a triumph in a Persian war in *Relat*. 9.3, the war predicted with Persia over Armenia did not actually occur, being averted by an embassy of Shapur III on September 9, 384 (Socrates, *HE* 5.12), as noted by Callu, *Symmaque V*, 158 n. 4. Theodosius finally celebrated a triumph on October 12 386, after the partition of Armenia, as noted by Barrow, *Prefect and Emperor*, 67-9 n. 1.

gratitude and introduction of the (lost) record of popular acclamations (*suffragia*) included with the state paper (*Relat*. 9.8).

In terms of the appropriateness of imperial tokens of affection, Symmachus again describes the imperial gift, of horses and elephants, without actually quantifying it – as we will see that he does with senatorial gifts. As in *Relat*. 7 he highlights the imperial generosity (*largitas*) which the gifts represent and he especially emphasizes the high opinion of the claims of Rome signified (*Relat*. 9.2). This generosity is, however, described in terms of the selfless character and judgement of the emperor, not, again, his emotions. The difference with *Relat*. 7 is that the affectionate response elicited (*Relat*. 9.4-6) is described as motivated by a particular understanding of Roman history:

> Nor should you suppose that a pleasure of this kind seems small to the people of Mars, to whom the relaxations of circus events brought the right to marry with neighbours, to whom it was seen as the highest honour that the backs of horses should bear those celebrating minor triumphs, that a chariot should pull those celebrating triumphs.
>
> *Nec putetis istiusmodi voluptatem plebe Martiae parvam videri cui delenimenta circensium finitimorum conubium praestiterunt, cui summus honor visus est, ut ovantes equorum dorsa gestarent, ut triumphantes currus inveheret* (*Relat*. 9.6).

Here, as Symmachus describes it, it is not the current state of the Roman people but its ability to remember its martial history and mythic origins which ensures that a well-chosen imperial gift is accepted as such. This imagined historical memory - later fourth-century Rome was in fact a thoroughly civilian and senatorial city, and its residents could hardly be described as the people of Mars (*pleb[s] Martia*) – is also highlighted in *Relat*. 4.2-3, to opposite effect, in order to reject an imperial gift. Here it emphasizes the wisdom of the emperor and the privileged relationship which he enjoyed with Rome.

Both *Relat*. 7 and *Relat*. 9, then, present particular imperial gifts as appropriate tokens of exemplary imperial generosity – not affection as such – toward Symmachus as urban prefect and

toward Rome respectively. The second is certainly the more elaborate work, and conveys thanks for a more considerable gift, but in both cases the gifts are described as eliciting similar responses of affection and loyalty in their recipients. As in the panegyrics discussed above, *Relat*. 7 and *Relat*. 9 endorse imperial choices, though here the emperors are far more obviously presented as benefactors, and *Relat*. 9, at least, ends with a request, for provisioning from Egypt, which clearly reflects senatorial rather than imperial priorities.

b) Gifts from the senate

Symmachus also presents tokens of senatorial affection as appropriate for conveying senatorial affection, to the extent possible, either in response to particular imperial gifts or simply in order to mark routine occasions on which gifts were usual, such as New Year's and especially imperial anniversaries. Here I will discuss *Relat*. 9.4, *Relat*. 13 and *Relat*. 15, which present equestrian statues in the first case and substantial and token gifts of gold in the latter two; *Relat*. 13, which presents a gift which is not only inadequate in terms of the unlimited devotion which Symmachus professes but also in terms of what the emperor apparently expected, will be discussed last. The most straightforward of these discussions is found in *Relat*. 9.4. The context of the passage has already been discussed above: Symmachus was responding to a specific gift from the eastern court, of horses and elephants.

> Deservedly the senate and people celebrate you with their mouth, worship you with their loyalty, embrace you with their affection. Believe me: you occupy the secret places of every heart, that place of good familiar ties in which dwells affection for children, for parents. And since every reward, when compared to your benefactions, is small, the senatorial order found a pleasing way to show itself grateful. For it consecrated among ancient names the founder of your family and stock, the onetime African and British commander, with equestrian statues. He fathered, by his happy seed, a godhead health-giving to the empire. This is how they are worshipped whose children were born for the public good.

> *Merito Vos Senatus ac Populus ore celebrat, devotione veneratur, amore conplectitur. Mihi credite: arcana omnium pectorum possidetis, illa bonarum necessitudinum loca quibus liberorum, quibus parentum inmoratur adfectio. Et quia omne praemium, dum beneficiis Vestris confertur, angustum est, invenit Ordo amplissimus amabilem vicem qua se gratum probaret. Nam familiae Vestrae et stirpis auctorem, Africanum quondam et Britannicum ducem statuis equestribus inter prisca nomina consecravit; qui felici satu numen in imperium salutare progenuit. Sic coluntur quorum liberi ad bonum publicum nati sunt* (*Relat*. 9.4).

The language of affection (*devotio, amor, arcana pectorum, adfectio*) is prominent here, and the senatorial response which expresses it is specifically described as pleasing (*amabilem vicem*). This language is not unique to this work, but the fact of stressing the devotion of the senate and people in such decidedly familial terms, in terms of affection for parents and children, is. The specifically familial character of this devotion as described is surely a reflection of the fact that the particular honour chosen is addressed not to the emperor directly but to his father.[254] The prestigious ancient practice of providing equestrian statues to the fathers of famous men establishes this honour as a fitting expression of the affectionate and loyal sentiments which Symmachus alleges.

A somewhat different senatorial act of *cultus* is found in *Relat*. 15, in which Symmachus presents New Year's gifts from the prefecture to the emperors, the counterpart to the gift for which *Relat*. 7 expresses thanks, though not a response to it. Unlike in *Relat*. 9.4, the gift (here a gift, not an honour as such) is entirely conventional:

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[254] The senate had reason to wish to honour the father of Theodosius I during the reign of his son: the father of Theodosius I had been executed during the accession of Gratian, an action, with which the senate must have been seen as having condoned, insofar as it cultivated close ties with the new regime of Gratian, and from which it was now eager to distance itself now. See Federico Alberto Poglio, *Gruppi di potere nella Roma tardoantica, 350-395 D.C.* (Turin: Celid, 2007), 202-204 and Callu, *Symmaque V*, 91 n. 1 for this suggestion, and Kelly "Pliny and Symmachus," 274 and 281 for the chronology of the involvement of the senate in the succession of Gratian more generally and specifically in securing the execution of another official, the praetorian prefect Maximinus. For the statue, see Lellia Cracco Ruggini, "Apoteosi e politica senatoria nel IV s.d. C.: Il dittico dei Symmachi al British Museum," *Riv. Stor. Ital*. 89 (1977): 425-489, especially 438-454, Domenico Vera, "Le statue del senato di Roma in onore di Flavio Teodosio e l'equilibrio dei poteri imperiali in età teodosiana," *Athenaeum* 57 (1979), 381-403, and Giovanni Alberto Cecconi, *Commento storico al libro II dell' Epistolario di Q. Aurelio Simmaco* (Pisa: Giardini, 2002), 291-295.

> From nearly the beginning of the city of Mars the usage of *strenae* has grown, with as its originator king Tatius who first received boughs of a fruitful tree from the grove of Strenia as auspices of the new year, lord emperors Valentinian, Theodosius and Arcadius, famous, victorious and triumphators, forever *Augusti*. The name serves as an indication that this suits the valour of energetic men (*strenui*), and therefore a distinction of this king is due to you, whose divine mind expects more the attestation of watchfulness than the prediction of it. (2) Take therefore, defenders of public safety, the small gifts drawn out in gold in the usual fashion, not because you delight in the honours of rich metal, but so that our devotion might bear witness to the affluence of a happy age. We make a full libation to good emperors. Receive from your officials open marks of deference, you who condemn hidden gifts. It is deservedly that we offer to you the usual cups with five solidi, to the godheads of integrity, as it were, gifts by which neither your modesty nor our resources are burdened. May such a usage of duty last forever with you, and may the unending return of years establish the honour of your Clemency. It is willingly that the (urban) prefecture makes use of accustomed *strenae*, which should be given to energetic men (*strenui*).
>
> *Ab exortu paene Urbis Martiae strenarum usus adolevit auctore Tatio rege qui verbenas felicis arboris ex luco Streniae anni novi auspices primus accepit, Domini Imperatores Valentiniane, Theodosi et Arcadi inclyti, victores ac triumphatores semper Augusti. Nomen indicio est viris strenuis haec convenire virtute atque ideo Vobis huiusmodi insigne deberi, quorum divinus animus magis testimonium vigilantiae quam omen expectat (2) Sumite igitur, defensores publicae salutis, sollemniter auro ducta munuscula, non quia divitis metalli honore gaudetis, sed ut nostra devotio felicis saeculi testetur opulentiam. Bonis Principibus bene parta libamus. Suscipite a iudicibus aperta obsequia, qui pretia occulta damnatis. Merito Vobis sollemnes pateras cum quinis solidis ut Numinibus integritatis offerimus, quibus nec Vester pudor nec noster census oneratur. (3) Maneat aevum talis circa Vos usus officii et honorem Clementiae Vestrae interminus annorum recursus instauret. Libenter strenis sollemnibus Praefectura fungetur strenuis deferenda* (*Relat*. 15.1-3).

Here again Symmachus mentions *devotio* (*Relat*. 15.2), here his own, though he does not dwell on it as much as in *Relat*. 9.4, and here again he is explicit about the gift offered, cups with five gold *solidi*. In arguing for its suitability, however, Symmachus does not argue that this relatively small gift was enough; unlike in *Relat*. 9.4, he does not even raise the issue. Instead he argues that it was not too much, given what he describes as the modesty (*pudor*, *Relat*. 15.2) of the emperors and their lack of interest in monetary gifts (*Relat*. 15.2). This he argues on the basis of the wealth of the age, for which the emperor can take some credit and which justifies a richer gift than king Tatius received (*Relat*. 15.2), and on the basis of the light burden which it imposed on

him (*nec noster census oneratur*, *Relat*. 15.2). There is no particular reason to believe that the emperors would have actually rejected these customary gifts, and by calling attention to the hypothetical reasons why they might do so Symmachus in fact praised them and added to the gift.

The opposite situation is found in *Relat*. 13, in which Symmachus presents another routine but considerably larger gift, an anniversary gift which was, however, not larger than a modest emperor might be said to want, but smaller than what he had actually asked for:

> If the merits of your divine clemency should be considered, no resources which either nature produces or fortune brings about will equal the favour of our love towards you, but, in my opinion, the public judgement about the best emperor is not to be reckoned by gifts. (2) The senate, however, quick in its marks of deference, took all of the other roles of duties by which affection is signified and it entreats your health-giving godhead that in this offering, by which it added a not inconsiderable amount to earlier ones, you might know that this was ensured, namely that we not seem to be capable of less under you. For to your deified parents on their ten-year anniversary, considered individually, a smaller sum was decreed; your deified brother as well, when he passed the third lustrum of his imperial reign, is said to have been honoured with more sparing expense. Now enthusiasm in love to you has grown. For the loyal senatorial order promised a thousand six hundred pounds of gold to the ten-year celebrations of your reign, to be offered with urban weights, that is, with the balance of a more generous scale. (3) If indeed the senate had abilities equal to its intention, you would know that there is abundance in the public affection for your Perennity. But it preferred to please your Clemency with fidelity in acquitting rather than in the size of a false promise. Furthermore, under a young emperor a sensible limit to a gift is a pledge to make it often. Far be it that under a good emperor we bring in more than we are able, since indeed the generosity of devotees does not justly wear down those who offer it. Therefore, willingly take now the contributions decreed to your sacred treasury and, at your future advances, reserve hope of similar marks of deference to your reign.
>
> *Si divinae Clementiae Tuae merita cogitentur, nullae opes qua saut natura sufficit aut fortuna circumfert gratiam nostri erga Te amoris aequabunt, sed, ut mea fert opinio, publicum de optimo Imperatore iudicium non est muneribus aestimandum. (2) Senatus tamen, promptus obsequii, omnes officiorum partes ultro adripit, quibus indicatur adfectio et salutare Numen Tuum precatur, ut in hac oblatione qua nonnihil superioribus addidit intellegas hoc esse curatum, ne sub Te minus posse videamur. Nam divis parentibus Tuis ob decennium singulis minor summa decreta est; etiam divus frater Mansuetudinis Tuae, cum tertium lustrum aevi imperialis exigeret, parciore munificentia honoratus adseritur. Nunc in amorem Tuum studia creverunt. Nam mille sescentas auri libras decennalibus imperii Tui festis devotus Ordo promisit urbanis ponderibus conferendas, id est trutinae largioris examine (3) Quodsi pares animo vires Senatus habuisset, scires in publico amore Perennitatis Tuae esse divitias. Sed maluit Clementiae Tuae solutionis fide placere quam magnitudine perfidae sponsionis. Dehinc sub Imperatore primaevo sanus muneris*

> *modus votum est saepe faciendi. Absit ut bono Principi plus quam possumus ingeramus; amantium quippe largitio non iure deterit offerentes. Ergo et nunc libens sume sacro aerario decreta subsidia et futuris processibus imperii Tui obsequiorum similium spem reserva* (*Relat*. 13.1-3).

As in *Relat*. 15 and especially *Relat*. 9.4, Symmachus emphasizes the affection of the senate for the emperor (*nostri erga Te amoris*, *Relat*. 13.1, *adfectio*, *Relat*. 13.2, *in amorem Tuum studia*, *Relat*. 13.2, *scires in publico amore Perennitatis Tuae esse divitias*, *Relat*. 13.3), specifically described as incapable of being expressed with the resources that the senate actually possessed (*Relat*.13.1). Here again, as in the two cases previously considered, Symmachus is explicit about the gift offered, one thousand six hundred pounds of gold (*mille sescentas auri libras*, *Relat*. 13.2), and even about the (urban) system of measures used. His challenge is to explain how this gift, which is below the (unlimited) deserts of the emperor (*Relat*. 13.1), the gifts that the senate would have liked to give (*Relat*. 13.3), and, quite clearly but implicitly, the amount for which the emperor had actually asked, remains the appropriate gift. This he does in terms of the fact that the gift was larger than what was offered to previous emperors at similar occasions (*Relat*. 13.2), the limited resources of the senate (*Relat*. 13.3), and the intention of the senate to maintain, and, it is implied, to increase the gifts over a long reign (*Relat*. 13.3): all of these make it a generous token of esteem. This state paper therefore provides a rather different justification of the appropriateness of a gift than *Relat*. 9.4 and *Relat*. 15 do, owing to different circumstances, though in each case a clearly described gift is said to represent the same thing, unlimited affection.

Whose discourse of appropriate *cultus* is this? At least some of the discourse of appropriate *cultus* in *Relat*. 13 and *Relat*. 9.4 surely derives from the decrees of the senate which voted the gifts in question. This is the only possible conclusion if Symmachus is to be taken at face value in *Relat*. 13.2 when he writes that "the senate (…) entreats your health-giving godhead

that in this offering, by which it added a not inconsiderable amount to earlier ones, you might know that this was ensured, namely that we not seem to be capable of less under you" (*senatus […] precatur, ut in hac oblatione quae nonnihil superioribus addidit intellegas hoc esse curatum, ne sub te minus posse videamur*). In *Relat*. 9.4, similarly, it was surely the senate as a whole which decided that the rare gift of an equestrian statue to the father of Theodosius I, significant in light of his untimely death (to which Symmachus does not directly allude), was to be a grateful response to an imperial gift of horses; this is certainly what Symmachus implies. The wish that the emperor understand the sense of the gift was, in both *Relat*. 13 and *Relat*. 9.4, apparently that of the senate. In *Relat*. 15, in contrast, in which the gifts are from the urban prefecture (*Relat*. 15.3) and "from your officials" (*a iudicibus*, *Relat*. 15.2), Symmachus was solely responsible for the gift which he offered. Even in *Relat*. 13 and *Relat*. 9.4, however, Symmachus may have been personally responsible for the emphasis on affection, which does not appear in the acclamations of the *Theodosian Code*, though this certainly does not necessarily mean that he was the first urban prefect to insist on it in a written report. All that can be said is that Symmachus does insist on it.

There are other cases in which Symmachus discusses gifts from a rather different perspective, not primarily as tokens of affection or loyalty but objects whose symbolic value was not connected to their status as gifts. This is the case in *Relat*. 4, in which the emperor's tokens of esteem, here to the urban prefecture specifically, as in the gift described in *Relat*. 7, rather than to the senate and Roman people collectively, were refused. Here Symmachus asks Valentinian II to remove the carriage which his half-brother Gratian had offered to the urban prefecture. The Roman people, although not the recipients of the gift, remain important here because they witness the gift, and their imagined reaction is decisive in Symmachus' argument:

What we would not keep silent from the deified emperor, the brother of your Clemency, if the Roman world was enjoying his presence, I put before the guardians of his reputation with that loyalty by which it suits your prefect to prefer truth to flattery, lord emperor Valentinian, famous, victor and triumphator, forever Augustus. It was falsely believed that the usage of a haughty vehicle would raise the prestige of the urban office; this reason alone made the new institution pleasing to his benevolent nature, namely that rich pomp would carry around an ancient magistracy. (2) Sober honour refuses a glory of that kind, honour which never regrets itself, to which, if we allow anything to be added, we admit that it was previously missing. Therefore the eyes of the city seek the noble fashion of a private vehicle and the Roman people supposed degenerate a prefecture which attracted later models. Far be it that the governor of a free and therefore loyal city be carried in like Salmoneus of Elis. We do not linger over foreign wonders. Your city of Rome does not endure an incitement to arrogance, mindful, you may know, of its good ancestors whom the display of Tarquin and the chariot of Camillus himself offended. For even to such a great man a white four-horse team brought grim exile. But on the other hand the lowering of power brought glory to Publicola, for he lowered, to an assembly of citizens, his consular axe, and broke down the loftiness of his own honour, so that he might raise up the liberty of the city. Therefore we should be assessed by our character rather than our accoutrements. We do not fault the new gift, but we prefer our own goods. Get rid of the vehicle whose appearance is more splendid: we prefered that one whose usage was more ancient.

Quod apud germanum Clementiae Vestrae divum principem non sileremus, si eo res Romana frueretur, custodibus famae eius insinuo ea devotione qua Praefectum Vestrum decet fidem praeferre blanditiis, Domine Imperator Valentiniane inclyte, victor ac triumphator semper Auguste. Falso creditum est quod urbanae fastigium potestatis peregrine ac superbi vehiculi usus adtolleret; haec ratio sola novum statutum benigno tunc persuasit ingenio, ut veterem magistatum dives pompa gestaret. (2) Recusat istium modi decus honor sobrius quem numquam paenitet sui; cui si quid patimur accedere, fatemur hactenus defuisse. Itaque oculi quaerunt civitatis privati vehiculi nobilem modum et degenerem Praefecturam Populus Romanus existimat, quae posteriora traxit exempla. Absit ut moderator Urbis liberae atque ideo devotae tamquam Salmoneus Elius invehatur. Nihil moramur externa miracula. (3) Inritamentum superbiae Roma Vestra non patitur memor scilicet bonorum parentum quos Tarquinius fastus et ipsius Camilli currus offendit. Nam tanto illi viro albentes quadrigae exilium triste peperunt. At contra Publicolae decus tribuit inclinatio potestatis; submisit enim contioni civium consularem securem et honoris sui culmen infregit, ut libertatem civitatis erigeret. Ergo moribus potius quam insignibus aestimemur. Non culpamus novum beneficium, sed bona nostra praeferimus. Submovete vehiculum cuius cultus insignior est; illud maluimus cuius usus antiquior (*Relat*. 4.1-3).

Here Symmachus' focus is clearly on the honour as a contributor to the public prestige (*fastigium*, *Relat*. 4.1) of the urban prefecture, as perceived both by Gratian and by the Roman people, rather than on the imperial affection or respect which it conveyed. The wish of the

deceased emperor to increase the honours of the urban prefecture, described in *Relat*. 4.1, certainly implies respect for the office, and Symmachus does describe it as a gift (*beneficium*) when he explains that he did not fault it as such (*non culpamus novum beneficium*, *Relat*. 4.3), but his focus is elsewhere. The point is not, of course, that the gift, a new state carriage, did not adequately convey esteem for the magistracy on the part of the late emperor, but that, insofar as it was an honour with a target audience, the Roman people, as well as a giver (the emperor) and a recipient (the urban prefecture), its failure to reflect the sensibilities of this audience was problematic. Much the same was true in the case of the equestrian statue to the father of Theodosius I in *Relat*. 9.4, but there, the granting party also being the audience, it was self-evident, at least for the purposes of the state paper itself, that the honorific statues would be interpreted in the proper way. In the works of Symmachus, this sort of refusal of an imperial gift on traditionalist grounds is unique to *Relat*. 4.

To what extent was Symmachus innovating here? Surely not in the expression of reluctance to accept honours. The emperors themselves, since Augustus, had accepted only a limited number of the honours, especially the divine honours offered to them, presumably also for the sake of their public image in Rome.[255] More recently, Christian emperors had also declined certain honours on religious grounds, with Gratian's refusal of the insignia of the *pontifex maximus* (Zosimus 17.8) and Constantine's acceptance of a cult to his *gens* at Hispellum only on condition that it did not include blood sacrifice as two notable examples.[256] In neither case, however, were public expectations derived from Roman tradition an obstacle to accepting

[255] See the discussion of Tiberius' show of reluctance at accepting the succession of Augustus in Tacitus *Annals* 1.11-13, and provincial competition in Asia to secure a temple to him in Tacitus *Annals* 4.37-56.
[256] For the office of the pontifex maximus, see Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome*, 51-56. For the cult of the Flavii at Hispellum, see Kayoko Tabata, "The date and setting of the Constantinian inscription of Hispellum: *CIL* XI, 5265 = *ILS* 705," *Studi classici e orientali* 45 (1995): 369-410.

these honours, nor is it necessary to assume that Constantine or Gratian were trying to satisfy a specifically Christian public rather than simply expressing their own (religiously inspired but essentially personal) preferences. In appealing to a traditionalist Roman audience in refusing a gift, Symmachus was making an argument in terms specific to a Roman senator in public life and particularly fitting for the urban prefect. How commonly this line of argument had actually been used is difficult to determine, though the fact that Symmachus only uses it once suggests that it did not dominate his own rhetoric around imperial gifts.

It remains, then, that in almost all the cases examined above imperial benefactions and senatorial or prefectural *cultus* are described first of all as marks of general affection, which is made explicit, and only secondarily as particular gifts, although the gifts themselves are often enumerated. All the same, it is clear that the exact tokens of affection were sometimes important, and might occasionally be contentious. To offer the emperor less than he requested, in *Relat*. 13, might be interpreted as a slight and required explanation. In the same way, the emperor's apparently unsolicited gift of a new carriage for the urban prefect was incompatible with the view of elite self-presentation in Rome which Symmachus, for one, held; the carriage had to be refused, though naturally only in such a way that the generous intent of the benefaction was acknowledged. Even aside from these special cases, the fact of expressing an ostensibly unlimited affection with quantifiable gifts, gifts which did not directly and obviously reflect the personality of the recipient as they clearly had in the case of praise in panegyrics, might well encourage some comment on the part of the giver beyond what is found in panegyrics.

3.3 *Cultus* defended but disguised: *Relat*. 3

So far we have considered *cultus* and benefactions in situations of public life in which their exchange was self-evidently desirable, that is, between emperor and senate and between

emperor and urban prefect. Where the practice of *cultus* in public life was most open to question in the later 4th century, that is, when offered to the traditional gods, certain forms of it had become difficult if not impossible to offer for lack of public or imperial support. Their reestablishment required a defense of the necessity of the *cultus* itself, which Symmachus famously offers in *Relat*. 3, his single most-read work.[257] Here I do not examine the political circumstances of the controversy which Symmachus addresses, which are well-treated by Robert Chenault and Rita Lizzi-Testa in recent book chapters;[258] my purpose is instead to demonstrate that the work can be read not simply as a response to a flashpoint in pagan-Christian relations in Rome, although it was certainly that, but also as an (anomalous) specimen for Symmachus' own rhetoric surrounding *cultus*, with some overlap in concerns addressed.

The work, the longest of the state papers and the longest work of Symmachus to survive intact, is made up of two discrete appeals which are roughly equal in length but not otherwise very obviously parallel to each other, with general appeals for Roman religion at the open, close and centrepiece of the work:

A1 opening appeal to Valentinian II for Roman religion generally (*Relat*. 3.1-2)

B request for the return of the altar of Victory, removed by Gratian (*Relat*. 3.3-7)

C general appeal for the case of Roman religion (*Relat*. 3.9-10)

D request for renewed subsidies and testamentary rights for the Vestal virgins, removed by Gratian (*Relat*. 3.11-19)

A2 closing appeal to Valentinian II for Roman religion generally (*Relat*. 3.19-20)

[257] For a bibliography, see above, n. 75.
[258] Lizzi-Testa, "The Famous 'Altar of Victory Controversy' in Rome," 405-419; Chenault, "Beyond Pagans and Christians: Politics and Intra-Christian Conflict in the Controversy over the Altar of Victory," 46-63.

The opening and closing appeals closely resemble each other in that both cite the support of Valentinian I for the ancient *status quo* in religious affairs and both insist that Gratian was unaware of the senatorial objections to the violation of this *status quo* which occurred during his reign (*Relat*. 3.1 and 3.20). *Relat*. 3 is thus roughly symmetrical and relatively elaborate in its arrangement.

Although *Relat*. 3 presents two discrete requests for quite different elements of the traditional Roman religious establishment, the work is held together not simply by its structure but also by some common arguments in each case. Here I will highlight arguments for the necessity of religious *cultus* (*Relat*. 3.3-7, 15-17), the attempt to move between deity and abstraction in the case of Victory (*Relat*. 3.3), the argument that a Christian emperor needed not be personally involved in religious *cultus* (*Relat*. 3.19), that the trappings of *cultus* which he preserved might be interpreted simply as traditional institutions (*Relat*. 3.4), and that the emperor, by preserving them, demonstrated an uncontroversial commitment to generosity and due process (*Relat*. 3.13-14, 18).

The most clearly recurring of Symmachus' arguments in *Relat*. 3 is that *cultus* of the traditional gods is necessary in order to obtain needed benefactions. In his discussion of the altar of Victory (*Relat*. 3.3-7) he argues that religious cult is necessary to ensure what he explicitly describes as the patronage (*patrocinium*) of Victory (*Relat*. 3.3). He also argues that religious cult is necessary to ensure the provisioning of Rome (*Relat*. 3.15-17) in his discussion of the subsidies to the Vestal virgins (*Relat*. 3.11-19), in the latter case specifically citing a recent food shortage following Gratian's removal of the subsidies. In more general terms, Symmachus argues for the desirability of traditional *cultus* as having protected Rome from the Gauls and Hannibal and extended the Roman empire in *Relat*. 3.9, the centrepiece of the work, and argues, in his

conclusion, that the traditional *cultus* which Valentinian I preserved (*servavit*, *Relat*. 3.20) itself preserved (*servavit*) the ruling dynasty (*Relat*. 3.19).

The argument receives its most general formulation in *Relat*. 3.8 and his appeal to past advantage (*utilitas*): "Now if the passage of a long time provides authority to religious affairs, faith must be kept with so many ages and it is incumbent on us to follow our ancestors, who with happy results followed theirs" (*Iam si longa aetas auctoritatem religionibus faciat, servanda est tot saeculis fides et sequendi sunt nobis parentes qui secuti sunt feliciter suos*, *Relat*. 3.8) This argument that *cultus* is advantageous in order to secure benefactions, as opposed to fitting given the character of the recipient, is one which would be quite unnecessarily crass when cultivating the emperors, and Symmachus does not include it in that context.

In all these cases Symmachus assumes the potency of the traditional gods and the reality of their benefactions, points which were not undisputed in his time and which Ambrose, in his refutation of *Relat*. 3, explicitly rejects (*Ep*. 18.6, 7, 22). The unacceptability of the recipients of traditional *cultus*, for a Christian emperor, thus remained a serious objection to Symmachus' argument. Symmachus addresses this concern in several ways. In *Relat*. 3.8 he flatly asserts that local forms of *cultus* (and their recipients) have divine sanction: "the divine mind assigned different forms of worship as guardians to the cities; as souls to those who are born, so guardian spirits holding their destiny are apportioned to the peoples" (*varios custodes urbibus cultus mens divina distribuit; ut animae nascentibus, ita populis fatales genii dividuntur*, *Relat*. 3.8). Symmachus more obviously attempts to accommodate Christian objections to worship of pagan deities in two other passages (*Relat*. 3.3 and *Relat*. 3.10) in which he argues that the recipients of religious *cultus* need not be considered as pagan deities at all. The first of these is found toward the beginning of the state paper:

> Let the honour which is denied to the divinity at least be returned to the name. Your Eternity owes much to Victory and will owe still more: let those oppose this power whom it in no way benefited; as for you, do not abandon a patronage friendly to triumphs. This might is desirable to everyone; let no one deny that that thing should be cultivated which is admitted to be wished-for.
>
> *Reddatur saltem nomini honor qui numini denegatus est. Multa victoriae debet Aeternitas Vestra et adhuc plura debebit: aversentur hanc potestatem, quibus nihil profuit; vos amicum triumphis patrocinium nolite deserere. Cunctis potentia ista votiva est; nemo colendam neget, quam profitetur optandam* (*Relat*. 3.3).

In deference to the emperor's Christianity, Symmachus suggests *cultus* of victory as an uncontroversial concept rather than of Victory as a pagan goddess, neatly equating what ought to be cultivated (*colendam*) with what ought to be desired (*optandam*), as victory clearly is. The passage is deliberately ambiguous, since although Symmachus suggests *cultus* of a name emptied of pagan content, victory nonetheless is described as offering patronage (*patrocinium*), and Valentinian II is described as being in its debt, properties more obviously associated with a person than an abstraction.

A more general argument is found later, in *Relat*. 3.10, in which Symmachus argues that all religious *cultus*, not simply that directed toward deities named for abstractions, might be considered acceptable:

> It is fair that whatever everyone cultivates be considered one. We see the same stars, the sky is common, the same universe embraces us: what difference does it make with which provision each one seeks the truth? It is not possible by one path to arrive at so great a mystery.
>
> *Aequum est quidquid omnes colunt unum putari. Eadem spectamus astra, commune caelum est, idem nos mundus involvit: quid interest qua quisque prudentia verum requirat? Uno itinere non potest perveniri ad tam grande secretum* (*Relat*. 3.10).

Here, instead of arguing that honour be attached to an (uncontroversial) name, emptied of religious content, Symmachus argues that the (controversial) name is irrelevant. He develops neither notion in much detail, and the pagan deities whose worship he defends remain the major

liability of his argument, but clearly he did attempt in *Relat*. 3, in a way that he did not need to elsewhere, to establish the acceptability of the recipients of *cultus* as recipients.

Other supporting arguments defend particular trappings of *cultus* on other grounds, avoiding the issue of *cultus* as such and not emphasizing divine benefactions. This is true of a parenthetical discussion inserted into the discussion of the precedent of Constantius II (*Relat*. 3.4, 3.6-7), that the altar of Victory guaranteed the trustworthiness of oaths in the senate, simply as a reminder of religion:

> Where will we swear to uphold your laws and pronouncements? By what religious inhibition will the deceiving mind be frightened into not lying in testimony? All things indeed are full of God, and there is no place safe for oath breakers, but it very much helps for the fear of committing crimes that the presence of the divinity also be impressed. That altar holds all harmony, that altar gathers the trust of individuals, nor does any other thing make more authority for our judgements, than that the senatorial order decides everything as if under oath. Will profane seats therefore be available to oath breakers and will my famous emperors reckon this worthy of endorsement, who are protected by a public oath?
>
> *Ubi in leges Vestras et verba iurabimus? Qua religione mens falsa terrebitur ne in testimoniis mentiatur? Omnia quidem deo plena sunt, nec ullus perfidis tutus est locus, sed plurimum valet ad metum delinquendi etiam praesentia numinis urgueri. Illa ara concordiam tenet omnium, illa ara fidem convenit singulorum neque aliud magis auctoritatem facit sententiis nostris, quam quod omnia quasi iuratus Ordo decernit. Patebit ergo sedes profana periuriis et hoc inclyti Principes mei probabile iudicabunt, qui sacramento publico tuti sunt*? (*Relat*. 3.5).

Senatorial honesty here is not itself a divine benefaction, but rather a by-product of a senatorial belief, brought to mind by the visible presence of the altar, that the gods punished oath breakers. This is an argument against the desacralisation of the senate house and of Roman institutions generally, but not one which relies on the notion of the gods as benefactors who receive *cultus*, and naturally not one which has obvious counterparts in the discussions of *cultus* previously reviewed. It reveals a tendency in Symmachus' *Relat*. 3 to describe the trappings of *cultus* in a framework other than that of *cultus* and benefactions, in obvious distinction to the tendency to explicitly place acts of *cultus* in a framework of *cultus* in *Relat*. 13 or 15.

In a similar vein, Symmachus argues in the passage in which the passage cited above is an insertion that the return of the altar of Victory is in conformity with the true policy of the Christian emperors not toward religious *cultus* specifically, but toward the condition of religious rites (*status religionum*, *Relat*. 3.3, 3.19) in general. This is asserted for the Christian emperors in general:

> Certainly let emperors of either sect, of either opinion be counted: the earlier part of them cultivated the rites of the ancestors, the more recent part did not remove them. If the religious duty of the ancients does not serve as a model, let the blind eye of the more recent serve.
>
> *Certe dinumerentur Principes utriusque sectae, utriusque sententiae: pars eorum prior caerimonias patrum coluit, recentior non removit. Si exemplum non facit religio veterum, faciat dissimulatio proximorum* (*Relat*. 3.3).

This is particularly emphasized in the case of Valentinian I, father of Valentinian II (*Relat*. 3.20). Symmachus sets aside the model of Constantius II's earlier removal of the altar of Victory a first time, by arguing that this was a short-lived innovation (*Relat*. 3.4, 3.6) which was not particularly representative of the religious policy of that emperor, as exemplified by his actions during his visit to Rome in 357:

> Let your Eternity learn of the other deeds of the same emperor, which it might more fittingly bring into usage. Nothing did he snatch from the privileges of the sacred virgins, he filled again the priesthoods with nobles. He did not refuse expenses to Roman rites, and through all the streets of the eternal city, following the happy senate, he saw with a calm visage the shrines, he read the inscribed names of the gods on the pediments, he inquired after the foundations of the temples, he admired the founders, and although he himself followed other religious rites, he preserved these by decree.
>
> *Accipiat Aeternitas Vestra alia eiusdem Principis facta quae in usum dignius trahat. Nihil ille decerpsit sacrarum virginum privilegiis, replevit nobilibus sacerdotia. Romanis caerimoniis non negavit impensas et per omnes vias Aeternae Urbis laetum secutus senatum vidit placido ore delubra, legit inscripta fastigiis deum nomina, percontatus templorum origines est, miratus est conditores, cumque alias religiones ipse sequeretur, has servavit imperio* (*Relat*. 3.7).

The verb which Symmachus uses to sum up the actions of Constantius II toward pagan rites is the same that he uses for Valentinian, namely "preserved" (*servavit*, *Relat*. 3.7, 3.20). As for Gratian,

he argues that the religious policies of Gratian which he was attempting to reverse (both the removal of the altar of Victory and the removal of the subsidies and rights to receive bequests of the Vestal virgins), though originating in his court, were not the personal policies of the emperor, or at any rate would have been reversed by Gratian had he known of the objections of the senate:

> Offer this, therefore, to your deified brother, namely the rectification of someone else's plan; cover over the deed, which he did not know had displeased the senate. Indeed, it is agreed that the legation was shut out for this purpose, that public opinion not make it through to him. It is for what future times will think that you should not hesitate to cancel what is proved to not have been the emperor's.
>
> *Praestate etiam divo fratri Vestro alieni consilii correctionem; tegite factum, quod senatui displicuisse nescivit. Siquidem constat ideo exclusam legationem, ne ad eum iudicium publicum perveniret. Pro existimatione est temporum superiorum ut non dubitetis abolere quod probandum est Principis non fuisse* (*Relat*. 3.20).

By setting aside these actions of both Gratian and Constantius II as either hasty or actions of their courts of which they were not personally aware, Symmachus leaves no anti-pagan precedent which represented the personal and considered judgement of a Christian emperor and was representative of his policy more generally. He argues that, although these emperors did not themselves practice pagan *cultus*, they nonetheless left room for it (*Relat*. 3.3) and that it was incumbent on Valentinian II to do the same.

The question of precedent is not foreign to Symmachus' discussions of cultivation of the emperor in the works previously examined, but there past precedent always established the prestige (as in *Relat*. 9.4) and generosity (as in *Relat*. 13) of particular gifts, or the way in which they might represent the poverty or wealth of the time (as in *Relat*. 15). The permissibility of cultivating the emperor in general was always a given, whereas with the cultivation of the gods the permissibility of the cultivation itself is to be established through precedent. Whether or not Symmachus was consciously innovating here, it is clear that this is not something that would have needed to be established in earlier antiquity.

Elsewhere, finally, Symmachus moves away from the question of religion and religious policy altogether and confines himself to fiscal policy and policy on monuments. The altar of Victory is thus defended as part of the adornments of the senate house (*ornamenta … curiae*, *Relat*. 3.4), on par with other adornments. Rita Lizzi-Testa has convincingly argued that the use of this language is to be associated with recent legislation, which Symmachus was accused of enforcing with undue rigour in an incident described in *Relat*. 21, protecting the temples of Rome as monuments, and was part of a larger senatorial attempt to use senatorial procedure and imperial legislation to protect traditional cult.[259] In the same way, Symmachus presents the testamentary rights of the Vestal virgins which Gratian had revoked as a simple matter of justice and consistency (*Relat*. 3.13-14). His argument is that freedmen and even slaves, to some degree, enjoyed these rights (*Relat*. 3.14) and he presents the subsidies for the Vestal virgins as acquired rights on par with other acquired rights (*Relat*. 3.18). The legal and administrative principles which Symmachus invokes are not, of course, specific to religion: insofar as religious *cultus* was controversial, he defends particular instances of and particular parts of the apparatus which provided it on less controversial grounds not inherently connected with *cultus*.

Where generosity and gratitude do enter here, they are not directed toward the gods, the objects of religious *cultus* – although Symmachus underlines the importance of showing gratitude to them in *Relat*. 3.15-17 – but rather toward their ministers, for performing state services. Symmachus asks "should that be denied under the most generous emperors which the stingiest offered?" (*sub largissimis Imperatoribus denegetur quod parcissimi praestiterunt*?, *Relat*. 3.11) and "but greed does not fit with your character" (*atqui avaritia in mores Vestros non cadit*, *Relat*. 3.12). The emphasis on generosity is shared with discussions of imperial benefactions, but here,

[259] Lizzi-Testa, "The Famous 'Altar of Victory Controversy' in Rome," 405-419.

rather than praising the generosity demonstrated by imperial gifts, as in *Relat*. 7 and *Relat*. 9, Symmachus argues prescriptively, insisting that the emperors must demonstrate their generous character by showing generosity to the Vestal virgins, who are ministers of *cultus* of the gods. The description of the emperor remains similar in both cases, but it is cited to different effects.

Ultimately, although Symmachus is somewhat vague on the question of the recipient of *cultus*, he is clear on the question of the giver, namely that it is the senate, not the emperor:

> He is, therefore, trying to strike an empty fear into your divine mind, whoever claims that you have the responsibility of those who offer if you do not undergo the resentment of those who take away. May the secret guardians of all sects favour your Clemency, and especially these which at one point helped your ancestors. Let them defend you, let them be cultivated by us.
>
> *Inanem igitur metum divino animo Vestro temptat incutere, si quis adserit conscientiam Vos habere praebentium, nisi detrahentium subieritis invidiam. Faveant Clementiae Vestrae sectarum omnium arcana praesidia et haec maxime quae maiores Vestros aliquando iuverunt. Vos defendant, a nobis colantur* (*Relat*. 3.19).

Symmachus is clear, then, that Valentinian II, like his Christian predecessors, need not cultivate the gods himself, so long as he allows the senate to do so with the resources traditionally assigned for this purpose. This (ostensible) attempt to clarify the identity of the giver, and to dissociate the emperor from the giving, is naturally not present in the discussions of cultivation of the emperor, in which there was no particular reason to dissociate anyone from it. Here again Symmachus takes his discourse of *cultus* in new directions.

Symmachus, then, relies on a wide variety of arguments in *Relat*. 3, not all of which are related to divine *cultus* or benefactions. He argues that the gods must be cultivated in order to ensure the needed benefactions which they provide, that the religious *cultus* offered is not necessarily objectionable to the religious policy of a Christian emperor. He also argues that the trappings of *cultus* are part of a Roman sacrality which ought to be preserved for other reasons, or, more often, that they are guaranteed by general due process which, at the limit, stemmed from

the character of the emperor's rule more generally and not simply his dealings with Rome itself. Finally, he insists that the Christian emperor need not be personally involved in pagan *cultus* at all. On every point he is opposed by Ambrose.

Ultimately, there are three questions which he answers here. The first is that of the suitability of the particular tokens of devotion offered (incense on the altar of Victory and state-supported *cultus* by the Vestal virgins) to achieve their own purposes. This question, so important with gifts offered to the emperors, which are described as suitable to convey devotion, is virtually ignored here, though Ambrose, in his reply to Symmachus, addresses the question directly when he argues, on Christian and biblical grounds, that God did not wish to be worshiped (*coli*) in stones (*Ep*. 18.8). Whereas Symmachus states in *Orat*. 2.32 that the gods actually expressed a preference for (*maluerunt*) the particular forms of worship which they received, which were hence suitable; in *Relat*. 3, he confines himself to the general statement that all knowledge of the gods, implicitly including the way in which they wished to be cultivated, derives from experience: "for, when all basis for reckoning is in concealment, from where more appropriately than from public memory and demonstrations of favourable things does knowledge of the divine powers come?" (*nam, cum ratio omnis in operto sit, unde rectius quam de memoria atque documentis rerum secundarum cognitio venit numinum*, *Relat*. 3.8).

The second question is that of the appropriateness of the gods receiving *cultus* at all, as Ambrose insists, in his initial response to the case, that the Christian God was (*Ep*. 17.1, 2, 7). Symmachus alludes to a similar question in *Orat*. 3.1 when he describes his purpose as that of explaining the reasons for his devotion to Gratian. The difference in *Relat*. 3, of course, is that whereas in a panegyric Symmachus could describe his reasons for devotion entirely in terms of the message of the court, which he needed simply to repeat back, here he was opposing the court. The stated reasons why *cultus* is appropriate are therefore practical, to avoid military or

agricultural disaster; Symmachus implicitly assumes the existence and power of the gods to help, a notion which Ambrose attacks (*Ep*. 18.6-7, 18.22).

The third question, finally, unique to *Relat*. 3, is that of the right of tokens of devotion and of the *cultus* which they offer to exist within a public order guaranteed by Christian emperors: Symmachus argues, from past precedent under Christian emperors and from his interpretation of the law and of the personality of the emperor, that they had this right. To the extent that the personality and duties of the emperor, in clear contrast to the nature of the gods, a point on which Symmachus obfuscates, are prominent here, their prominence recall the centrality of the personality of the emperor in the panegyrics, though in *Relat*. 3 the emperor appears as Symmachus would have him (just and generous) rather than precisely as he would have himself appear. To the extent that Symmachus argues the right of pagan *cultus* to exist within a public order guaranteed by Christian emperor, and it is certainly one of the main arguments which Symmachus makes in *Relat*. 3, religious tokens are emptied of what they might represent and their maintenance is enjoined purely as a matter of convention and due process; the result, from the emperor's viewpoint, is something that could not be described as *cultus* at all. Naturally this argument is rejected by Ambrose, who argues in *Ep*. 7.14 that the Christian emperor is responsible as a Christian for all the religious worship that he permits. It has the effect, however, of fixing the tokens of *cultus* in a particular conventional form, and accounts for the conservativism of Symmachus' argument, somewhat less apparent in most of the passages from elsewhere in the *Relations* reviewed above.[260]

[260] Michele Salzman, "Reflections on Symmachus' Idea of Tradition," *Historia* 38 (1989) 348-364 points out that, compared to Firmicus Maternus or C. Marius Victorinus of the previous generation (or Cicero), Symmachus permits himself virtually no speculation about the metaphysical underpinnings of traditionalism.

To state the obvious, then, the issues in *Relat*. 3 include but are by no means limited to those in the works previously discussed, highlighting questions which were simply assumed in those works, and obfuscating on questions on which those works were explicit. The aim of *Relat*. 3, limited to the return of a specific altar and the cancelling of two policies of Gratian with regards to the Vestal virgins, is no broader than the aim in any other work discussed, except perhaps for *Relat*. 4; indeed, it must be considered narrower than the aim of his works which ostensibly offered tokens of unlimited devotion. All the same, the fact that it brought Symmachus into ideological conflict with certain elements at court around the question of religious *cultus* encouraged Symmachus to offer a wider range of arguments, mostly indirectly connected to *cultus*, in support of his limited aims. Some of these arguments may have been novel and original to Symmachus; others, including some of his central arguments, cannot have been, since the implication that the traditional gods might worthily be cultivated and the specific point that the emperor was not personally responsible for what he funded are both countered in Ambrose's *Ep*. 17, written before he had access to the text of Symmachus' report. At the same time, as well as leading him to develop new arguments, ideological conflicts also encouraged Symmachus to omit and downplay arguments about *cultus* which he uses elsewhere because they were unlikely to convince whereas in the panegyrics and the works presenting and acknowledging gifts discussions of *cultus* were more likely to be superfluous because the point which he would convey was already understood and accepted. The result is certainly more clearly traditionalist than any of the other works discussed above except for *Relat*. 4, but it can still be placed on the same continuum; indeed, the work is best understood this way.

3.4 Conclusion

These examples show that Symmachus was, at various points in his career, responsible for offering *cultus* and accepting benefactions on behalf of the senate and Roman people, and for ensuring that *cultus* continued to be offered. More remarkably, they also show that Symmachus, while engaged in these exchanges, regularly and explicitly highlighted his *cultus* in order to demonstrate its appropriateness, though far more as urban prefect in the *Relations* than as senatorial ambassador in the panegyrics. The panegyrics were clearly delivered for no other reason than to offer *cultus* to the emperor, but are, at least in their extant fragmentary forms, much more explicit about his qualification to rule, the reasons for senatorial loyalty, than about the senatorial loyalty actually inspired, which *cultus* might express. Much more likely to comment on the emotional state allegedly inspired by the emperor and reflected in gifts (and the means by which it was expressed), as we saw, were briefer written communications offering, accepting and refusing particular concrete tokens of loyalty (*Relat*. 4, 7, 9, 13 and 15). Here Symmachus (usually) argues that tokens whose expense and cultural resonance made them plausible conveyors of ostensibly unlimited affection did in fact convey this affection.

Most of the instances discussed emphasize an agreement between court and senate which could be quite plausibly asserted, but there were also instances of disagreement on the question of proper cultivation and benefactions. One obvious example was in religion: clearly there was Roman *cultus*, of the pagan gods, as described in *Relat*. 3, which Symmachus considered necessary but which was increasingly unacceptable to the (largely Christian) court. There were also, conversely, imperial benefactions which were considered appropriate at court but which Symmachus considered unacceptable in Rome, such as the new state carriage of the urban prefect

(*Relat*. 4). In these cases, Symmachus argued his (distinctively senatorial) point while gliding over actual differences with the court as much as as possible.

Does Symmachus, then, offer a single consistent vision of *cultus* throughout his works? Despite some consistency between *Relat*. 7, 9, 13 and 15 and a general compatibility of these works with the less explicit *Orat*. 1-3, it is certainly difficult to square the vision of these works, if a single vision can be extracted, with that of *Relat*. 3, which in any case itself contains several mutually incompatible arguments. It is possible that Symmachus, partly as a product of his own time, really did consider *cultus* in connection with religion in one way (in terms of rites with particular effects) and *cultus* in connection with the emperor in another (in terms of expressions of real affection). This is perfectly conceivable, but it does not automatically follow from the texts themselves. *Relat*. 3, for all its elaboration, is unlikely to have been a complete and perfect reflection of Symmachus' thoughts on religion, nor did Symmachus necessarily conceptualize the emperors in quite the terms in which he describes them. The manner in which he describes himself as cultivating the emperors, with ultimately arbitrary tokens whose value stemmed primarily from the senatorial devotion which they convey, might conceivably also represent his general view of cultivation of the gods.

Indeed, despite the general thrust of *Relat*. 3, in which Symmachus presents the details of divine cult as hallowed by tradition in the particular form in which they had recently existed and thus inalterable, there are indications elsewhere that he accepted that arrangements for the *cultus* of the gods could be altered, at least to some extent. Symmachus, in an enigmatic passage, describes the care of the gods handed over from the priests to the citizens (*convenit inter publicos sacerdotes, ut in custodiam civium publico obsequio traderemus curam deorum*), an action which maintained *cultus*, and even significantly increased its elaboration (*ergo multo tanto ornatior quam solebat caelestis factus est honor*, *Ep*. 1.46.2). Even in *Relat*. 3 itself Symmachus allows

for the possibility of changes in religious institutions, having a personified Rome admit, in passing "I will see what is thought should be instituted" (*videro quale sit quod instituendum putatur*, *Relat*. 3.10); here the preceding and following assertions that real changes would be insulting to Rome are based on civic pride rather than on religious impossibility. There is no reason to doubt that Symmachus valued traditional forms of religious *cultus* in themselves, but forms of *cultus* of the emperor might be almost equally traditional. It is thus likely that his emphasis in *Relat*. 3 on the immutability of particular tokens of *cultus* is at least partly accounted for by the particular situation with which he was faced and the fact that the argument seemed promising in this context.

As for Symmachus' real conception of the cultivation and benefactions of the emperor, conversely, it is unlikely that he really thought that the residents of Rome loved Theodosius I, whom very few of them can have ever met in 384, in quite the same sense that they loved their own parents and children, as he states that they do in *Relat*. 9.4. In practice most gifts to the emperor were simply routine, although clearly they could be altered if necessary. Nor can it be denied that certain tokens of imperial affection, especially the provisioning of Rome, had a practical value for the Roman people at least partially independent of any symbolic value: Rome depended, for public order, on receiving particular benefactions at particular times. There was an obvious limit to the extent to which these benefactions could be altered or exchanged for others. Under these circumstances, it was at least as accurate and relevant to say that imperial goodwill guaranteed future benefactions as that benefactions attested imperial goodwill, although Symmachus had obvious reasons for downplaying the former and emphasizing the latter. Despite the clear emphasis on affection in the works considered above, Symmachus would have had reason to sometimes consider *cultus* of and benefactions by the emperor in an instrumental,

utilitarian perspective not entirely unlike that which he presents in *Relat*. 3, in which the value of *cultus* is measured by success.

If the above argument is valid, then, rather than reflecting a specifically religious and a specifically imperial vision of *cultus*, *Relat*. 3 and the other works discussed above simply reflect two perspectives on *cultus* between which Symmachus presumably switched freely. This is not to deny that Symmachus may have had a primary perspective through which he actually considered the cultivation of the gods or of the emperors respectively, but there is no reason to suppose, particularly in the former case, that it necessarily corresponded with the perspective through which he considers these in works addressed to the emperors. In any case, the rhetoric itself appears to be adaptable to Symmachus' needs.

Flexible in the tangible gifts offered and both flexible and perhaps sometimes innovative in the rhetoric which accompanied and defended their offering, Symmachus' *cultus* does nonetheless pursue reasonably consistent ends. Insofar as public *cultus* was a means to an end, it can be said that all the works discussed above promote positive and fruitful relations between Rome and the emperor and the gods respectively: this was necessarily the goal of public *cultus* at Rome. Naturally, the successful offering of public *cultus* might advance Symmachus' personal career, as the panegyrics and *Relat*. 3, at least, as Cristiana Sogno emphasizes in her 2006 biography, promised to do.[261] All the same, the primary goal of public *cultus* is surely public.

Insofar as Roman public *cultus* pursued, virtually by definition, the objectives mentioned above, its aims were less likely to be novel than the specific gifts or the discourse that they generated; insofar as it was ancient, its objectives could be termed consistently traditional in a

[261] See Sogno, *Q. Aurelius Symmachus: A Political Biography*, 2-3, 21-22. For the reward of the panegyrist by his honorand, see Gillett, "Epic Panegyric and Political Communication in the Fifth-Century West," 267 and 280-281. For the importance to Symmachus of vindication in 384 in the case the altar of Victory, which he had unsuccessfully prosecuted in 382, see Sogno, *Q. Aurelius Symmachus: A Political Biography*, 46, 49.

sense that the means, both tangible gifts and discourse, were not. Close relations between Rome and the gods, for one, though under obvious threat in Symmachus' time, was a clearly traditional aim of the Roman state, amply illustrated in the works of Livy, to take only one example with which Symmachus would have been familiar.[262] Symmachus himself highlights the traditional nature of his aims in *Relat*. 3: at the limit, he might, and does in fact, cite the entire Roman past until Valentinian I as a model for the status of religious affairs which he desired to continue (*Relat*. 3.3). The means that he was prepared to take and the entente which he expected to reach with the court may not have been entirely traditional, but the ultimate objective surely was.[263]

In terms of imperial-senatorial relations, Symmachus' aims were also surely traditional at least in the minimal sense that close relations were the aims of many earlier senators. An obvious historical reference point for this state of relations, to which Symmachus sometimes alludes, was the age of the adoptive and Antonine emperors of the second century. This period was idealized in Pliny's *Panegyric*, which Symmachus certainly read, and presumably also in the orations of Fronto, which he may have read;[264] a wider resonance of this period in senatorial circles is confirmed if Chenault is correct in seeing self-consciously Trajanic overtones to senatorial negotiations with Constantine and to the self-presentation of Theodosius I in Rome.[265] Symmachus' own direct intertexts with the *Panegyric* itself appear primarily in works connected

[262] For Symmachus and Livy, see the (relatively limited) inventory of parallel passages in Kroll, *De Q. Aurelii Symmachi Studiis Graecis et Latinis*, 80-82 and the discussion of Symmachus' copying of a complete text of Livy (Symmachus *Ep*. 9.13), and his responsibility for correcting the manuscripts, see Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome*, 477-478, 498-516, 522-523, with a bibliography on p. 498. Although Cameron is probably correct in downplaying the personal involvement of Symmachus in serious textual scholarship on Livy, it remains that he did own a complete copy and was directly familiar with at least part of it.
[263] The additional objective of maintaining the (traditional) distinctiveness of Rome in religious as in non-religious affairs, as described by Chenault, "Rome Without Emperors," 239-259, also sought to preserve a traditional state of affairs, though not one inherently tied to *cultus*.
[264] Kroll, *De Q. Aurelii Symmachi Studiis Graecis et Latinis*, 97 for Fronto's extant works and Kelly, "Pliny and Symmachus," 269-287 for engagement with Pliny's *Panegyric*.
[265] Chenault, "Rome Without Emperors," 109, 114.

with the accession of Gratian, as Gavin Kelly points out,[266] but it is striking that Symmachus cites the age of the adoptive and Antonine emperors in *Ep*. 1.13.3 as an era of virtue in which the imperial virtues (*bonus, strenuus, innocens, plenus officii*) which Gratian personally exhibited had come naturally, since otherwise both he and his contemporaries locate the era of ideal virtue much earlier in Roman history.[267] In this sense, cooperation with the court was not simply more potentially fruitful than confrontation for a traditionalist senator, but could be seen as a traditional goal in itself.

Roman tradition, then – and not primarily that of the Republic, despite his explicit focus on it –, provided a vague and still mostly uncontroversial ideal for what Symmachus attempted to achieve through *cultus*. To the extent that it was controversial, Symmachus was a traditionalist and might highlight this fact; for the most part he was simply a traditional senator. The practice of *cultus* by cities under recent emperors, in turn, provided a (relatively flexible and usually uncontroversial) means of achieving his ends, means which Symmachus was either willing to or felt that he needed to highlight. In his *cultus* – indeed, through his *cultus* –, Symmachus remained closely engaged with contemporary realities: he rarely appears out of touch, though he was unsuccessful with *Relat*. 3. Discussions of Symmachus as a traditionalist or proponent of a pagan revival therefore run the risk of over-simplifying: Symmachus' ends were vaguer and his means more contemporary than is sometimes realized.

In any case, at least by 385, when he resigned his urban prefecture, Symmachus was well-practiced in *cultus* as it was offered in the public sphere and well aware of the issues surrounding

[266] Kelly, "Pliny and Symmachus," 263-287, especially 274-285; see above, p. 6-8.
[267] The third Punic war was the turning point identified in Sallust *Cataline* 10, a school text in late antiquity, and the tendency to idealize this earlier period is amply borne out in Felmy, "Die Römische Republic im Geschichtsbild der Spätantike." History under the emperors, less well-represented in the classical curriculum, is less likely to be explicitly idealized, and Kelly, "Pliny and Symmachus," 287 n. 69 points out that in not citing Pliny explicitly Symmachus "is typical of Latin authors of late antiquity who tend not to cite post-Augustan literature by name."

it; whether his appreciation of it and discourse surrounding it developed further in the 390s cannot be determined due to the loss of his later panegyrics. As a practitioner of *cultus* he cannot, of course, have been unique, but there may well have been elements of originality in his discussions of *cultus* in these contexts, presumably in his defense of traditional religion in *Relat*. 3, but perhaps also in his willingness to explicitly articulate his (senatorial and relatively consistent) understanding of the way in which the emperor might be cultivated. His consistency in highlighting it defines him as an actor in high senatorial politics

To the extent that Symmachus was not simply following established practice in writing state papers (panegyrics are a different question), one source of inspiration must have been the much better-attested conventions of letter-writing. Though the forms of address that Symmachus uses in the *Relations*, written to obvious superiors, and in his *Letters*, written to friends, are quite different, there is a certain resemblance between certain discussions of *cultus* in the *Relations* and in the *Letters* of Symmachus and late antique letters more generally. That Symmachus drew in part on standard letter-writing practice in his self-description as virtually present to the emperor as a result of the latter's letter in *Relat*. 7.2 is likely.[268] Analogies to professions of affection between friends in letter-writing are similarly clear in descriptions of senatorial affection for the emperor in *Relat*. 9.4 and *Relat*. 13. In any case, a similarly explicit treatment of *cultus* would figure in a specifically epistolary context in the next decade and a half in Symmachus' major work of literary self-presentation, the *Letters*, as we will see in the following chapter.

[268] See above, n. 252.

CHAPTER 4

Epistolary *cultus* and literary self-presentation in the *Letters* of Symmachus

Summary:

This chapter aims to demonstrate that two of the features which have tended to make Symmachus' published *Letters* uninteresting to modern readers, namely his lingering over the question of letter-writing itself and the repetitive nature of the sentiments expressed, are not only an integral and useful part of Symmachus' strategy as a letter-writer, as John Matthews argued in his ground-breaking 1974 article, but a deliberate part of his literary self-presentation to a Roman audience. I argue that Symmachus presents his epistolary *cultus* of powerful patrons as entirely appropriate in his published *Letters*; I further seek to prove that it is, in fact, the primary purpose of the *Letters* to do so, governing the selection and arrangement of the individual letters.

This chapter is a return to the argument of chapter 1, but from a literary rather than a historical perspective, demonstrating not what Symmachus had reason to do, but what he does in fact do as an author and editor of his own works. Having argued in the previous chapter that an explicit discourse of *cultus* is his personal hallmark in his cultivation of the emperors, here I argue that another form of this discourse, which does engage at least indirectly with the question of merit, is the central and distinctive feature of his main literary legacy. This chapter supports the argument that, while engagement in *cultus* is part of what makes Symmachus typical as a late Roman senator, explicit treatment of *cultus*, here in service of self-presentation as a good late Roman senator, is part of what makes him unique.

The thesis of this chapter will be demonstrated first through an analysis of the structure of the first seven books of the *Letters* as a deliberately crafted work of self-presentation. Here I will argue, based on what is included and its organization, that letter-writing is not simply the vehicle of Symmachus' self-presentation but, as a means of cultivating powerful friends, the primary

object of discussion. There follows a close reading of those passages in the *Letters* which relate to the regularity with which Symmachus sent letters, the authenticity of the sentiments expressed, and the disparagement of the direct pursuit of honours through informal connections and personal influence. Here, as in the previous chapter, I highlight consistency of approach. Unlike in the previous chapter, I do not focus on the usefulness of including the highlighted remarks in the works as initially sent, although I assume that most if not all of these remarks were not simply added for publication but did figure in the letters as sent and served a useful purpose there. I focus instead on the usefulness of the inclusion and positioning of the letters in question for the sort of literary self-presentation which I have posited, and argue on this basis that it would have been reasonable to expect a contemporary reader to read the *Letters* in the way that I have suggested.

Introduction

This chapter focusses not on Symmachus' discourse of proper *cultus* and benefactions as an integral and perhaps idiosyncratic part of his efforts to ensure that his cultivation was successful and achieved its potential in the public sphere, but on his literary representations of his *cultus* for less immediately practical ends. As noted in the first chapter, the successful use of *cultus* by senators, though apparently normal enough in Symmachus' time, was open to criticism when used for private ends. Here I argue that Symmachus published his *Letters* in order to present and justify his cultivation of important magnates as appropriate, for the benefit of a wide secondary audience and in response to what must have been real criticism.[269]

[269] Since my focus is on literary self-presentation for a secondary audience, I confine my analysis almost exclusively to the first seven books, which Symmachus seems to have prepared for publication himself, although virtually all the features of the *Letters* which I discuss are also present in the eighth and ninth books. For a discussion of the publication of the collection, see above, p. 5-7.

That Symmachus did publish his letters in a one-book collection (the first book of the extant *Letters*), and began to prepare a larger seven-book collection himself, to be released in the decade after his death by his son Memmius, is well-established.[270] The question of why he did so has not received a fully satisfactory answer, since the *Letters* of Symmachus have often been criticized as uninteresting.[271] John Matthews rehabilitates the letters, as sent to their individual recipients, as effective tools of social advancement, and thus demonstrates that they were inherently interesting to Symmachus and his correspondents, despite an allusiveness which can be frustrating to a modern reader.[272] Publication, however, implies that these letters were perceived to be interesting to a much broader readership, and publication by the author that they presented the author in a particular way. Matthews' own suggestion that Symmachus was presenting himself as a new Pliny the Younger seems unlikely given the still incipient reputation of Pliny as a letter-writer in the fourth century and the way in which his letters were actually organized.[273] Indeed, although the first book of the *Letters* does have some literary merit as a collection, by virtue of its density of literary and historical allusions, as suggested by Philippe Bruggisser, the letters are more like real letters and less like purely literary letters than those of Pliny, as Cristiana Sogno points out.[274] The notion that most of the letters which Symmachus actually includes would be interesting on purely literary grounds, even in the context of a

[270] See above, n. 15. See Matthews, "The Letters of Symmachus," 64-68, Roda, *Commento storico al libro IX dell'epistolario di Q. Aurelio Simmaco*, 79, Sogno, *Q. Aurelius Symmachus: A Political Biography*, 60-62, Salzman, *The Letters of Symmachus: Book 1*, lviii, Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome*, 167-168 and Cameron, "Were Pagans Afraid to Speak Their Minds in a Christian World? The Correspondence of Symmachus," 72, 93-97.
[271] For a limited survey of negative reviews, see Matthews, "The Letters of Symmachus," 60.
[272] Matthews, "The Letters of Symmachus," 58-91.
[273] See above, p. 6-8.
[274] Cristiana Sogno, "Roman Matchmaking," in *From the Tetrarchs to the Theodosians: Later Roman History and Culture, 284-450 CE*, ed. Scott McGill, Cristiana Sogno and Edward Watts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 62.

proliferation of letter collections in late antiquity, suggests literary tastes rarely shared before or since.

Implicit in many of the treatments of the *Letters* is another explanation of the publication, namely that, given Symmachus' obvious prominence in Rome, anything that he published would have found interested readers. This is surely true, and if a reader was interested in the life of Symmachus, he or she would no doubt have been especially interested to read a collection of his letters, though it must be said that the *Letters* could contain considerably more biographical material that they actually do, one reason for which modern readers have found them frustrating. All the same, public interest in the life of Symmachus does not explain why Symmachus himself published anything. It also leaves the question, since Symmachus made a personal selection of his letters, of why he chose what he chose, why he chose as much of it as he did, and what sort of self-presentation might be gleaned from it.

In my first section (1) I discuss the nature and structure of the *Letters*, and outline the way in which it might serve as a record of the practice and results of Symmachus' epistolary *cultus* in general, including of magnates at court, arguing that it does so quite effectively. I then discuss (2) three particular aspects of Symmachus' *cultus* which are explicitly highlighted in particular letters, namely the frequency of epistolary exchange, simplicity and naturalness of epistolary form, and, outside of the framework of letter-writing, the limitations which Symmachus observes in *cultus* in public life. Noting the ways in which the second and third of these in particular are associated with proper Roman conduct as illustrated by old models, I demonstrate that the arrangement of the letters for publication highlights all of these elements and associates them with each other in what I argue is a unified self-presentation as a senator who offered appropriate *cultus*.

4.1 The structure and nature of the *Letters*

The structure of the *Letters*, in both its one-book and seven-book publications, is unique: aside from its scale and the fact that it is an edited collection of letters, it has little in common with the ten-book collection of *Letters* of Pliny the Younger which is sometimes cited as its model. Below I consider, and propose an explanation for, the grouping of letters by correspondent, which has no parallel in Pliny, and the various ways in which Symmachus groups the correspondents themselves.

First, the seven-book collection of the *Letters* is arranged strictly by correspondent, each of whom receives his own exclusive block of letters, with its own title. The block of letters from *Ep*. 1.1-12, for example, is introduced by the title "To his Father" (*Ad Patrem*), and contains all the letters addressed to Symmachus' father in the collection. The same is true of the next block of letters, *Ep*. 1.13-43, "To Ausonius" (*Ad Ausonium*), with respect to Ausonius,[275] the following block, *Ep*. 1.44-55, "To Agorius Praetextatus" (*Ad Agorium Praetextatum*) with respect to Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, and so on, through fifty-seven blocks of letters.[276]

This is not true of the *Letters* of Pliny: even allowing for the fact that the *Letters* of Pliny were almost certainly not all published at the same time,[277] Pliny arranges his individual books in

[275] *Ep*. 9.88 was probably also sent to Ausonius, but was left out of the published collection. See Roda, *Commento storico al libro IX dell'epistolario di Q. Aurelio Simmaco*, 219-22; Roda, "Un nuova lettera di Simmaco ad Ausonio," 273-80; Salzman, *The Letters of Symmachus: Book 1*, 39.

[276] There are a few exceptions to the rule that each correspondent is addressed in only one block of letters. Thus there is a collection of letters "To the brothers Minervius, Protadius and Florentinus together" (*In Commune Fratribus Minervio, Protadio et Florentino*, *Ep*. 4.56-5.57), where Protadius (*Ep*. 4.17-4.34), Minervius (*Ep*. 4.35-4.49) and Florentius (*Ep*. 4.50-4.55) each receive collections of their own. There are also two collections of letters *Ad Licinius*, both before (*Ep*. 5.72-5.78) and after (*Ep*. 5.76-5.77) the letters to Limenius (*Ep*. 5.64-5.65). Otherwise the principle that each of the addressees of Symmachus is addressed in only a single block of letters applies universally, and the vast majority of these addressees are addressed individually. The exception are the brothers Olybrius and Probinus (*Ep*. 5.67-5.71), Nicomachus Flavianus junior and his wife (the sixth book in its entirety) and the Fratres (*Ep*. 7.72-7.80), who are always addressed collectively, and the brothers Petronius and Patruinus, whose letters together form a single collection (*Ep*. 7.102-128) introduced by a single title, but who are more often addressed individually than collectively. For those letters, see below, p. 177.

[277] For the groupings of books and dates of publication, see especially A.N. Sherwin White, *The Letters of Pliny: A Historical and Social Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 52-56.

a medley. Pliny's letters to Tacitus (*Ep*. 1.6, *Ep*. 1.20, *Ep*. 4.13, *Ep*. 6.16 and *Ep*. 6.20, *Ep*. 7.20, *Ep*. 7.33, *Ep*. 8.7, *Ep*. 9.10, *Ep*. 9.14), for example, not only appear in several books, the first, fourth, sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth, a natural consequence of a book-by-book publication of an ongoing correspondence, but where more than one letter to Tacitus appears within a given book (as in in the first, sixth, seventh and ninth) these are never placed together. Thus Pliny's *Ep*. 1.6 is separated from *Ep*. 1.20, *Ep*. 6.16 from *Ep*. 6.20, and so on. Roda, Salzman, Kelly and others thus rightly insist on the independence of Symmachus from Pliny.[278]

Cicero's *Ad Familiares* provide a much closer parallel, insofar as it, like the *Letters* of Symmachus, groups its addressees and has books titled by addressee, although Cicero, unlike Symmachus, dates his letters.[279] Whether the *Ad Familiares* was a direct source of inspiration for Symmachus is less clear: Cicero is mentioned periodically in the *Letters* for his style, hardly surprisingly, but there are very few verbal parallels which would indicate that Symmachus had read his letters.[280] Ebbeler is probably correct in arguing that neither Cicero nor Pliny were considered as generic models for letter-writing until the late fifth century: direct imitation of Cicero seems unlikely.[281]

The presence of discrete blocks of addressees in the *Letters* of Symmachus requires some principle by which to organize them within the larger collection. One of these is chronological. It is clear enough that the letters of Symmachus are not organized strictly chronologically within

[278] See above, n. 15, 16, 17.
[279] The first book of the *Ad Familiares*, for example, is titled "To Publius Lentulus" (*Ad P. Lentulum*) and with the exception of its tenth and final letter, addressed to D.L. Valerius, it is in fact addressed exclusively to him. Not all the books of the *Ad Familiares* contain letters addressed to only one recipient, but even when they do not, as in the case of the fourth book, titled "To Servius Sulpicius and Others" (*Ad Ser. Sulpicium et Ceteros*), they still separate the addressees in blocks. Thus the titular addressee receives *Ep. Ad Fam*. 4.1.1-6, M. Marcellus receives 4.7-11, Servius 4.12, Figulus 4.13, and Gnaeus Plancius 4.14-15.
[280] Kroll, *De Q. Aurelii Symmachi Studiis Graecis et Latinis*, 71-72.
[281] Ebbeler, "Pedants in the Apparel of Heroes? Cultures of Latin Letter-writing from Cicero to Ennodius," 78-79, 94-95.

individual addressee collections or within individual books, but there is nonetheless some tendency to place earlier addressee-collections earlier in the collection. The first book, which was certainly published earlier, tends to include earlier letters (all were written before 384), while the letters included in later books are predominantly, though not exclusively, later in date.[282] While there is relatively little temporal progression from one book to the next in the later books, there is a progression between the second and sixth books. Indeed, it appears that there is (virtually) no temporal overlap between the letters to Flavianus Nicomachus senior in the second book and the letters to his son Flavianus Nicomachus in the sixth book, with all of the letters to the latter but *Ep*. 6.72 postdating the death of the former in 394, a lack of overlap which is almost certainly deliberate and achieved through the omission of some earlier letters to Flavianus Nicomachus junior.[283] Chronological ordering, then, is important in determining the sequence and content of some of the books of the *Letters*, although it is hardly rigorously followed.

Another related organizing principle, only occasionally used but important to the structure of the seven-book collection, is the symmetrical arrangement of letters to men closely connected to Symmachus by kinship or marriage, as Cristiana Sogno has pointed out. The collection is framed both by the very obviously parallel second and sixth books, each devoted to a single addressee, and by parallel addressee-collections within the first and seventh books. The first and last books begin with letters to Symmachus' father (*Ep*. 1.1-12) and son (*Ep*. 7.1-14) respectively, and the second and second to last books are each devoted to another pair of father and son, respectively Flavianus Nicomachus senior and his son Flavianus Nicomachus junior, as

[282] *Ep*. 2.44, which Callu, *Symmaque I*, 184 dates to 364-365, provides one example, as do several of the letters to Julianus at the beginning of the third book and *Ep*. 5.4 to Theodorus in the fifth, which Jean-Pierre Callu, *Symmaque II* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1982), 17 and 157 respectively dates to 371-373 and to before 376-377, and *Ep*. 7.66 to Alypius in the seventh, which Callu, *Symmaque III* (Paris: Les Belles Lettre, 1995), 80 dates to 378.
[283] Arnaldo Marcone, *Commento Storico al Libro VI dell'Epistolario di Q. Aurelio Simmaco* (Pisa: Giardini, 1983), 50-56.

previously mentioned.[284] It must be said that the principle of symmetrically pairing fathers and sons is not otherwise followed in the collection.[285] All the same, it plays, in conjunction with a loose chronological ordering – sons always appear after their fathers –, an undeniably important role in structuring the *Letters*.

The kinship ties between brothers also serve to structure the *Letters*, since Symmachus tends to group together the brothers with whom he corresponded.[286] The letters to the brothers Petronius and Patruinus are actually intermixed in *Ep*. 7.7.102-128, forming the largest single block of letters in the seventh book,[287] and Symmachus keeps the letters to the Gallic brothers Protadius (*Ep*. 4.17-4.34), Minervius (*Ep*. 4.35-4.49), Florentius (*Ep*. 4.50-4.55) and to the three brothers collectively (*Ep*. 4.56-4.57) together in the fourth book, where they account for most of the book. Indeed, since the fourth book is the central book of the seven-book collection, these letters could be said to form the centrepiece of the collection. Kinship is therefore an important organizing principle in the *Letters*.

Similarities in career might also provide an principle for organizing addressees. It is certainly followed at the end of the third book, in which Symmachus groups together a succession of important palatine ministers of Theodosius I and his son Arcadius (Ricomeres,

[284] Sogno, *Q. Aurelius Symmachus: A Political Biography*, 61-62. Nicomachus Flavianus junior is always formally and often in fact addressed in conjunction with his wife, Symmachus' daughter. See Jean-Pierre Callu, "Symmachus Nicomachiis Filiis: Vouvoiement ou discours familial," in *Colloque Genevois sur Symmaque à l'occasion du mille six centième anniversaire du conflit de l'autel de la Victoire*, ed. François Paschoud (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1986), 26-34 for the letters to Symmachus' daughter.

[285] There are no obvious parallels between the placement of the letters to Petronius Probus in the first book (*Ep*. 1.56-61) and the letters to his sons Olybrius and Probinus (*Ep*. 5.67-71) in the fifth book. The earlier publication of the first book precluded placing these letters together, and Symmachus does not appear to have attempted to place them symmetrically in the seven-book collection.

[286] The correspondence with each brother was not always worthy of inclusion in the *Letters*. Thus Symmachus corresponds with both Magnillus (*Ep*. 5.17-5.33) and with his brother Romanus (*Ep*. 8.28, 56, 59, 90), but Romanus appears in the seven-book collection only as a recommendee (*Ep*. 1.73, 1.104, *Ep*. 2.15, 2.20). All the same, there does not appear to be any case in which Symmachus corresponded with two or more brothers and placed their letters separately in the seven-book collection.

[287] Callu, *Symmaque III*, 184 = 97 n. 1.

PLRE I p. 765-766, *Ep*. 3.54-3.69; Timasius, *PLRE* I p. 914-915, *Ep*. 3.70-3.73; Promotus, *PLRE* I p. 750-751, *Ep*. 3.74-3.80; and Rufinus, *PLRE* I p. 778-781 Rufinus 18, *Ep*. 3.81-3.91). It can hardly be a coincidence that the fourth book, which follows, begins with letters addressed to Stilicho, chief minister of Honorius (*Ep*. 4.1-4.14). Although it is naturally not mentioned in any of these letters, Rufinus replaced Timasius in influence and actually engineered the death of Promotus[288] while Stilicho engineered the fall of Rufinus.[289] Symmachus thus presents himself as addressing a succession of powerful court officials.

Simple alphabetization and similarities in names provides a final principle by which addressees are grouped and paired. The similarity of names (beginning with Eu) appears to have dictated the grouping of the letters to the unrelated and otherwise rather different Spanish rancher Euphrasius (*PLRE* II p. 425, *Ep*. 4.58-63), and the palatine ministers Eupraxius (*PLRE* I p. 299, *Ep*. 4.64-65) and Eusignius (*PLRE* I p. 309-310, *Ep*. 4.66-74) at the end of the fourth book, and is certainly reflected in the fact that the letters to Limenius (*Ep*. 5.74-75) in the fifth are both immediately preceded and immediately followed by letters to Licinius (*Ep*. 5.72-73; 5.76-77). In the seventh book, indeed, the similarity in names might account for Symmachus' thorough intermixing of the letters to the brothers Petronius and Patruinus (*Ep*. 7.7.102-128) whereas the letters to the brothers Protadius, Minervius and Florentius follow each other sequentially.[290] There may even occasionally be symmetrical placement of similarly named addressees. While it is unclear whether there was any particular significance to Symmachus' placement of letters to Ausonius (*Ep*. 1.13-43) second in the first book after his own father and those to Syagrius (*Ep*.

[288] Zosimus 4.51.1-3; *PLRE* I p. 750, 778, 914.
[289] Zosimus 5.7.5-6; Jerome *Ep*. 60.16; Socrates 6.1.5-7; Sozomen 8.1.3, John of Antioch *fr*. 190; Philostorgius *Historia Ecclesiastica* 9.3; Claudian *in Rufinum* 2.343-9; Asterius *Homilies* 4; *PLRE* I p. 780.
[290] See Callu, *Symmaque III*, 184 = 97 n. 1. Most of the letters are sent to Patruinus (*Ep*. 7.103, *Ep*. 7.105, *Ep*. 7.107, *Ep*. 7.108, *Ep*. 7.111, *Ep*. 7.112, *Ep*. 7.113, *Ep*. 7.115, *Ep*. 7.116, *Ep*. 7.117, *Ep*. 7.118, *Ep*. 7.120, *Ep*. 7.121, *Ep*. 7.122, *Ep*. 7.124, *Ep*. 7.125, *Ep*. 7.126, *Ep*. 7.128) or to the two together (*Ep*. 7.102, *Ep*. 7.104, *Ep*. 7.110, *Ep*. 7.119, *Ep*. 7.123, *Ep*. 7.127).

1.94-107) last in the one-book collection, it is striking that he echoes it in the seventh book by placing Attalus (*Ep*. 7.15-25), another "a" name, as the second addressee after his own son and Sibidius (*Ep*. 7.129-131), another "s" name, last.[291] The large majority of addressees in the *Letters* are not arranged alphabetically, but it was yet another principle that Symmachus could follow on occasion.

Notwithstanding the various principles of organization detailed above, which make a significant contribution to a structured collection, the arrangement of addressees in the *Letters* remains as a whole relatively loose and informal. The fourth book, for example, perhaps the most tightly structured book, begins with letters to Stilicho (*Ep*. 4.1-4.14) and Bauto (*Ep*. 4.15-4.16), both officials at court, continues with letters to Protadius, Minervius and Florentius (*Ep*. 4.17-4.57), who were all relatively minor officials at court but are surely grouped together primarily because they are brothers, and ends with letters to a series of addressees whose names begin with the letters "eu" (Euphrasius, Eupraxius and Eusignius, *Ep*. 4.58-4.74). Neither in this book nor in any other does Symmachus attempt to follow a single organizing principle throughout an entire book beyond keeping the letters to individual addressees together.

The letters, then, are not randomly ordered, but they are arranged in a variety of different ways, the models for which are obscure. This variety reflects the variety of the letters themselves, which span several decades and were addressed to strikingly different elite correspondents who were connected to Symmachus in a wide variety of ways. There were patrons at court, but also family connections, suppliers for Symmachus' games, promising young senators, and others. What these letters have in common, besides for the fact that Symmachus actually wrote and

[291] Attalus is the future usurper emperor (*PLRE* II p. 180-181).

(presumably) sent them, is a strong similarity of approach, often commented on, and the fact they were prepared for publication in a single collection.[292] But why were they published?

a) The *Letters* as self-presentation

If the *Letters* in their published form are a work of self-presentation, a safe a priori assumption, what did Symmachus wish to highlight about himself? The collection does not provide a complete political biography of Symmachus, to borrow from the title of Cristiana Sogno's recent book, [293] and certainly does not highlight his complete list of offices (*cursus*), since it almost entirely omits letters sent during his earliest career under Valentinian I, that is, his governorship of Lucania and Bruttium (365), of Africa (373), or his embassy to Trier (369-370), which is discussed, on the rare occasions when it is, almost entirely in retrospect.[294] Indeed even within the period actually covered, Symmachus' *cursus* is not the focus, and his own consulship of 391, which should have been the pinnacle of his career, appears as a minor event.[295] The

[292] For the character of the letters, see especially Matthews, "The Letters of Symmachus," 58-99.
[293] Sogno, *Q. Aurelius Symmachus: A Political Biography*. Symmachus certainly does not write political history and has often been found disappointingly inexplicit, vague or uninterested in the major political questions of his day, especially by Paschoud, *Roma aeterna: Études sur le patriotisme romain dans l'Occident latin à l'époque des invasions*, 105-107. He does not supply details for their own sake, but political questions on which he particularly distinguished himself are treated and often highlighted in the *Letters*, as I will demonstrate.
[294] *Ep*. 2.44 was sent during his correctorship of Lucania and Bruttium (and is dated to then by Callu, *Symmaque I*, 184), but otherwise Symmachus' early career appears entirely in retrospect. The embassy to Trier is alluded to in two later letters, in *Ep*. 1.14.3, in which Symmachus mentions to Ausonius having seen the Moselle in person, and in *Ep*. 1.32.4, a letter written by Ausonius, in a reference to time that they spent together at court, but clearly it is important in the *Letters* for the ties it cemented between Symmachus and Ausonius rather than for its own sake. As for the proconsulship of Africa, *Ep*. 1.1.5, written soon after Symmachus held the office, provides a prominent but vague reference to his new rank: among these youthful glory, Symmachus, but prominent with a mature rank, twelve fasces, you hear (*hos inter iuvenile decus, sed honore senili,/ bis seno celsus, Symmache, fasce cluis*), and in *Ep*. 2.63, which asserts that Africa, the homeland of one of his recommendees, was dear to Symmachus himself, the office is important because of rapport it creates between Symmachus and his recommendee, well after the office itself (see Callu, *Symmaque I*, 196 for the date of 390). The letters which treat Symmachus' proconsulship in Africa and its legacy for its own sake are not published in the seven-book collection (*Ep*. 8.20, *Ep*. 8.5, *Ep*. 9.115 and *Ep*. 10.1.2-3).
[295] Symmachus occasionally mentions his own consulship to the officials of Theodosius I, Nicomachus Flavianus senior (*Ep*. 2.62-64) and Theodorus (5.10; 5.15) and atttributes it to the agency of Theodosius I personally (*Ep*. 2.62; 5.15), but cannot have organized the seven-book collection of his *Letters* with any clear intention of highlighting it. See below, p. 218-221.

collection is rather more concerned with Symmachus' cultured leisure (*otium*), within the context of the duties of a Roman senator, than with the progression of his career, and may celebrate the values of *otium* for a Roman senator.[296] The main focus, however, is simply on a series of epistolary friendships; the arrangement of the letters by correspondent and the highlighting of the degree to which each correspondent fulfilled the duties of friendly correspondents, as we will see, actually lends the *Letters* a strong element of *other*-presentation, albeit narrowly confined to letter-writing.

i) The *Letters* document epistolary friendships

If the *Letters* of Symmachus highlight letter-writing itself, how do they do so, and what sort of image of Symmachus do they provide? The arrangement of both publications by recipient, convenient as an organizing principle, naturally encourages the reader to consider *Ep*. 4.5 to Stilicho, for example, an important letter describing the senate's exceptional use of its long-lapsed republican powers to condemn the African rebel Gildo as a public enemy, not simply as a discrete composition, but in the context of the other letters to Stilicho (*Ep*. 4.1-14). Furthermore, Symmachus very often begins particular addressee-collections with letters which are focused on the epistolary friendship itself and comment on the degree to which he and his addressee adhere to the norms of etiquette which govern these friendships,[297] often to the exclusion of other content. In the third book, for example, seven out of twelve addressee-collections begin with letters devoted exclusively to the demands of friendship in the context of the relationship between Symmachus and his addressee (*Ep*. 3.1 to Julianus, *Ep*. 3.10 to Naucellius, *Ep*. 3.17 to Gregorius, *Ep*. 3.46 to Eutropius, *Ep*. 3.54 to Ricomeres, *Ep*. 3.70 to Timasius, and *Ep*. 3.74 to Promotus).

[296] See especially Bruggisser, *Symmaque ou le rituel épistolaire de l'amitié littéraire*, 51-87 for *Ep*. 1.1 and also Salzman, *The Letters of Symmachus: Book 1*, xlv, xlviii.
[297] For a summary of the rules of letter-writing, see Bruggisser, *Symmaque ou le rituel épistolaire de l'amitié littéraire*, 2-24.

The other first letters in the third book focus instead on careers, insofar as they recommend candidates (*Ep*. 3.30 to Ambrose), comment on the successes of a recommendee (*Ep*. 3.38 to Hilarius and *Ep*. 3.81 to Rufinus), congratulate the addressee on his own recent successes (*Ep*. 3.43 to Siburius) or simply comment on the business of the addressee (*Ep*. 3.23 to Marinianus). Nonetheless, even these sometimes begin by commenting at length on the acquittal of Symmachus' friendly duty to his addressee (*Ep*. 3.38 to Hilarius) or his addressee's duty to Symmachus (*Ep*. 3.81.1 to Rufinus). Conversely, the last letter of a given addressee collection is often concerned with nothing but encouraging the addressee to write often (*Ep*. 3.9 to Julianus, to some extent *Ep*. 3.16 to Naucellius, *Ep*. 22 to Gregorius, *Ep*. 3.42 to Hilarius and *Ep*. 3.80 to Promotus, though framed in terms of exchange), or to come in person (*Ep*. 3.16 to Naucellius and *Ep*. 3.45.2 to Siburius).[298] There is, clearly, no universally observed way of beginning or ending an addressee-collection, but the pronounced tendency to begin and end by highlighting adherence to the rules of friendly *cultus*, and specifically the principle of frequent letters, suggests that these rules are important among the criteria by which these letters, and Symmachus, should be judged.

To the extent that the first letter of a particular correspondence often – it is important to recognize variation in Symmachus' practice in this respect – serves, in the published collection of letters, to characterize that correspondence, as I have hypothesized, one would expect the impression of the correspondent which it provides, either positive or negative, to be borne out in the following letters. For negative characterizations, at least, in which the correspondent is criticized as being slow to write, this tends to be the case. The brief first letter to Stilicho, *Ep*. 4.1, to take one example, asserts that Stilicho is neglecting his correspondence with Symmachus:

> "For a long time I admit that I kept quiet, so that your speech would offer me confidence in writing. But though I observed that I am not yet encouraged by an invitation to duty, I

[298] *Ep*. 3.37 to Ambrose, although it is a recommendation, does encourage Ambrose to reply.

was the first to burst forth into words of greeting, asking most earnestly that you deign to be an imitator of this model"

Diu siluisse me fateor, ut mihi fiduciam scribendi tuus sermo praestaret. Sed cum perspicerem necdum me ullo invitamento officii provocari, prior in verba salutationis erupi plurimum rogans ut exempli istius imatator esse digneris (*Ep*. 4.1).

The impression that Stilicho writes seldom is confirmed in *Ep*. 4.10 and *Ep*. 4.11, which complain rather more forcefully about the lack of responses, so *Ep*. 4.1 can plausibly be said to be representative of the way in which Stilicho appears as a letter-writer in the *Letters*. In the same way, most of the immediately preceding addressee-collections which end the third book of the *Letters*, to a succession of generals and ministers of Theodosius I, similarly begin with reproaches. In the first letters to each of them, and indeed in each case in the first sentence, Symmachus successively faults Ricomeres (*Ep*. 3.54), Timasius (*Ep*. 3.70) and to a lesser extent Stilicho's eastern rival Rufinus (*Ep*. 3.81) for being slow to respond to letters.[299] Since Symmachus again faults Ricomeres in *Ep*. 3.56 and Rufinus in *Ep*. 3.82.1, *Ep*. 3.83, and *Ep*. 3.86.1, slowness to write can be said to be typical of Symmachus' presentation of these correspondents. Symmachus, then, does offer consistent characterizations of correspondents as neglectful.

Other first letters, in contrast, suggest more considerate or eager addressees, and here too the impression is regularly confirmed later in the collection. *Ep*. 4.17, Symmachus' first letter to the retired Gallic administrator Protadius (*PLRE* I p. 751-2 Protadius 1), thanks him for the letter which he sent while Symmachus was sick and thereby suggests the closeness of their relationship, an impression amply borne out in later letters, especially in *Ep*. 4.27, *Ep*. 4.28, *Ep*.

[299] Michele Renee Salzman, "Symmachus and the 'Barbarian' Generals," *Historia* 55 (2006): 352-67 argues that Ricomeres (*PLRE* I p. 765-6) and Bauto (*PLRE* I p. 159) are treated as barbarians, in contrast to Stilicho, but Ricomeres, as a letter-writer, is more clearly compared to Timasius (*PLRE* I p. 914) and Rufinus (*PLRE* I p. 778-81 Rufinus 18), with whose letters his letters are juxtaposed. Promotus (*PLRE* I p. 750-1), the addressee of *Ep*. 3.74-80, however, is spared: the first letter addressed to him is purely positive.

4.32.1 and *Ep*. 4.33, in which Symmachus mentions that Prodatius expects frequent letters. Symmachus similarly begins the collection of letters to Naucellius (*PLRE* I p. 617-8) in *Ep*. 3.10 by underlining Naucellius' expectation of longer letters, reflecting his conscientiousness as a letter-writer: virtually every letter to Naucellius (*Ep*. 3.11.1, *Ep*. 3.12.1, *Ep*. 3.13, *Ep*. 3.14, *Ep*. 3.15) begins by responding to and commenting on a letter from him. In the cases of both Protadius and Naucellius, the first letter in the collection is considerably shorter and less substantive than the unusually elaborate letter that follows (*Ep*. 3.11 and *Ep*. 4.18 respectively), but the first letters concisely convey the nature of Symmachus' correspondence with the addressee in question.[300]

If Symmachus is characterizing his correspondents and their letters, whom and what is he characterizing? All the correspondents mentioned in the previous two paragraphs are Symmachus' superiors in some sense, whether in age (the senator Naucellius, whom Symmachus twice compares to Nestor, *Ep*. 3.11.1, *Ep*. 3.13.2), or access to state power (the palatine ministers and generals Stilicho, Rufinus, Timasius and Ricomeres, and to some extent also the retired palatine minister Protadius, whose brothers are still at court). This ought to identify the nature of these letters: gifts given by superiors, including "polite attentions" in letters, are (friendly) benefactions, answered with (friendly) *cultus*.[301] When Symmachus describes the way in which these correspondents write, he is describing the way in which they give benefactions, as he presents himself as offering a particular sort of *cultus*.

[300] Subsequent letters may qualify the impression of the correspondent: Protadius, for example, though he clearly appears as an eager addressee, is occasionally also described as slow to write (*Ep*. 4.25 and *Ep*. 4.30.1) and Rufinus is once described as often breaking welcome news to Symmachus (*saepe mihi auctor laetitiae aut primus aut solus es*, *Ep*. 3.90) despite the fact that he is described as neglectful of friendship in the letters cited above.
[301] The phrase "polite attentions" is from Matthews, "The Letters of Symmachus," 80.

When Symmachus, more rarely, writes to inferiors, in the case of his son (*Ep*. 7.1-14), daughter and son-in-law (all the letters of book 6), and the young senators Olybrius and Probinus (*Ep*. 5.67-71), the reverse is true. Their letters, and the physical gifts which they give, namely his daughter's weaving (*Ep*. 6.67) and Olybrius' and Probinus' gift of game meat (*Ep*. 5.67, 68), should be considered as forms of *cultus*, and the answering letters of Symmachus as benefactions. Here Symmachus shows the sorts of (epistolary) benefactions which he gives.

The correspondents of Symmachus, then, have in common not simply the fact that he addresses them or that they are, formally, his friends, but also the fact that they are all engaged in a process of exchange of (primarily immaterial) cultivation for (primarily immaterial) benefactions. These exchanges of cultivation and benefactions are usually limited to the expression of regards in the letters themselves, and always governed by the rules of friendly letter-writing. The letters of Symmachus are not, then, like the letters of Pliny or Seneca, letters only in form.[302] Not only are the letters real, but the process of letter-writing, rather than the biographical information which the letters reveal, is the focus of the literary self-presentation which the published collection conveys. Friendly letter-writing becomes the main criterion by which Symmachus' correspondents are judged in the *Letters*.

ii) The *Letters* document political advancement through appropriate *cultus*

This is not to deny that the *Letters* do document Symmachus' political advancement, that some of his correspondents were important political actors, and that some of the benefactions that

[302] Guillemin, *Pline le Jeune: Lettres I*, xxix-xxx: pour Pline, la forme épistolaire est une fiction, le nom servant d'en tête est celui non d'un correspondant, mais d'un dédicataire. (...) Chaque morceau – tels ces petits poèmes qu'aimait la littérature impériale – forme un tout nettement caractérisé, rentrant dans un genre défini aux lois duquel il se conforme: il y a des récits, des descriptions, des éloges, des dissertations morales, des dissertations littéraires, etc.... For the letters of Seneca as fictitious, see Miriam T. Griffin, *Seneca: A Philosopher in Politics*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), appendix B4; for the way in which they nonetheless remain letters rather than simple essays, see Marcus Wilson, "Seneca's Epistles Reclassified," in *Texts, Ideas and the Classics*, ed. S. J. Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 164-187.

Symmachus received were quite practical. Compared to epistolary *cultus* and benefactions considered for their own sake, practical benefactions are mentioned rather less often in the *Letters*, but these favours and the means by which they were obtained are hardly absent from the collection. Here I will review the way in which extra-epistolary benefactions appear and are highlighted in a particular book of the collection in which the accession to office of Symmachus' correspondents is especially prominent, the first, then the inclusion and arrangement of letters relating to two major achievements, the games of Symmachus' son and the political rehabilitation of his son-in-law.

The first book of the *Letters*, which was probably published first as a separate collection, draws some attention to concrete benefactions which Symmachus sought or received.[303] First, noteworthy for a published collection, it has a substantial number of recommendations, which seek concrete benefactions for another person through *cultus*.[304] Recommendations account for thirty-three of one hundred and seven letters,[305] that is, nearly a third (31%) of all letters included, and for a substantial proportion of letters which do not simply focus on Symmachus' epistolary friendships.[306] All but two correspondents receive recommendations – Symmachus' father (*Ep*.

[303] The first book is studied in detail by both Bruggisser, *Symmaque ou le rituel épistolaire de l'amitié littéraire* and Salzman, *The Letters of Symmachus: Book 1*. Both comment on recommendations, Bruggisser, in 281-330, 427-429, in terms of the norms of friendship and Salzman, in xlv-xlvi, in terms of the activities of a powerful senator.
[304] Book 13 of Cicero's *Ad Familiares*, probably prepared by the author himself, which contains many recommendations and which advertises Cicero's continuing influence at a time when he was not in office, offers a counterpart. See Hannah M. Cotton, *Mirificum genus commendationis*: Cicero and the Latin Letter of Recommentation,' *American Journal of Philology* 106 (1985): 328 n. 3 and Roger Rees, "Letters of Recommendation and the Rhetoric of Praise," in *Ancient Letters: Classical and Late Antique Epistolography*, ed. Ruth Morello and A.D. Morrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 152. In the first book of the *Letters* of Pliny, by contrast, there are three letters which offer positive appraisals of third parties (*Ep*. 1.10, *Ep*. 1.14, *Ep*. 1.16) and one which asks for a favour, for help in purchasing a farm, on behalf of a third party (*Ep*. 1.24), but no letters which ask the recipient to generally assist the career of a third party. For the recommendations of Pliny, see Rees, "Letters of Recommendation and the Rhetoric of Praise," 152, 155-6. 159-168.
[305] *Ep*. 1.15, 1.17, 1.19, 1.22, 1.25, 1.29, 1.30, 1.40, 1.41, 1.43 (to Ausonius); *Ep*. 1.60 (to Probus); *Ep*. 1.63, 1.64, 1.66, 1.67, 1.68, 1.69, 1.70, 1.71, 1.72, 1.73, 1.74 (to Celsinus Titianus); *Ep*. 1.75, 1.77, 1.79, 1.81 (to Hesperius); *Ep*. 1.90, 1.93 (to Antonius); *Ep*. 1.94, 1.99, 1.104, 1.106, 1.107 (to Syagrius).
[306] In the first book of the *Letters* of Pliny, by comparison, there are three letters which offer positive appraisals of third parties (*Ep*. 1.10, *Ep*. 1.14, *Ep*. 1.16) and one which asks for a favour, for help in purchasing a farm, on behalf of a third party (*Ep*. 1.24). There are, however, no letters which ask the recipient to generally assist the career of a

1.1-12) and Praetextatus (*Ep*. 1.44-55) are the exceptions – and recommendations often account for a substantial proportion of the letters addressed to a particular correspondent in the extant collection. While only one out of five letters to Probus (20%) is a recommendation, recommendations account for four out of fourteen letters to Hesperius (29%), ten out of thirty-one letters to Ausonius (32%), five out of fourteen letters to Syagrius (36%), two out of five letters to Antonius (40%), and eleven out of thirteen letters to Symmachus' brother Celsinus Titianus (85%). The importance of recommendations in the first book, though not significantly out of proportion with what is found elsewhere in the eventual second-book collection, is clear enough.[307]

It should be stressed that virtually all of Symmachus' recommendees in the first book, far more than in the subsequent books, as we will see, are separate individuals: most are never mentioned again outside of the letter in which Symmachus recommends them.[308] The result is that

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third party.

[307] The book which is most obviously comparable in terms of the number of recommendations and variety of correspondents who receive them is the third book. Here there are recommendations to Julianus (*Ep*. 3.3.2), Ambrose (*Ep*. 3.30, *Ep*. 3.31, *Ep*. 3.32, *Ep*. 3.33, *Ep*. 3.34, *Ep*. 3.35, *Ep*. 3.36, *Ep*. 3.37), Hilarius (*Ep*. 3.39), Eutropius (*Ep*. 3.48, *Ep*. 3.53- an intervention for property), Ricomeres (*Ep*. 3.60, *Ep*. 3.66, *Ep*. 3.67, *Ep*. 3.69), Timasius (*Ep*. 3.72, *Ep*. 3.73), Promotus (*Ep*. 3.76, *Ep*. 3.77), and Rufinus (*Ep*. 3.86.2, *Ep*. 3.87, *Ep*. 3.89, *Ep*. 3.91). Out of ninety-one letters there are therefore twenty-four recommendations along with three letters (*Ep*. 3.41 to Hilarius, *Ep*. 3.49 and *Ep*. 3.51 to Eutropius) which respond to recommendations of the addressee. In the third book, only Naucellius (*Ep*. 3.10-3.16), Gregorius (*Ep*. 3.17-3.22), Marinianus (*Ep*. 3.23-3.29) and Siburius (*Ep*. 3.43-3.45), that is, four out of twelve correspondents, receive no letters of recommendations. This, however, gives a slightly lower percentage of recommendations than the first book (26 as opposed to 31 percent).

[308] The sole exceptions are Palladius (*Ep*. 1.15; *Ep*. 1.94) and Romanus (*Ep*. 1.60; *Ep*. 1.73; *Ep*. 1.104). Palladius is unique in the first book in that the advantage to his career from Symmachus' *cultus* might be traceable and perhaps even highlighted in the *Letters:* he is recommended to Ausonius at court as a talented rhetorician at Rome in *Ep*. 1.15 then to Syagrius (*Ep*. 1.94) as having recently left Rome to receive a position at court. The fact that the two letters in question are respectively the third letter (and first recommendation) to Ausonius and the first letter to Syagrius gives the case of Palladius unusual prominence for a recommendee, but even here Symmachus does not explicitly emphasize that he was responsible for the promotion of Palladius, and it is an isolated case. In the case of Romanus, who is clearly at court when *Ep*. 1.60 and *Ep*. 1.94 were sent (*Ep*. 1.60 mentions *aulic[a] offici[a]* and *Ep*. 1.94 mentions *palatin[a] stipendi[a]*) and may very well have been at court when *Ep*. 1.73 was sent, although nothing in the letter directly indicates it, the particular effect of the recommendations of Symmachus is not as clear as it is for Palladius. Symmachus mentions specific details of his careeer only in *Ep*. 1.60 (in which he is described as working at court as an accountant in the treasury, *aulicis etiam nunc paret officiis utpote sacri administer aerarii*). The way in which he advanced due to any particular recommendation of Symmachus, either before his position at the treasury or after it, is unclear.

the success with which Symmachus actually secured benefactions on behalf of any one person is not clear, or at least not explicitly highlighted in the published collection; presumably Symmachus was successful in most cases. It is the activity of *cultus*, whose success in obtaining useful benefactions could be assumed, rather than the particular benefactions obtained, which is the focus of the first book, the original one-book collection.

It is not in the inclusion of recommendations as such, still less the demonstration of success in individual cases, that the first book is unique, but rather in its highlighting of the political climate within which the recommendations were sent. Recipients of recommendations, regardless of where they appear in the seven-book collection, were invariably in positions of influence, usually at court, at the time when they received recommendations; in the first book, this was usually during the reign of Gratian. Some of the letters of the first book were sent before (*Ep*. 1.1-12) or after (*Ep*. 1.55) the reign of Gratian, but it seems that very few of the recommendations were.[309] The prominence of the reign of Gratian would not necessarily be remarkable in itself if Symmachus did not highlight it, but he does. An account of the senate's welcoming of the new reign of Gratian (*Ep*. 1.13) marks an obvious turning point in the book, not only between the letters addressed to Symmachus' father, one of two correspondents not to receive letters of recommendation, and those addressed to Ausonius, but between two types of activity on Symmachus' part. In the first twelve letters of the book Symmachus is mostly outside

[309] Callu, *Symmaque I*, does not date any of the letters in question to the reign of Valentinian II, and only one securely to the reign of Valentinian I. Of these, only *Ep*. 1.63 to Celsinus Titianus, which Callu, *Symmaque I*, 121 dates to 374, is securely dated to his reign; his dating, on p. 119, of *Ep*. 1.60 to Petronius Probus to the time of Valentinian I, apparently on the basis of Probus' prominence at this time, is challenged by Salzman, *The Letters of Symmachus: Book 1*, 125 n. 1. Salzman is probably correct, since Probus remained active long after 375. *Ep*. 1.41 to Ausonius, and *Ep*. 1.90 and *Ep*. 1.93, both to Antonius, which Callu, *Symmaque I*, 104, 137, 139 each dates simply to after 370, may also be earlier, while Callu, *Symmaque I*, 105 dates *Ep*. 1.43 to Ausonius between 370 and 379, which would suit either the reign of Gratian or of Valentinian I. In all these cases Callu and Salzman agree. For a convenient table in which Salzman's and Callu's dates are compared, see Salzman, *The Letters of Symmachus: Book 1*, lxix-lxxii.

of Rome and preoccupied with private family business, either on a tour of inspection of his own rural estates (*Ep*. 1.1.2, *Ep*. 1.3.3-5, *Ep*. 1.5.2, *Ep*. 1.7, *Ep*. 1.10) or supervising renovations on his father's properties (in *Ep*. 1.12). In subsequent letters, in contrast, he is usually in Rome itself, clearly involved in public affairs, and typically (except in the first ten letters to Praetextatus, *Ep*. 1.44-54) corresponding with men who are in office. In some cases, particular imperial favours to Symmachus' correspondents are mentioned, most notably in the case of the appointment of Ausonius as consul in 379 (*Ep*. 1.20), and unidentified appointments of Praetextatus (*Ep*. 1.55, probably under Valentinian II) and Probus (*Ep*. 1.58).[310] *Ep*. 1.95 to Syagrius (*PLRE* I p. 862 Syagrius 3) documents and asks the recipient to forward thanks for a favour which Symmachus himself received from the emperor, in being asked to read an imperial oration to the senate.[311]

This arrangement of the letters surely invites the reader to consider the reign of Gratian as a time when Symmachus had privileged access to the favours which flowed from the court, even if his friend Praetextatus clearly did not, a time when one could assume that his *cultus* would be well-received. This image of the reign of Gratian is surprising, since the letters must have been published after relations between the court of Gratian and at least the pagan senators had already

[310] Indeed, even the two correspondents who do not receive recommendations, Symmachus' father and Praetextatus, are both shown as returning to public life in the one-book collection and particularly in the letters to Praetextatus (*Ep*. 1.44-1.55). The fact that Praetextatus is idle and away from Rome can be inferred in all but the last letter addressed to him (*Ep*. 1.44-54) from the fact that Symmachus sends him news of public business from Rome (*Ep*. 1.44, *Ep*. 1.46, *Ep*. 1.47, *Ep*. 1.49, *Ep*. 1.51, *Ep*. 1.52) and his inactivity is explicitly highlighted in *Ep*. 1.47, *Ep*. 1.48, *Ep*. 1.51, and *Ep*. 1.53, in which he is respectively described as being at Baiae in the first two then in Etruria, and hunting on an unspecified estate. Praetextatus is, then, the most obviously inactive correspondent of the first book. It is the first and last letters to Praetextatus which mark the return to action: in the first letter to Praetextatus, *Ep*. 1.44, Symmachus describes his own father's invitation back to Rome and return to public life after his enforced absence (*Ep*. 1.44.1). The incident which led to his departure, a riot of the urban mob after he refused to sell his wine at the prices demanded, is described in Ammianus Marcellinus (27.3.4) but not directly treated by Symmachus. Symmachus does, however, confirm that his father is outside of Rome in *Ep*. 1.5.1, *Ep*. 1.7, and *Ep*. 1.8. and in the last letter to Praetextatus, Symmachus mentions Praetextatus' own return to public life and labor (*Ep*. 1.55), presumably as praetorian prefect under Valentinian II. So Seeck, *Q. Aurelii Symmachi opera quae supersunt*, xc, and Callu, *Symmaque I*, 116, followed with additional arguments by Salzman, *The Letters of Symmachus: Book 1*, 115 n. 1.

[311] For the orations, see above, p. 123-124.

soured: it would be surprising indeed if the book were a straightforward celebration of Gratian's reign. The early part of the reign, however, as a time when Symmachus' cultivation was well-received – and this is clearly highlighted – had a counterpart during the reign of Honorius, when Symmachus' influence seems to have been roughly equal. Clearly Symmachus knew this at the time when he was preparing the seven-book collection, including the first book, for publication; whether he knew it when the one-book collection was independently published is less clear. I suspect that he did, though this depends on a later date of publication, not necessarily quite as late as c. 400 as advanced by Alan Cameron but certainly after 396 or 397.[312] Otherwise, a book arranged to highlight precisely what this book does highlight is more difficult to explain.

The subsequent books (especially 3-7), focusing on the events of the mid to later 390s, when Symmachus was at his political height,[313] also emphasize the implications of *cultus* for the careers of Symmachus and his protégés, but they focus somewhat less on the context and considerably more on the effects of his *cultus*. Here again Symmachus offers many recommendations and requests for favours to those in a position to gratify them,[314] although by no means all of his addressees receive recommendations.[315] In a major departure from the first book, however, a relatively large proportion of letters which seek practical benefactions are connected to two particular cases in which the results of Symmachus' *cultus* are clear, both of which

[312] See Cameron, "Were Pagans Afraid to Speak Their Minds in a Christian world? The Correspondence of Symmachus," 93-5.
[313] Sogno, *Q. Aurelius Symmachus: A Political Biography*, 83-85.
[314] In the third book, for example, there are recommendations to Julianus (*Ep*. 3.3.2), Ambrose (*Ep*. 3.30, *Ep*. 3.31, *Ep*. 3.32, *Ep*. 3.33, *Ep*. 3.34, *Ep*. 3.35, *Ep*. 3.36, *Ep*. 3.37), Hilarius (*Ep*. 3.39), Eutropius (*Ep*. 3.48, *Ep*. 3.53- an intervention for property), Ricomeres (*Ep*. 3.60, *Ep*. 3.66, *Ep*. 3.67, *Ep*. 3.69), Timasius (*Ep*. 3.72, *Ep*. 3.73), Promotus (*Ep*. 3.76, *Ep*. 3.77), and Rufinus (*Ep*. 3.86.2, *Ep*. 3.87, *Ep*. 3.89, *Ep*. 3.91). Out of ninety-one letters there are therefore twenty-four recommendations along with three letters (*Ep*. 3.41 to Hilarius, *Ep*. 3.49 and *Ep*. 3.51 to Eutropius) which respond to recommendations of the addressee. In the third book Naucellius (*Ep*. 3.10-3.16), Gregorius (*Ep*. 3.17-3.22), Marinianus (*Ep*. 3.23-3.29) and Siburius (*Ep*. 3.43-3.45), that is, four out of twelve correspondents, receive no letters of recommendations.
[315] In the third book Naucellius (*Ep*. 3.10-3.16), Gregorius (*Ep*. 3.17-3.22), Marinianus (*Ep*. 3.23-3.29) and Siburius (*Ep*. 3.43-3.45), that is, four out of twelve correspondents, receive no letters of recommendations.

significantly postdate the events which figure in the first book. These are the quaestorian and praetorian games of Symmachus' son, and the political rehabilitation of his son-in-law Nicomachus Flavianus junior.

First, the games of Symmachus' son Memmius Symmachus. In the second to seventh books Symmachus often mentions the preparations for the quaestorian (*Ep*. 2.46; 2.76-78; 5.20-22; 5.59; 7.76) and particularly the praetorian games (*Ep*. 4.7-8; 4.12; 4.58-60; 4.63; 5.56; 5.82; 5.83; 6.34; 6.35; 6.38; 6.42; 6.43; 7.48; 7.82; 7.97; 7.105; 7.106; 7.110; 7.121) which he staged for his son in 393 and 401 respectively.[316] Requests for assistance dominate (*Ep*. 2.46.2; *Ep*. 2.78; *Ep*. 5.21; *Ep*. 5.22; *Ep*. 5.59; *Ep*. 4.7-8; 4.58-60; 4.63; 5.82; 6.38; 6.42; 7.48; 7.82; 7.105; 7.106; 7.110; 7.121), but there are also thanks for assistance rendered (*Ep*. 2.77; *Ep*. 4.7; 4.12; 5.56; 7.97) and simple updates on Symmachus' activity in preparing for the games (*Ep*. 2.76; *Ep*. 5.20.1; 6.34; 6.35; 6.43) or updates during the games themselves, as some of the would-be Saxon gladiators committed suicide on the eve of the games (*Ep*. 2.46.1). Symmachus naturally highlights problems and worries surrounding both games, but he does imply, in the context of the praetorian games, that the earlier quaestorian games were successful and generated high expectations (*Ep*. 4.60.2; *Ep*. 4.82). Symmachus does not otherwise comment on the success of the games, and never provides a full description of either set of games, but he certainly emphasizes that they were elaborate productions. It cannot be said that any of the relevant letters are obviously strategically placed in the seven-book collection, but they impress by sheer number.

[316] The horses for the praetorian games are particularly prominent in the *Letters*: Symmachus includes a collection of letters which he sent to the Spanish rancher who provided the horses (*Ep*. 4.58-63), and a large number of other letters in which he sought to ensure their transportation to Rome, particularly in the later part of the seventh book (*Ep*. 5.82; 5.82; 7.48; 7.82; 7.97, 7.105; 7.106).

A second major practical application of *cultus* in the *Letters* is the rehabilitation of his son-in-law Flavianus Nicomachus junior after his father Flavianus Nicomachus senior's support for the usurpation of Eugenius and his political ruin and suicide.[317] The rehabilitation of Flavianus Nicomachus junior is explicitly discussed in the letters to Stilicho (*Ep*. 4.2; *Ep*. 4.4; *Ep*. 4.6) and to a variety of other palatine ministers (Theodorus in *Ep*. 5.6, Longinianus in *Ep*. 7.93; *Ep*. 7.95; *Ep*. 7.96.3; *Ep*. 7.100, and Petronius and Patruinus, *Ep*. 7.102; *Ep*. 7.104; *Ep*. 7.110), as well as in the letters to Flavianus Nicomachus junior himself (especially *Ep*. 6.1 and *Ep*. 6.36). Naturally many of the letters to palatine ministers on the subject are recommendations (*Ep*. 4.2, *Ep*. 7.95; *Ep*. 7.96.3; *Ep*. 7.100; *Ep*. 7.102) but there are as many letters of celebration or thanks (*Ep*. 4.4; *Ep*. 4.6; *Ep*. 5.6; *Ep*. 7.93; *Ep*. 7.104; *Ep*. 7.110), including the long *Ep*. 4.4 to Stilicho, which is unusually explicit on the influence of the addressee at court and which specifically identifies the rehabilitation as a *beneficium* (*Ep*. 4.4.1). The successful outcome of Symmachus' *cultus* is thus clear, along with the process of cultivating itself.

This particular case is clearly important to the conception of the *Letters* as a seven-book collection, highlighted, at least for a readership familiar with the events, by the fact that the second and sixth books are entirely devoted to Nicomachus Flavianus senior and Nicomachus Flavianus junior respectively.[318] As in the case of the quaestorian and praetorian games, the rehabilitation is otherwise prominent mainly due to the frequency with which it is mentioned,

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[317] For the end of Flavianus Nicomachus senior and the rehabilitation of his son, see Charles W. Hedrick, *History and Silence: Purge and Rehabilitation of Memory in Late Antiquity* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), especially xiv-xv, 91, 99, 128-130, Sogno, *Q. Aurelius Symmachus: A Political Biography*, 78-83, and Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome*, 198-205.

[318] To a politically aware readership, the fact of both beginning (*Ep*. 2.1) and ending (*Ep*. 2.91) the second book with letters of recommendation of men in political difficulties whose fathers are somehow relevant to the case would arguably frame the book with anticipations of the *cultus* which Symmachus would need to offer on behalf of the son of the sender. In the first cases these difficulties are connected to the mistakes of the father of the recommendee (*parentis inpia volunta[s], Ep*. 2.1), while in the latter case Symmachus cites his affection for the father of the recommendee as leading him to help the son "in these matters which are dependent on the patronage of justice" (*in his rebus quae iustitiae patrocinio fulciuntur*, *Ep*. 2.91.1).

since few of the letters on the rehabilitation are particularly prominently placed. All the same, Flavianus Nicomachus junior is the subject of the first letters to both Longinianus (*Ep*. 7.93) and to Petronius and Patruinus (*Ep*. 7.102). Clearly this was an important case.

The fact of cultivating useful benefactions in general, then, and certain specific benefactions, are clearly important to the published *Letters*. It remains the case, of course, that for every letter seeking these sorts of extra-epistolary benefactions, whether or not the outcome is made clear, there are two or three letters seeking only "polite attentions." Also, although the extra-epistolary benefactions, invariably sought on behalf of others, differed from the strictly epistolary (and therefore immaterial) benefactions in their practical effects, both are cultivated by essentially the same means, that is, through friendly letters. Symmachus presents himself as cultivating a variety – though not, as I will demonstrate below, an unlimited variety – of benefactions in the *Letters*, but as offering only one kind of cultivation, suitable to his status as Roman senator.

4.2 The nature of the *cultus* that Symmachus offers in the *Letters*

What sort of epistolary *cultus* does Symmachus offer? Symmachus comments far more explicitly than any previous author of an extant collection of letters on the proper way to write letters.[319] The two elements which are most readily apparent, and which he most clearly

[319] The primary letters in which Symmachus explicitly discusses ideals in letter-writing in the seven-book collection, and the letters in which he applies old models to these discussions, are *Ep*. 1.14 and *Ep*. 1.25 to Ausonius, *Ep*. 1.45 and 1.47 to Praetextatus, *Ep*. 2.35 to Flavianus Nicomachus senior, *Ep*. 3.3 to Julianus, *Ep*. 3.11 to Naucellius, *Ep*. 3.44 to Siburius, a variety of letters to Protadius (*Ep*. 4.23, *Ep*. 4.24, *Ep*. 4.28; *Ep*. 4.30, *Ep*. 4.33, *Ep*. 4.34), *Ep*. 4.42 to Protadius' brother Minervius, *Ep*. 5.14 to Theodorus, *Ep*. 5.73 to Licinius, *Ep*. 6.60 to Flavianus Nicomachus junior, and *Ep*. 7.75 to the Fratres. Of these letters, *Ep*. 2.35, *Ep*. 3.44, *Ep*. 4.30 and *Ep*. 4.42 are concerned primarily or in part with simple addressee lines, *Ep*. 1.14, *Ep*. 1.45 and *Ep*. 4.28 with brevity, and *Ep*. 3.11 with simple verbal effects. These letters account for most of the explicit discussion of simplicity in the *Letters*. As for the frequency of letters, there are scattered references throughout the *Letters*, particularly in the letters to Protadius (*Ep*. 4.17-4.34), but also in *Ep*. 3.3, *Ep*. 4.23, *Ep*. 5.14, *Ep*. 5.73, *Ep*. 6.60 and *Ep*. 7.75 to the custom determining who writes first after one correspondent has travelled away from home, which can impact the frequency of letters. It is these letters which will be the basis for the discussion that follows.

highlights himself, are frequency, in the sense that Symmachus writes often, and simplicity, in the sense that he writes straightforward and deliberately unaffected letters.

a) Frequency

In terms of the first, frequency, this is clear enough from the over nine hundred letters that survive that Symmachus wrote often. Included in the collection are ninety-one letters to Nicomachus Flavianus senior (*Ep*. 2.1-91), and eighty-one letters to Nicomachus Flavianus junior (*Ep*. 6.1-81), virtually all sent in a seven-year period between 395 and 402.[320] Other recipients receive fewer letters in the collection, and presumably also in reality: Ausonius with thirty letters, *Ep*. 1.13-43, and Protadius with eighteen letters, *Ep*. 4.17-34 come in next place. All the same, it is clear that Symmachus wrote often to a wide variety of correspondents.

Aside from the volume of his own published correspondence, the impression that Symmachus wrote often himself emerges perhaps most clearly from the fact that he often urges his correspondents to write more often, as I stressed above.[321] One particularly clear example is in a letter to the Gallic administrator Siburius, although he receives only three letters (*Ep*. 3.43-45) in the extant collection: "you certainly do not need to be asked by me to write often. The regularity of my letters will ensure that you are advised of your reciprocal duty" (*ut saepe scribas nequaquam orandus es mihi. Efficiet adsiduitas litterarum mearum ut mutui admonearis officii*, *Ep*. 3.44.2). Indeed, it is not uncommon that the last letter included to a particular correspondent urges the correspondent to write further: *Ep*. 3.22 to Gregorius is one example. Clearly Symmachus presents himself as writing and demanding frequent letters.

[320] See Marcone, *Commento Storico al Libro VI dell'Epistolario di Q. Aurelio Simmaco*, 50-56.
[321] See above, p. 182.

Obviously, there were practical obstacles to frequent letters. Correspondents might be distant – Symmachus had correspondents in Gaul, Spain, and the East – and have few opportunities to send letters to each other. Symmachus does not comment on the difficulty of sending letters to Ausonius in Trier when the court of Gratian was in the city, but he does comment on the difficulty of sending letters to Protadius in the same city at a time when the court of Honorius was in Milan: there were few potential bearers heading that way from Rome (*Ep*. 4.28.1).

Another obstacle to frequent letters was simply the difficulty of locating correspondents who had travelled away from their usual residences. The need to wait until the traveller had signified where letters should be directed was, it seems, the basis of a custom, several times commented on (*Ep*. 3.3, *Ep*. 4.23, *Ep*. 5.14, *Ep*. 5.73, *Ep*. 6.60, *Ep*. 7.75): "ancient tradition made the following order of writing, namely that those setting out from home inaugurate the duty of (sending) an epistolary gift" (*prisca observantia hunc scribendi ordinem fecit, ut domo profecti officium litterarii muneris auspicentur*, *Ep*. 6.60).[322] At the same time, it is clear that a

[322] Symmachus appears to have regularly observed the custom at least with the Fratres, whom he alerts to his arrivals at his destinations in both *Ep*. 7.72 (Milan) and *Ep*. 7.73 (Baiae) in both cases asking them to reply, without specifically invoking an ancient custom in either case.
The commonplace nature of the custom is suggested by the fact that Symmachus, particularly outside of the seven-book collection of the *Letters* itself, tends to describe the custom in relatively formulaic terms, with the same terms for the custom itself (*observantia*), the act of leaving home (*proficiscor*), and the priority of the traveller in sending letters (*auspicium*):
Ep. 6.60 (to Nicomachus Flavianus junior): *prisca* ***observantia*** *hunc scribendi ordinem fecit, ut* ***domo profecti*** *officium litterarii muneris* ***auspicentur****...*
Ep. 7.75 (to the Fratres): *Scio et desiderari et expectari a vobis litteras meas, quia moris est ut munus huiusmodi* ***a proficiscentibus*** *inchoetur.* ***Auspicium*** *ergo vobis alternandae inter nos salutationis emitto…*
Ep. 8.56 (to Romanus) *servo* ***observantiam*** *quam mos priscus instituit, ut* ***domo profecti*** *litteras* ***auspicentur****.*
Ep. 8.60 (to Servius): *fortasse allegatione moris uteris, quoniam plerisque persuasum est* ***auspicium*** *salutationis* ***profectis*** *esse capiendum. Absolvo te consuetudinis* ***observantia*** *aut lege pigritiae*.
Ep. 9.63 (to anonymous): ***observantiam*** *vetus usus induxit ut* ***domo profecti*** *praestent* ***auspicium*** *mutuae scriptionis*.
It should be noted that it is only in the description of what the traveller sets in motion (*salutatio* in *Ep*. 7.75 and 8.60, *litterae* in *Ep*. 6.60 and 8.56, and *scriptio* in *Ep*. 9.63) that these passages show any real variety. This is all the more striking insofar as Symmachus invokes the custom in a variety of rhetorical contexts, as the stationary correspondent (*Ep*. 6.60; *Ep*. 9.63), the traveller (*Ep*. 7.75; *Ep*. 8.56; *Ep*. 8.60), and even when criticizing the custom (*Ep*. 8.60), and insofar as the custom is not quoted from any extant source. The custom appears to have been simply self-evident as a point of reference in situations in which one correspondent had travelled.

correspondent who had travelled was not necessarily impossible to locate, particularly if he had travelled on official business. A correspondent who had left home to assume a provincial governorship, like Julianus in *Ep*. 3.3, presumably, or who had business at court, like Flavianus Nicomachus junior in *Ep*. 6.60, could, it seems, be assumed to be reachable at the provincial metropolis or at court, precisely the place where the correspondent might be most useful to Symmachus and where it was easiest to find bearers to go.[323] In these cases, and in other cases in which the whereabouts of the correspondent who had travelled was known, the custom in question was more a point of etiquette, which might potentially be discarded, than a simple recognition of reality. It was, however, an obstacle to frequent letters, or at least an excuse for infrequent letters.

How does Symmachus treat these obstacles to frequent letters in the *Letters*? The most basic observation that can be made is that he includes a relatively large number of letters whose primary subject is one reason or another for infrequent letters. The most elaborate justifications of infrequent letters are in two letters sent to Protadius, *Ep*. 4.28 and *Ep*. 4.33. In the first, Symmachus explains that it is easier for Protadius to write to him than for him to write to Protadius:

> That human nature is quick to accuse is obvious to all. But you, who are numbered among the few good things of life, cease to pursue what is, by nature, easier, and accept a defense of my long silence, which overflows with many supports of justice, if you consider that to the neighbourhood of the Rhine, from which both the best emperor and the most powerful magistrate are now absent, no one is travelling from our parts. It would be a fluke if someone, unknown to me, should take such a long journey for private business. (2) You have greater access to people setting off to Rome, first because into the common capital of the empire there is concourse of people from everywhere, then because the wishes and needs of all follow the most clement emperor, residing in this region. And nonetheless, although more occasions offer bearers to you, you hold back equally (to me) from your pen, and you are not touched by any complaint from us. Indeed, my lack of cares ensures that I do not doubt that I am esteemed even by one who is silent. Therefore, let confidence in our

[323] For the location of Flavianus Nicomachus senior at Milan in *Ep*. 6.60, see Seeck, *Q. Aurelii Symmachi opera quae supersunt*, lx and Callu, *Symmaque III*, 35 n. 167.

friendship not depend on letters. As for their intervals, chance will make it; the trust in our mutual affection, for its part, balks at a verbal claim.

Ingenia humana prompta ad arguendum esse omnibus liquet. Sed tu, qui inter bona rara numeraris, omitte sectari per naturam faciliora et defensionem longi silentii mei suscipe, quae abundant plurimis iustitiae patrociniis, si contempleris ad viciniam Rheni, a qua nunc et optimus princeps et magistratus potissimus abest, nullum nostrarum partium commeare. Fors fuat, an quis tantum viae ob rem privatam mihi ignoratus adripiat. (2) Tibi profiscentium Romam maior facultas; primo quia in commune imperii caput undique gentium convenitur; tunc quod clementissimum principem in hac parte degentem varia omnium desideria vel necessitates sequuntur. Et tamen, cum tabellarios tibi plures causae offerant, aeque a stilo temperas nec ulla a nobis expostulatione perstringeris. Facit enim securitas mea, ut diligi me etiam a tacente non ambigam. Ergo amicitiae nostrae fiducia non ex litteris pendeat. Illarum intervalla fors faciet, fides autem mutuae diligentiae indignatur linguae adsertionem (*Ep*. 4.28.1-2).

Symmachus' point here, that the friendship between Protadius and himself, which must have been carried on virtually entirely through letters, existed independently of these letters (and thus independently of cultivation), is interesting in the context of cultivation of magnates (here former magnates) at court. It seems doubtful that any meaningful friendship with Protadius could have existed in the absence of regular letters, but it was obviously useful for a published collection concentrating on the cultivation of powerful friends to suggest that it might have, that the letters were not strictly necessary.

In the second letter, *Ep*. 4.33, the point is similar:

You delight in my letters. I believe it! Hence it is that you both frequently and urgently demand them. But I do not immediately deserve censure for laziness, if I am not able to satisfy the greed of your affection toward me. Or do you suppose that the memory of friendship crumbles through silence? Be careful not to suppose such things about minds whose judgements are eternal. For loyalty has a great deal of weight with itself, and, confirmed by a spontaneous oath, it does not need the warning of a pen. (2) These things have not been written by me to you only once, nevertheless you do not abandon the longstanding complaint. What if it is better to be silent for a long time? Don't you see that the oracles which once spoke have ceased, that nothing is read in letters in the Cumaean cave, that Dodona does not speak through leaves, that no chant is heard from the Delphic vents? Allow, therefore, that I, a mere man made by the hand of Prometheus, cease to entrust to papyrus things that for a long time have not been read in the leaves of the prophets. (3) Nonetheless, I do not wish you to suppose that silence has been announced by me to you. I will hold to such measure in writing as we are distant in space. You too conquer impatience

with reason, which does not allow that my letters be delivered every day to you, placed in the neighbourhood of the Rhine, from our Albula (the Tiber). Farewell.

Delectaris epistulis meis. Credo! Hinc est, quod eas et saepe et ardenter efflagitas. Sed non statim mereor desidiis notam, si nequeo tui amoris in me avaritiam satisfacere. An interlabi amicitiae memoriam per silentium putas? Cave talia de animis opinari, quorum aeterna iudicia sunt. Habet enim plurimum sibi ponderis fides et allegata voluntario sacro stili admonitione non indiget. (2) Haec a me tibi non semel scripta sunt, nec tamen deseris inveteram querellam. Quid si praestat longum tacere? Non vides oracula olim locuta desisse, nec ulla in antro Cumano litteris legi, nec Dodonam loqui frondibus, nec de spiraculis Delphicis ullum carmen audiri? Patere igitur, ut homullus Promethei manu fictus mandare cessem papyro, quae dudum in vatum foliis non leguntur. (3) Nolo tamen denuntiatum tibi a me silentium suspiceris. Tenebo in scribendo tantam mensuram temporis, quantum inter nos locis absumus. Tu quoque inpatientiam vince ratione, quae non sinit, ut tibi cottidie litterae meae in vicinia Rheni posito a nostro Albula deferantur. Vale (*Ep*. 4.33.1-3).[324]

Clearly here Symmachus returns to the same points as in the letter cited above: practical constraints imposed by distance, and the permanence of friendship. The model of silent oracles is new, and potentially offers a general defense for infrequent letters, but it is significant that Symmachus immediately specifies that it was not meant as a general program for his future correspondence with Protadius (*Ep*. 4.33.3). Indeed, it hardly could have been, since an epistolary friendship could not exist without letters. All the same, the suggestion that Symmachus had legitimate reason not to write to, and hence not to cultivate, the distant contacts whom he did cultivate was potentially useful for his literary self-presentation for the secondary audience of the

[324] The silence of the oracles is a literary *topos* which dates back at least to the time of Plutarch (*De defectu oraculorum*) and Juvenal (6.555) and which also appears in Symmachus' Latin contemporaries Claudian and Prudentius. Claudian, in an almost exactly contemporary poem, states that "for you [Honorius] horned Ammon and long quiet Delphi broke their silence" (*tibi corniger Hammon/ et dudum taciti rupere silentia Delphi*, *IV Cons. Hon*. 144). Parallels with Prudentius are even closer, to the point of suggesting to Callu, *Symmaque II*, 239 = 116 n. 2 that Prudentius had read Symmachus, which is plausible: Prudentius asserts that the "Delphic caves, with condemned lots, have been silent; the cauldron does not rule the tripods, nor does the panting fanatic foam the fates published by the Sibylline books; lying Dodona has lost its unwholesome vapours; mute Cumae mourns the dead oracles, nor does Hammon give answers in the Libyan Syrtes" (*Delphica damnatis tacuerunt sortibus antra;/ non tripodas cortina regit, non spumat anhelus/ fata Sibyllinis fanaticus edita libris;/ perdidit insanos mendax Dodona vapores;/ mortua iam mutae lugent oracula Cumae,/ nec responsa refert Libycis in Syrtibus Hammon*, *Apotheosis* 438-443). Like Symmachus, Prudentius mentions Delphi, Dodona and Cumae, although not in the same order. Despite the religious colouring to which the *topos* could lend itself, Cameron, "Were Pagans Afraid to Speak Their Minds in a Christian world? The Correspondence of Symmachus," 77-79 is surely correct that it need not be present here.

published seven-book collection, in which the letters to Protadius and his brothers form the centre-piece.

By including two letters to the same correspondent explaining the infrequency of his letters, at considerable length, on reasonable practical grounds, and by placing these letters relatively close to each other, Symmachus certainly does not dispel the impression that he wrote often to correspondents like Protadius, and it cannot have been his intention to do so. He does, however, affirm that he was sufficiently close to Protadius that he did not need to defer unduly to him. In this connection, it is important to note that the friendship with Protadius is always presented in the *Letters* as already formed. Symmachus did sometimes, perhaps often, initiate friendships by letter, surely most often with the magnates at court, whom he was less likely to meet in person, and these letters must have been somewhat deferential by necessity. The fact that these were rarely included in the *Letters*, clearest in the case of Ausonius, in which the initiating letter actually survives in later-published material as *Ep*. 9.88,[325] shows the desire to keep the *cultus* which initiates friendships out of the published collection even while Symmachus dwells at length on the *cultus* which flows from existing friendships. In the extant collection, friendship, with its more or less egalitarian rules, generally precedes the cultivation of friends, and the assurance that friendship exists, always a given, can justify the absence of *cultus*.

As for the custom of waiting for the traveller to write first, what do we see? In three cases Symmachus was the correspondent who had travelled (*Ep*. 5.14, *Ep*. 5.73, *Ep*. 7.75), writing in order to allow his correspondents to respond (*Ep*. 5.73, *Ep*. 7.75) or to reiterate an invitation to respond which the correspondent had already received (*Ep*. 5.14). In the remaining three cases his recipient was the traveller (*Ep*. 3.3, *Ep*. 4.23, *Ep*. 6.60); here the correspondent is either informed

[325] For the letter, see above, n. 35.

that Symmachus had been waiting for word from him (*Ep*. 4.23), or that Symmachus was disregarding custom by writing first (*Ep*. 3.3 and *Ep*. 6.60). In the latter two cases Symmachus explains that he was disregarding custom out of affection for the correspondent: "my affection, not bearing the delay, by its scruples changed the order of writing" (*adfectus morae impatiens scribendi vices religione mutavit*, *Ep*. 3.3.1) and "it seemed too long to wait for the letters of someone with whom I am of one mind, although I don't criticize their lateness (*longum visum est opperiri unanimitatis tuae litteras quarum non arguimus tarditatem*, *Ep*. 6.60). In the case of *Ep*. 3.3.1, the forwarding of a recommendation (*Ep*. 3.3.2) to the recipient, apparently a palatine minister, provided a more practical reason to write, but affection is listed as the primary reason.[326]

What do these letters add to Symmachus' self-presentation as a letter-writer offering friendly *cultus*? The letters in which invites his correspondent to respond now that they were able (*Ep*. 5.14, *Ep*. 5.73, *Ep*. 7.75) are naturally to be attached to the other letters, of which there is no shortage in the *Letters*, in which he encouraged replies. *Ep*. 7.75 closes by anticipating that the recipients will not be slow in answering (*ad respondendum vos desides non futuros*), and *Ep*. 5.73 by asking the recipient to "prove with a constant conversation the fraternal attachment which you always show me in your thought" (*fraternam religionem quam mihi semper mente exhibes adsiduo sermone testare*). *Ep*. 5.14, with its complaints of the palatine minister Theodorus' slowness to write, parallels many similar complaints elsewhere in the collection, as seen above. All suggest an expectation of frequent letters, and thus of frequent *cultus* or *beneficia*.

As for the letters in which Symmachus was the stationary correspondent, the letter in which Symmachus cites the same custom to explain his own delay in writing, since it is

[326] The recommendation is of the new senator Philippus (*PLRE* I p. 697 Flavius Philippus 8); it is paralleled, outside of the seven-book collection of the *Letters*, by a recommendation of Symmachus' client Laurentius in *Ep*. 9.63, also identified as sent out of order out of Symmachus' affection for the recipient.

addressed to Protadius, is presumably to be attached to the other letters to the same correspondent (*Ep*. 4.28 and *Ep*. 4.33) in which he defends infrequent writing on grounds of necessity. In all these cases Symmachus highlights the fact that he sometimes delayed his letters, but that he had valid reasons for doing so. As I have argued above, these letters are best understood as demonstrating that Symmachus wrote as often as he was able to all correspondents.

The letters in which Symmachus explains that he is disregarding the principle that the traveller should write first (*Ep*. 3.3 and *Ep*. 6.60), finally, suggest that, for Symmachus, affection trumped etiquette, at least when he was able to locate his correspondent and in which the custom in question really was a point of etiquette. Symmachus demonstrates that he wrote more often than he needed to, and that he did so for all correspondents: *Ep*. 3.3 was written to a senator, Julianus, then in office as a provincial governor, and *Ep*. 6.60 to Symmachus' son-in-law Flavianus Nicomachus junior.

To the extent that all this is a deliberate editorial choice, it can be said, at very least, that Symmachus presents the frequency of his *cultus* as an important issue in the published *Letters*. Why would this be so? One would expect the question of frequency to interest his primary recipients much more than the secondary readership of the published collection. One potential reason, however, may be the context in which it sets his *cultus* of magnates like Ausonius and Stilicho through frequent letters: to judge by the *Letters*, it would appear that that Symmachus usually wrote more letters to these correspondents than he received from them. Only Protadius, not a palatine minister himself in the period in which Symmachus writes to him but the brother of palatine ministers Minervius and Florentius, seems to have written more than he received from Symmachus. In the *Letters*, Symmachus' *cultus* of the magnates is set within the context of (relatively) unlimited epistolary *cultus* and *beneficia* to all correspondents. Although he is not particularly sparing in his cultivation of the magnates, it emerges from the *Letters* that, at least in

terms of frequency of letters, he does not treat them differently from other correspondents, that is, as confirmed friends to whom Symmachus wrote more by choice than by necessity.

b) Simplicity

Whereas the impetus to write frequently and thus to offer abundant epistolary *cultus* tended to inspire Symmachus to ignore certain limits, and to emphasize that he did so, the other major feature of the *Letters*, simplicity, imposed limits on the sort of *cultus* that could be offered in letters. Simplicity was again a product of friendship, insofar as it distinguished sincere friendship from flattery, and Symmachus makes the connection explicitly in *Ep*. 4.30.3 and 4.42.2.[327] The specific limits which Symmachus obviously observes and clearly emphasizes, and which will be the emphasis of this discussion, are in terms of forms of address in letters.

In terms of Symmachus' general practice, it is immediately apparent that there is virtually only one style of addressee line in the *Letters*, namely that in which both sender and recipient are identified by their recipient by their *cognomina* only. The letters to Ausonius (*Ep*. 1.13-43) thus provide a typical example of the addressee lines in Symmachus' *Letters*: "Symmachus to Ausonius" (*Symmachus Ausonio*), with the *cognomen* of the sender in the nominative and the *cognomen* of the recipient in the dative.[328] Symmachus does not alter his addressee line to reflect the rank of the addressee, following the same convention for Ausonius (*Ep*. 1.13-43) and Stilicho (*Ep*. 4.1-14) as for the bishop Ambrose (*Ep*. 3.3-37), the professor Marinianus (*Ep*. 3.23-29), and

[327] For a general discussion of frankness as the distinguishing mark between friendship and flattery in classical literature, beginning in the Hellenistic world, see Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World*, 98-104. Konstan notes, p. 153-156, that Symmachus' Greek contemporary Themistius develops the opposition between true friendship and hypocrisy specifically.

[328] In some cases, the *nomen* is also used, as in the letters to Praetextatus (*Ep*. 1.44-55), hence *Symmachus Agorio Praetextato*. For members of his family the relation may replace the *cognomen* of Symmachus' correspondent, hence *Symmachus patri* and *Symmachus filio* for the letters to his father (*Ep*. 1.1-12) and son (*Ep*. 7.1-14) respectively, or supplement it, hence *Symmachus Celsino Titiano fratri* for his brother (*Ep*. 1.62-74), *Symmachus Flaviano fratri* for his brother-in-law (*Ep*. 2), and *Symmachus Nicomachi filiis* for his daughter and son-in-law (*Ep*. 6).

the rancher Euphrasius (*Ep*. 4.58-63). This usage, indeed, is followed in all the letters whose addressee lines survive, and not simply those included in the seven-book collection: even *Ep*. 10.2, which is included neither in the one-book nor in the seven-book collection, is addressed simply as Symmachus to Gratian Augustus (*Symmachus Gratiano Augusto*).

This was apparently a common model of addressee line at the time, but not the only model in use, and clearly not the most honorific for the recipient, to judge by the letters of Augustine and Ambrose.[329] Augustine does sometimes follow the same form as Symmachus, also including the *cognomen* of the sender and the recipient, the former in the nominative and the latter in the dative, with the only difference that whereas Symmachus always puts his own name first Augustine puts his name second, hence *Nebridio Augustinus* (Aug. *Ep*. 10), *Romaniano Augustinus* (Aug. *Ep*. 15), and *Lampadio Augustinus* (Aug. *Ep*. 246). It is clear, however, that Augustine is not as consistent with regard to simple forms of address as Symmachus is, and the form in which he provides the name of his addressee, and sometimes also his own name, is usually more elaborate. Some of these might be only slightly more elaborate than the form above, as for example "Augustine the priest to the bishop Aurelius" (*Aurelio Episcopo Augustinus Presbyter*, Aug. *Ep*. 22).[330] Others might be more clearly flattering, as with "Augustine to the most blessed and reverend brother and fellow priest Nobilius" (*Beatissimo Ac Venerabili Fratri*

[329] The letters of Jerome are less helpful in this regard, since the exact form of the addressee lines appears to be dictated by the needs of publication rather than by the original correspondence. Jerome never identifies himself as sender of the individual letters, presumably because he did not need to in the published collection, using instead the form "to Rufinus" (*Ad Rufinum*, *Ep*. 3) and "To Florentinus" (*Ad Florentinum*, *Ep*. 5). Titles for more obscure recipients were presumably for the benefit of the reader of the published collection, hence "to Julianus, a deacon of Aquileia" (*Ad Iulianum diaconum Aquileiae*, *Ep*. 6), and "to Chrysocoma, a monk of Aquileia" (*Ad Chrysocomam monachum Aquileiae*, *Ep*. 9). So are summaries of the subject matter, as in "to Florentinus about the birth of friendship" (*Ad Florentinum de ortu amicitiae*, *Ep*. 4). Jerome's actual practice in his original letters is unclear.

[330] Augustine's *Ep*. 29 provides a rather different example in which Augustine identifies himself by his position within the Church without naming himself at all: "a letter of the priest of the inhabitants of Hippo Regius to Alypius bishop of the Tagastians about the birthday of Leontius one-time bishop of Hippo" (*Epistula Presbyteri Hipponiensium Regiorum Ad Alypium Episcopum Tagastensium De Die Natalis Leontii Quondam Episcopi Hipponiensis*, Aug. *Ep*. 29).

Et Consacerdoti Nobilio Augustinus, Aug. *Ep*. 269). More often Augustine also explicitly emphasizes his affection for his recipient. Thus, to cite just a few examples, there is "the priest Augustine to the most blessed and venerable and, in the sight of the Lord, a father dearest with unmixed affection, the bishop Valerius" (*Domino Beatissimo Et Venerabili Et In Conspectu Domini Sincera Caritate Carissimo Patri Valerio Episcopo Augustinus Presbyter In Domino Salutem*, Aug. *Ep*. 21), or "Augustine to the choicest lord and brother and fellow presbyter Jerome, to be embraced and preserved with the sincerest cult of affection" (*Domino Dilectissimo Et Cultu Sincerissimo Caritatis Observando Atque Amplectendo Fratri Et Conpresbytero Hieronymo Augustinus*, *Ep*. 28). The letters of Ambrose, which also place the recipient first and the sender second, are even more consistent in this regard and invariably use elaborate forms of address.[331] In most of the letters of Augustine and all the letters of Ambrose, then, *cultus* is fully explicit in the addressee line itself, although there was no entirely standard way of making it explicit.

This tendency Symmachus not only ignores, but explicitly rejects in *Ep*. 2.35 to Flavianus Nicomachus senior and in *Ep*. 4.30 to Protadius. Consider the former, which responds to criticism that he had used something like the forms of address highlighted above in a previous letter:[332]

> I too embrace the model of antiquity in writing and I am very surprised that the mistake crept up on me of a scribe who, though accustomed to place only names at the front of my letters, exchanged the simple usage for a novel addition. But it will be clear that this was done by chance rather than on purpose, if you would recall that my previous letters were never tainted with a heading of this kind.
>
> *Ego quoque in scribendo formam vetustatis amplector nimisque miror quod mihi librarii error obrepserit, qui solitus epistulis meis nomina sola praeponere, usum simplicem novella*

[331] *Ep*. 21 provides a relatively typical example: "to the most clement emperor and most blessed Augustus Valentinian, bishop Ambrose" (*clementissimo imperatori, et beatissimo Augusto Valentiniano, Ambrosius episcopus*).
[332] The letter in question cannot be identified with any particular letter in the collection and must therefore have been either left unpublished or corrected.

adiectione mutavit. Sed id casu potius quam consulto factum liquebit, si recorderis nunquam superiores litteras meas istiusmodi titulo sorduisse (*Ep*. 2.35.1).

By describing the inclusion of the elaborate form in this case as a momentary and unintentional lapse, and as the fault of his scribe, Symmachus underlines the fact that he was concious of his choice to use the simple form of addressee line. The other letter, to Protadius, in which Symmachus urges Protadius to follow the simple form, similarly underlines the importance that he attaches to this form but here in the context of the sort of *cultus* that the simple form provides:

> But let's return, then, to the unsullied titles of names, and when "health" is pronounced or returned, let's consider nothing to be more respectful or more enticing than our names themselves. Indeed, let my letter serve as an example to you, and, if you disdain to imitate it, I will seem both censured with arrogance and lumped in with the others, who have great reputation for words, but no *cultus* in their feelings.
>
> *Redeamus quin ergo ad infucatos nominum titulos, et cum dicitur aut redditur salus, nihil ipsis vocabulis nostris honoratius aut blandius esse ducamus. Exemplo certe tibi sit epistula mea quam si spreveris aemulari, et adrogantiae notatus videbor et ceteris adgregatus, quorum magnus suspectus in verbis est, nullus cultus in sensibus* (*Ep*. 4.30.3).

Symmachus thus insists that the simple form, which does not explicitly mark the affection of the sender for the recipient, nonetheless offers real as opposed to apparent *cultus* and should be used by both correspondents for this reason.

Clearly, the exclusive use of simple addressee lines limited the way in which Symmachus could offer apparent *cultus* in his letters, even if not actual *cultus*, as he insists in the letter to Protadius cited above, all the more since as he maintained a certain degree of informality within the text of the letter itself. In *Ep*. 4.42.3 to the Gallic palatine minister Minervius, brother of Protadius, Symmachus asks his recipient to use simple and informal forms of address not only in the addressee line, which it seems that Minervius had used, but in the text itself, which he had not:

> Furthermore, I request to know why the ancient form, preserved in our names placed at the front, was lacking in the text of the letter. Let it please others to be exalted with the title of Sublimity; I refuse the term of Magnificence- unless perhaps you suppose me bad because

> I do not bestow the same delights on your honour. Feigned love stoops to these words; the *cultus* of friendship is genuine.
>
> *Praeterea scire postulo cur servata in praemissis nominibus nostris vetustas defuerit litterarum contextioni. Iuvet alios titulo sublimitatis adtolli, ego magnificentiae appellationem recuso. Nisi forte me inprobum putas, quod honori tuo eadem delenimenta non defero. Amor fictus in illa verba summittitur; amicitiae cultus ingenuus est* (*Ep*. 4.42.3).

As in *Ep*. 4.30, to Minervius' brother Protadius, discussed above, Symmachus expresses the worry that his recipient might consider him in the category of correspondents who display their sycophancy by offering elaborate *cultus*, and in both cases he clearly affirms that simple *cultus* is best. The point that genuine *cultus* is simple, however, is here extended from the addressee line to forms of address within the text of the letter.

Symmachus was rather less consistent about simplicity in the text itself. Stilicho, who is always addressed by his cognomen only in the addressee line, is sometimes referred to in the main text as "your sublime excellence" (*sublimis excellentia tua*, *Ep*. 4.9), "your magnificence" (*magnificentia tua*, *Ep*. 4.9), "your eminent sublimity" (*praecelsa sublimitas tua*, *Ep*. 4.12) and as "your highness" (*culmen tuus*, *Ep*. 4.14). All the same, these flattering forms of address, even in the main text, are rare: this is, generally speaking, not the sort of *cultus* which Symmachus offers in his *Letters*.

Symmachus, then, presents himself as offering *cultus* to his distinguished correspondents in the *Letters*, but within limits, in the form of acts of sincere friendship rather than flattery, as Peter Brown emphasizes.[333] In doing so, he aligns himself with what he describes as ancient as opposed to present practice. Protadius is invited to "return" with Symmachus (*redeamus*, *Ep*. 4.30.3) to the simple form. Flattering addressee lines are described as a newfangled addition (*novella adiectio*, *Ep*. 2.35.1) and as "meretricious ornaments of the present age" (*lenocinia aevi*

[333] Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, 101.

praesentis, *Ep*. 4.30.3). while simple addressee lines are described as "the ancient form" (*forma vetustatis*, *Ep*. 2.35.1, *vetustas*, *Ep*. 4.42.3) and "bare names, according to ancestral custom" (*more maiorum nuda nomina*, *Ep*. 3.44.1). There is no letter in which the simple form of addressee line is discussed in which its old-fashioned nature is not clearly emphasized. Finally, the "ancient form" most often referred to the addressee line, but might also apply to simple forms of address in the text itself, as when Symmachus asks Minervius why "the ancient form" (*vetustas*, *Ep*. 4.42.3) present in the title was lacking in the main body.

Was this really an ancient form? The addressee lines in the letters of Cicero, Seneca and Pliny are certainly simpler than some of the forms which Augustine and Ambrose use, but are invariably different from, and often somewhat more complex than, "Symmachus to Ausonius" (*Symmachus Ausonio*). Cicero, or at least his editor, regularly includes at least slightly more in his addressee lines than Symmachus does, with "Cicero [says] greetings to Atticus" (*Cicero Attico Sal*.) in the letters to Atticus and fuller names and even titles in the *Ad Familiares* as, for example "Marcus Cicero says greetings to Publius Lentulus the proconsul" (*M. Cicero s.d. P. Lentulo procos*., *Ep. Ad Fam*. 1.1). Seneca offers a close parallel to the letters to Atticus by beginning all his letters to Lucilius with "Seneca [says] greetings to his friend Lucilius" (*Seneca Lucilio suo salutem*), while Pliny virtually always identifies both himself and his addressee by both *nomen* and *cognomen* in the style of "Gaius Pliny [says] greetings to his friend Caninus Rufus" (*C. Plinius Canino Rufo suo s*., *Ep*. 1.3).[334] Cicero, Seneca and Pliny all include *salutem*, at least in abbreviated form, and Seneca and Pliny both refer to the addressee as *suus*, features which Symmachus does not attempt to reproduce.

[334] Plin. *Ep*. 1.1 and *Ep*. 1.2, however, refer to the recipient, at least, by one name only, in the style of "Gaius Pliny to his friend Septicius, greetings" (*C. Plinius Septicio suo S*, Plin. *Ep*. 1.1) and "Gaius Pliny to his friend Arrianus, greetings" (*C. Plinius Arriano suo s*., Plin. *Ep*. 1.2).

This distance from actual ancient models is not particularly surprising. Jennifer Ebbeler convincingly argues that epistolography as a genre developed late and that Cicero and Pliny were not models in the literary sense until the time of Sidonius Apollinaris.[335] The old model is not so much the actual practice of ancient letter-writers in addressee lines specifically, although it is in this context that it is invoked, as the perceived general practice of the ancients in rejecting flattery, in contrast to the prevalence of flattery among the contemporaries of Symmachus. There is no evidence that Symmachus even considered directly imitating the actual addressee lines of Cicero: here it is helpful to examine the two letters in which he engages directly with wholesale imitation in friendly *cultus* of old ways of writing, namely *Ep*. 3.11 to the elderly senator Naucellius and *Ep*. 3.44 to the Gallic administrator Siburius.

In the first case, *Ep*. 3.11.1-2 to Naucellius, Symmachus contrasts ancient and contemporary models for verbal effects. It is not entirely clear which effects Symmachus had in mind, but Callu plausibly identifies the discussion with *clausulae*, on the grounds that it is with respect to these that Symmachus' style is most obviously post-classical.[336] I quote the passage in full:

> I received your twinned letters simultaneously, written, as I might say, with a Nestorean hand, whose seriousness I strain to copy. For the practice of the time draws us into the over-refinements of an applause-worthy mode of expression. Therefore, good-naturedly accept the language of our age, and don't take it the wrong way that this letter lacks Attic healthiness. It is appropriate that this very admission of fault to you should help me to be pardoned easily. (2) But if you are intolerant of newfangledness, take arbitrators from the forum on whether you or I should ask for pardon for our writing. Believe me, I will earn more votes, not on the basis of equity, but because more people favour common faults. Therefore, as you yourself sometimes say, I am left as your only audience for the old coinage; delights of the ears hold the others rapt. Let this agreement therefore stand between us, that it pleases me to take a sample of antiquity from your handwriting, and that you don't regret putting up with the newfangledness of my writings.

[335] Ebbeler, "Pedants in the Apparel of Heroes? Cultures of Latin Letter-writing from Cicero to Ennodius," 78-79, 94-95.
[336] Callu, *Symmaque II*, 25 n. 1.

> *Sumpsi pariter geminas litteras tuas Nestorea, ut ita dixerim, manu scriptas, quarum sequi gravitatem laboro. Trahit enim nos usus temporis in plausibilis sermonis argutias. Quare aequus admitte linguam saeculi nostri et deesse huic epistulae Atticam sanitatem boni consule. Dignum est ut haec ipsa apud te culpae confessio prosit mihi ad veniae facilitatem*. (2) *Quodsi novitatis inpatiens es, sume de foro arbitros, mihi an tibi stili venia poscenda sit. Crede, calculos plures merebor, non ex aequo ac bono, sed quia plures vitiis communibus favent. Itaque, ut ipse nonnumquam praedicas, spectator tibi veteris monetae solus supersum; ceteros delinimenta aurium capiunt. Stet igitur inter nos ista pactio, ut me quidem iuvet vetustatis exemplar de autographo tuo sumere, te autem non paeniteat scriptorum meorum ferre novitatem* (*Ep*. 3.11.1-2).

In comparing his contemporary and the elderly Naucellius' old-fashioned styles, Symmachus readily admits the objective superiority of Naucellius' style, and emphasizes that the letters of Naucellius, his superior in age, are worthy benefactions which he fully appreciates. He describes his own use of the contemporary style, in contrast, as a "fault" (*culpa*, *Ep*. 3.11.1) and the style itself in terms of "common vices" (*viti[a] commun[ia]*, *Ep*. 3.11.2), and implies that the old style, which he characterizes by its "healthiness" (*sanitas*, *Ep*. 3.11.1), is simpler. At the same time, however, Symmachus insists that this style is not natural, at least not to him or to most of his peers, since he "strains to copy" it (*sequi […] laboro*, *Ep*. 3.11.1) and they actually prefer the contemporary style (*Ep*. 3.11.2).

Some of the same themes appear in the other letter, to Siburius:

> I yield to your rules and I not unwillingly strive for *ancienneté* in writing. You for your part, however, make sure that you remember that that seems simpler to many people which the usage of a following age has adopted. Do you wish that bare names be placed before our letters following ancestral custom? If you have such love of antiquity, let's return with similar eagerness to the ancient words with which the Salii sing and the augurs perform augury, and the decemvirs composed the (twelve) tables. Now these have long since been abandoned, as the succession of ages has changed the things which were earlier pleasing. (2) Or if we must write a legal speech, will we first mention Jupiter and the other gods by the principle of Cato, so that we be charged with neither neglect nor ignorance of antiquity? Yet it is better to follow Cicero, who compliant and I have given the surrender branch to your will? That you should write often you do not need to be asked by me. The diligence of my letters will ensure that you are advised of your mutual duty.
>
> *Concedo in leges tuas et ἀρχαϊσμὸν scribendi non invitus adfecto. Tu tamen fac memineris illud potius simplex nonnullis videri, quod sequentis aetatis usus recepit. Vis ut epistulis nostris more maiorum nuda nomina praeferantur? Si tibi vetustatis tantus est amor, pari*

> *studio in verba prisca redeamus, quibus Salii canunt et augures avem consulunt et decemviri tabulas condiderunt. Iamdudum his renuntiatum est, ut successio temporum placita priora mutavit. (2) An si nobis scribenda sit forensis oratio, Iovem deosque ceteros Catonis lege praefabimur, ne nobis vitio detur vel neglegentia antiquitatis vel inscitia? Atqui praestat Tullium sequi, qui ignorata maioribus usurpat exordia. Sed quid ego de hoc plura, cum sim tibi dicto audiens atque herbam dederim voluntati tuae? Ut saepe scribas nequaquam orandus es mihi. Efficiet adsiduitas litterarum mearum, ut mutui admonearis officii. Vale* (*Ep*. 3.44.1-2).

Here Symmachus appears to doing no more than accepting to write with the simple addressee lines which, as we have already seen, he uses as a matter of course (*vis ut epistulis nostris more maiorum nuda nomina praeferantur*?, *Ep*. 3.44.1). All the same, perhaps in response to an overly generally worded invitation to do so, he takes the opportunity to comment on the mechanical copying of ancient forms in letters. He argues that old models may be invalidated by their obsolescence, as with vocabulary (*Ep*. 3.11.1), and by their replacement with forms universally recognized as superior, as in oratory (*Ep*. 3.11.2). This was clearly not the case with simple addressee lines, which Symmachus always treats as valid. The point is, rather, a general one: insofar as simplicity, as most perceived it, could be dissociated from antiquity, Symmachus would privilege the former (*fac memineris illud potius simplex nonnullis videri, quod sequentis aetatis usus recepit*, *Ep*. 3.44.1).

In this way, though Symmachus presents his *cultus* as following ancient models, he occasionally considers it necessary to stress that, insofar as these models are models of simplicity and naturalness – which appears to have been accepted as a given – they ought to give rise to a natural *cultus* rather than to mechanical copies. The point is gratuitous in the context of *Ep*. 3.44, but it expresses well what appears to be Symmachus' general approach to ancient simplicity in epistolary *cultus*. Just as (newfangled) flattery would detract from the genuineness of *cultus*, so would (obsolete) unnatural language.

Ultimately, the primary reason for offering this sort of *cultus* must have been practical. Since Symmachus' *cultus* was offered predominantly in the form of written words, and since he insists that he rejects flattery, he was limited to cultivating his friends through frequent letters which would be accepted as offering genuine *cultus*. His reasons for highlighting simple, genuine *cultus*, however, must be more connected with literary self-presentation. It can be presumed that Symmachus' correspondents were usually willing enough to accept his *cultus*, in the particular form which he offered it, as genuine. This is the obvious conclusion to draw from the fact that he only takes the trouble to argue that it was genuine when writing to addressees whose tastes, to judge by the other letters which Symmachus sends them, were particularly literary and who might therefore appreciate demonstration that would otherwise be superfluous. To these correspondents, however, and presumably also to the secondary readership of the *Letters*, the simplicity of his *cultus* was worth highlighting.

If my argument is correct, simplicity and genuineness, understood in proper relation to the prestigious past, characterize and legitimize Symmachus' *cultus* of the magnates, as of everyone else, by showing that there were limits beyond which he did not go, that is, into flattery. Symmachus' *cultus* was highly successful, especially in the 390s, but the readers of the published collection were to conclude that it was always the right sort of *cultus*, following the spirit of ancient models.

c) *Cultus* in public life: the limits which Symmachus presents himself as observing

To return to the question of practical returns on (epistolary) *cultus* in public life, finally, do the *Letters* affirm limits not only to the way in which benefactors could be cultivated, but also to the sort of benefactions which could legitimately accrue from this cultivation? They do explicitly affirm certain limits, at least very occasionally; the five relevant letters are *Ep*. 1.51,

Ep. 2.36, *Ep*. 4.29, *Ep*. 4.45, and *Ep*. 5.9. The first of these (*Ep*. 1.51) contrasts priestly cultivation of the gods with aristocratic cultivation of popular opinion, while the second (*Ep*. 2.36) identifies new priestly honours as future prizes to be obtained through *cultus* (of those with the power to award it). In the third, fourth and fifth cases (*Ep*. 4.29, *Ep*. 4.45 and *Ep*. 5.9) Symmachus introduces two (lost) speeches which he delivered, one on a proposed revival of the ancient censorship and the other on the quaestorship of the son of Polybius, apparently a new senator. All of these works have been cited in my first chapter as evidence for attitudes toward honours and merit; here my focus is on the impression that they were supposed to provide of Symmachus.

The first of these letters, *Ep*. 1.51, is written to Praetextatus, who was, as in virtually all the letters that Symmachus writes to him, away from Rome, while Symmachus was in the city. The context is best appreciated when the letter is cited in full:

> I had decided to linger in foreign parts until the Kalends of October, but news of a tottering hometown changed my plans, since my carefree existence among common evils seemed unbecoming to me. In addition to this, pontifical service and the duty of the appointed month requires my attention. **For my mind does not tolerate, among such priestly neglect, a colleague to stand in for me. This delegation of sacred duty would once have been simple; now for Romans to be absent from the altars is a kind of *ambitus***. As for you, how long will Etruria detain you? Now we complain that there is something that has been preferred for so long to your fellow citizens. Let the state of the countryside be gentler all it wants: no one is able to enjoy his leisure properly who fears for friends who are absent. Farewell.
>
> *Statueramus in externis ad K. Oct. morari, sed labantis patriae nuntius destinata mutavit, cum mihi in communibus malis decolor videretur securitas mea. Ad hoc sacri pontificalis administratio curam de me et officium stati mensis exigit.* ***Neque enim fert animus in tanta sacerdotum neglegentia sufficere collegam. Fuerit haec olim simplex divinae rei delegatio: nunc aris deesse Romanos genus est ambiendi.*** *Vos Etruria quousque retinebit? Iam querimur esse aliquid quod tamdiu civibus praeferatur. Sit licet ruris status mitior, non potest bene defrui otio, qui suis absentibus timet. Vale* (*Ep*. 1.51).

The primary theme of the letter is the contrast between rural leisure – which Symmachus had meant to enjoy and which his friend Praetextatus was still enjoying, as is respectively emphasized

at the beginning and end of the letter – and the priestly obligations and the duty of solidarity with the citizen body during a food crisis in the city, both of which Symmachus took seriously. Clearly Symmachus presents himself, both to Praetextatus and to his secondary readership, as a dutiful senator. There is also, however, a secondary contrast drawn between two kinds of *cultus*, the priestly *cultus* of the gods in which Symmachus personally engaged, and a kind of undue cultivation (*genus [...] ambiendi*) of what can be assumed to be anti-pagan opinion, through neglect of the gods. Although Symmachus does not comment on the particular benefactions cultivated in this way, he does condemn (and distance himself from) the means of cultivation, insofar as it came at the expense of legitimate public cultivation (of the gods). Praetextatus, as a pagan, would presumably have agreed with him; Christians among Symmachus' secondary readership likely would not have, but they would at least be able to appreciate that Symmachus was observing limits in cultivation.

The four remaining letters are silent on the means adopted for what is clearly illegitimate *cultus*, but explicit (at least in *Ep*. 2.36 and *Ep*. 4.29) about the forbidden objects, in each case public honours. In *Ep*. 2.36, to Nicomachus Flavianus senior, Symmachus cites a dispute in the pontifical college in 385 over posthumous honours for Praetextatus as priest.[337] Although Symmachus does not explicitly mention it, this dispute came in the context of a competition between pagans and Christians for prominence in the city, insofar as Praetextatus was the most prominent pagan of his time and insofar as bishop Damasus had also died shortly before.[338] Symmachus had previously endorsed a different, senatorial, statue for Praetextatus in *Relat*. 12,

[337] For the functioning of the pontifical college at this time, see Van Haeperen, *Le collège pontifical: 3e s. av. J.-C.-4e s. ap. J.-C.: Contribution à l'étude de la religion publique romaine*, 202-211.
[338] See Callu, *Symmaque V*, 85 n. 1 for contemporary competition between the urban prefect and bishop of Rome in connection with the carriage of the former.

and many of his readers may well have expected that he would have endorsed this statue also, but here he is wary of creating a new honour:

> The virgin priestesses of Vesta intend to dedicate a memorial in the form of a statue to our Praetextatus. When the pontifices were consulted, before they weighed the respect due to an exalted priesthood or longstanding practice or the state of the present time, they, apart from a few who followed me, assented that they should erect a monument to him. 3. I, although I noted that such compliments to men did not suit the respectability of maidens, **and that it was not customary what Numa the originator and Metellus the preserver of religious rights and all the pontifices maximi never previously earned**, nonetheless kept these things silent, so that, when announced to the rivals of sacred rites, these would not create trouble for those asserting something uncustomary; **I wrote only that the model was to be avoided, so that a matter arising from a just beginning would not soon come to unworthy men through intrigue (*ambitus*)**.
>
> *Praetextato nostro monumentum statuae dicare destinant virgines sacri Vestalis antistites. Consulti pontifices, priusquam reverentiam sublimis sacerdotii aut longae aetatis usum vel condicionem temporis praesentis expenderent, absque paucis qui me secuti sunt, ut eius opificium statuerent adnuerunt. (3) Ego qui adverterem neque honestati virginum talia in viros obsequia convenire **neque more fieri quod Numa auctor, Metellus conservator religionum omnesque pontifices maximi nunquam ante meruerunt**, haec quidem silui, ne sacrorum aemulis enuntiata noxam crearent inusitatam censentibus; **exemplum modo vitandum esse rescripsi, ne res iusto orta principio brevi ad indignos per ambitum perveniret*** (*Ep*. 2.36.2-3).[339]

In terms of proper honours, Symmachus identifies several problems here: the suitability of Vestal virgins offering honours to men, the excessive nature of what was offered, and the creation of a new potential prize for contemporary *ambitus*, the latter of which was the public reason which he offered to the college of pontiffs. The implication of the latter objection is that public honours were, ideally, due to those who met publicly recognized standards of merit – as Praetextatus did –

[339] He was unsuccessful, since in an extant inscription (*CIL* 6, 2145) Paulina, the widow of Praetextatus, thanks the chief Vestal Virgin Caelia Concordia for the statue:
To Coelia Concordia the chief Vestal Virgin Paulina, a senatorial woman, ensured that a statue be made and erected, both on account of her (Coelia Concordia's) famous chastity and conspicuous sanctity in matters of divine worship, and also because she (Coelia Concordia) earlier erected a statue to her (Paulina's) husband Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, a senatorial man, who (Praetextatus) was unique and worthy in every respect, to be cared for by the virgins of this sort and by the priests.
Coeliae Concordiae Virgini / Vestali maximae Pau/lina cf statuam facien/dam conlocandamque/ curavit cum propter / egregiam eius pudici/tiam insignemque / circa cultum divinum / sanctitatem tum quod / haec prior eius viro / Vettio Agorio Praetexta/to vc omnia singulari / dignoque etiam ab huius / modi virginibus et sa/cerdotibus coli statu/am conlocarat.

rather than simply to those who had cultivated the body which controlled the attribution, who might be unworthy candidates. And yet Symmachus identifies the situation implied in the latter case as the prevalent contemporary tendency in the attribution of honours. By opposing *ambitus* here, in a case in which his own religious faction stood to benefit, Symmachus presents himself as taking an unusually principled stance on the question of what *cultus* ought to be able to obtain in the public sphere.

As for the three letters (*Ep*. 4.29, *Ep*. 4.45, and *Ep*. 5.9) introducing two (lost) speeches which Symmachus delivered in the senate some time apart but published together, respectively opposing a proposed revival of the censorship and the premature advancement of the son of a certain Polybius (*PLRE* I, p. 711 Polybius 2) to the quaestorship, they show the same concern for limiting the public prizes for contemporary *cultus* as *Ep*. 2.36.[340] The incidents which occasioned these speeches are otherwise unknown and the letters have only tentatively been dated to 397-8.[341] Unlike the case of the statue for Praetextatus, in which he describes himself as representing a minority position, Symmachus was apparently supported by the senate as a whole, at least in the case of the censorship (clear from references to the *auctoritas* of the whole senate in *Ep*. 4.29 and

[340] A fourth letter, *Ep*. 7.58 to Hadrianus (*PLRE* I p. 406 Hadrianus 2), simply mentions that the speeches were sent to Minervius, the addressee of *Ep*. 4.45, and to Felix (*PLRE* II p. 458-459 Felix 2), whose letter does not survive, without describing them in any way.

[341] The date of publication is proposed by Seeck, *Q. Aurelii Symmachi opera quae supersunt*, viii on the basis of the magistracies of Felix (*quaestor sacri palatii*) and Minervius (*comes rerum privatarum*) at Milan at this time. The date of the original speech is less certain: Symmachus says that he delivered the speech on the censorship earlier but revised it for publication, in contrast to the speech on the quaestorship of the son of Polybius, which is recent (*Ep*. 4.45). Most scholars place the debate on the censorship only somewhat earlier in the reign of Honorius, so Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court AD 364-375*, 267, Callu, *Symmaque II*, 111 n.1 and Marcone, *Commento storico al libro IV dell'epistolario di Q. Aurelio Simmaco*, 70. Still, given the fact that the proposal seems to have originated at court and was rejected, the fact that it was publicized under Honorius could perhaps suggest an earlier dating, and the suggestion in Stuart Cristo, "A Note on Four Letters of Symmachus on the Revival of the Censorship," *The Classical Bulletin* 51 (1975), 53-54 of the reign of Eugenius is possible. Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court AD 364-375*, 267 is alone in identifying the proposal as emanating from the senate itself, while Cristo and Marcone, probably more plausibly, interpret it as proposed by the court. The rationale behind the proposal remains uncertain, but a simple wish to restore an ancient magistracy in Rome was probably part of it: two of Symmachus' three recipients of copies of his speech are at court (Minervius for *Ep*. 4.45 and Theodorus for *Ep*. 5.9), and the letters anticipate their surprise at the negative reception in Rome of the proposed revival of the censorship.

Ep. 4.45) and apparently also in the case of the quaestorship of the son of Polybius in *Ep*. 5.9.2, if Symmachus's request that Theodorus support the *auctoritas* of the senate here is to be connected with the more recent case. Both cases, particularly the case of the censorship, apparently attracted interest at court, to judge from the fact that Symmachus addresses all three letters to either current or former palatine ministers,[342] and it could well be that the court had been an important player in both cases, and a source of support for both initiatives. The advancement of the son of Polybius, himself apparently a new senator whose son, born before his entry into the senate, needed to enter the senate on his own merits, seems to have been pursued by irregular means, prompting the response of Symmachus in the second speech.

All three letters follow a similar pattern. In each the focus is clearly on the first speech, on the censorship.[343] In every case Symmachus expects his reader to be shocked by the title of this speech, insofar as the censorship was a prestigious ancient institution and Symmachus' speech thus appeared to oppose an aspect of the Roman past,[344] but in each case he insists that his speech makes the argument convincingly. Both *Ep*. 4.29 and *Ep*. 5.9.2 – *Ep*. 4.45 is brief and simply refers Minervius to the speech – also draw an explicit contrast between the prestigious

[342] The letters in question are written to non-senatorial palatine ministers in Milan, to Theodorus, probably then Praetorian Prefect of Italy (*PLRE* I p. 900-2 Flavius Mallius Theodorus 27), and to Minervius, *Comes Rei Privatae* (*PLRE* I p. 603 Minervius 2), in the case of *Ep*. 5.9 and *Ep*. 4.45 respectively, as well as to Protadius, the brother of Minervius (*PLRE I* p. 751-2 Protadius 1) in the case of *Ep*. 4.29. Hadrianus (*PLRE* I p. 406 Hadrianus 2), the recipient of *Ep*. 7.58, which mentions the speech, is also a palatine minister.

[343] *Ep*. 4.29, sent to Protadius only mentions that there are two speeches without discussing or describing the second in any way. Since Protadius was not at court, the case of the son of Polybius, whose main interest seems to have been that it was then a live issue, would have been less important to him.

[344] Compare "I warn you, nevertheless, not to change your opinion about me because of the title of one oration, for the rejection of the censorship troubles us at first at the simple perusal of the subject" (c*ommoneo tamen, ne orationis unius titulo mutetur de me existimatio tua. Nam repudiata censura gravat nos principio sola argumenti inspectione*..., *Ep*. 4.29.2); "The subject of this one is the rejection of the censorship, which the authority of the whole senate put to flight at that time. I do not want you to be surprised that the most venerable order rejected the magistracy" (*Huic argumentum est repudiata censura quam tunc totius senatus fugavit auctoritas. Nolo mireris gravissimum ordinem magisterium respuisse*, *Ep*. 4.45),
"Don't criticize me for the rejection of ancient severity" (*nec mihi vitio vortas priscae severitatis repulsam*, *Ep*. 5.9.2).

appearances and the harmful reality of the revived censorship. In both cases Symmachus insists that the censorship, under a prestigious name (*sub specioso nomine*, *Ep*. 4.29.2; cf. *solis speciosa nominibus*, *Ep*. 5.9.2), presents a real danger when implemented (*usu et experiundo plurimum nocent*, *Ep*. 5.9.2). These dangers may have related to the exercise of the powers of the censor, but there was another danger, explicitly highlighted in *Ep*. 4.29.2, as presumably in the speech itself: the stimulus given to *ambitus*. Symmachus explains that he opposed the revival of the censorship "so that the doors of lack of self-restraint will not, under a prestigious name, be opened to those accustomed to self-seeking" (*ne sub specioso nomine fores inpotentiae ambire solitis panderentur*). The censorship, at least, could not be handed over to those most likely to obtain it under present circumstances, and this was, for Symmachus, a sufficient reason to refuse the revival of the ancient office. Symmachus, again, aligns himself firmly with support for limits on the potential returns in civic affairs of canvassing by members of his own senatorial elite.

In each of these cases, Symmachus also implicitly aligns himself with an idealized past precisely insofar as he supports appropriate *cultus* and condemns inappropriate *cultus*. In *Ep*. 1.51 he rejects the ancient practice of delegating priestly duties, but implicitly aligns himself with antiquity against what he describes as the harmful present practice of gaining benefits through ignoring sacrifices altogether. In *Ep*. 2.36 he aligns himself with the simplicity of past honours and with the merit of Numa and Metellus on the one hand, against *ambitus* on the other, which is implicitly described as a present phenomenon. In *Ep*. 4.29 he opposes the revival of the censorship (an action identified with the "rejection of ancient severity, *priscae severitatis repulsa*, in *Ep*. 5.9.2), but again identifies himself with the era in which it functioned properly by opposing current *ambitus*.

Why were these letters with remarks about public prizes for *ambitus* included in the *Letters* and how did they contribute to Symmachus' self-presentation? The placement of the

letters may offer a clue, since Symmachus, if indeed he is responsible for the final arrangement, juxtaposes the two letters which explicitly highlight the danger of creating public prizes for *ambitus* (*Ep*. 2.36 and *Ep*. 4.29) with several very explicit letters on the sort of *cultus* appropriate to letter-writing. *Ep*. 2.36 is placed immediately after *Ep*. 2.35, while *Ep*. 4.29 is placed between *Ep*. 4.28 and *Ep*. 4.30; each of these three letters (*Ep*. 2.35, *Ep*. 4.28, and *Ep*. 4.30) not only offers *cultus* but also comments on and marks Symmachus' attachment to ancient models of epistolary *cultus*. Symmachus, then, apparently meant his reader, in two cases, to read his attachment to the ideal simplicity of epistolary *cultus* in light of his respect for public affairs as a sphere in which a particularly self-interested sort of *cultus* ought not to – but does – operate.

The obvious conclusion, which Symmachus cannot have expected to be lost on the readers of these paired letters, is that he did not use the *ambitus* in public life which he so harshly criticizes in *Ep*. 2.36 and *Ep*. 4.29 any more than he used the overly elaborate epistolary *cultus* which he criticizes in *Ep*. 2.35, *Ep*. 4.28, and *Ep*. 4.30, something which would have been clear enough to a reader of the *Letters*. Instead, in every case, he presents his own *cultus*, though exercised in a contemporary setting, as observing limits, in form and object, which he presents as typical of antiquity and which his readership might have been expected to accept as such.

This is not to say that Symmachus' reader was supposed to conclude, or likely to conclude, that he had not pursued anything in public life through *cultus*, simply that he had not pursued honours for himself. The rehabilitation of Nicomachus Flavianus junior and the quaestorian and praetorian games of Memmius Symmachus appear as the major examples of the objects that he did pursue through *cultus*; here the causal relationship between epistolary *cultus* and political success is clear. The highlighting of the types of objects in public life that he did not pursue through *cultus*, namely public honours for himself, can be seen as a necessary corollary to the highlighting of the rehabilitation and the games.

Whether or not this is an accurate picture of the way in which Symmachus cultivated benefactors in public life, and whether or not Symmachus' actual practice was exceptional for his time, as he implies, is, of course, ultimately unknowable, but it should be possible, at least, to observe whether his self-presentation is consistent in this respect across the *Letters*. In terms of public honours, the most obvious test case is Symmachus' ordinary consulship of 391, which we have earlier seen received relatively little emphasis compared to the quaestorship and praetorship of his son.

There are five letters which mention the consulship of Symmachus (*Ep*. 2.62-2.64, *Ep*. 5.10 and *Ep*. 5.15). In the first (*Ep*. 2.62), Symmachus announces his consulship, and expresses the wish that his correspondent, Flavianus Nicomachus senior, soon enjoy a consulship of his own. In the second (*Ep*. 2.63), Symmachus mentions the consulship in passing in a recommendation of the man who was the bearer of the news informing Symmachus of it, while in the third (*Ep*. 2.64) he responds to Flavianus' encouragement to organize his games, and hopes again that Flavianus will obtain his own consulship. The theme of preparations is reflected again in *Ep*. 5.15, in which Symmachus announces his consulship to the palatine minister Theodorus and asks for help in staging the inauguration. In *Ep*. 5.10, finally, also to Theodorus but sent seven years later, Symmachus congratulates Theodorus, now consul-designate, on his consulship, which is said to make Symmachus relive his own.[345]

There are two observations to make here. First, since all of these letters post-date the award of the consulship, none of them actually cultivate the addressee with a view toward the consulship as a benefaction. It is hardly surprising that Symmachus does not ask for the consulship in a letter: presumably this would have been very bad form, though he had no problem

[345] For the dating, see Callu, *Symmaque II*, 161 and 164.

asking for favours for Nicomachus Flavianus junior and for help with the games of his own son Memmius Symmachus, as we have seen.[346] Nor does he thank his correspondents for the award, or suggest that they were responsible for it, again unlike some of his letters in connection with the rehabilitation (*Ep*. 4.4, *Ep*. 4.6, *Ep*. 5.6) and the quaestorian and praetorian games (*Ep*. 2.77, *Ep*. 4.7, *Ep*. 4.12, *Ep*. 5.56, *Ep*. 7.97). He emphasizes instead that the consulship is due to his virtues and merits in the eyes of the emperor: "in the sacred and divine judgement of our lord Theodosius, I deserved the consulship" (*d.n. Theodosii sacro divinoque iudicio merui consulatum*, *Ep*. 5.15).

It remains the case that these letters are works of *cultus*. The wish that the correspondent will enjoy a future consulship of his own (in *Ep*. 2.62 and *Ep*. 2.64) or the congratulation of the correspondent on a consulship awarded (*Ep*. 5.10) is obviously a form of *cultus*. All the same, the particular favours requested from these court officials – help for the bearer of the initial news (*Ep*. 2.63) and help in staging fitting consular celebrations (*Ep*. 5.15) – are not public honours themselves. Symmachus' consular inauguration is thus presented as a – minor – achievement of his cultivation of officials at court, but his consulship itself is not.

Symmachus' treatment of his *cultus* in connections with his ordinary consulship of 391, then, is consistent with the way in which he presents his *cultus* as operating in general in the *Letters*. Cristiana Sogno is no doubt correct in identifying the consulship as the culmination of his political recovery after the usurpation of Magnus Maximus which relied heavily on taking advantage of connections at court.[347] All the same, this is hardly how Symmachus wished to present it. The consulship is not presented as the culmination of the sort of *cultus* which had

[346] For petitioning for one's own consulship, see above, p. 54-55. For favours for Flavianus Nicomachus junior and help with the games of Memmius Symmachus, see above, p. 190-192.
[347] See Sogno, *Q. Aurelius Symmachus: A Political Biography*, 71-77 for the political context of Symmachus' appointment.

obtained the rehabilitation of Nicomachus Flavianus junior and the direct requests for animals needed for the games of Symmachus' son, nor, indeed, of the entire senate's direct petition of the new emperor which had obtained the consulship for Symmachus' father in 377.[348] In terms of the principles which he endorses with respect to honours and *ambitus* and his own conduct as he presents it, he does not contradict himself.

Symmachus' public life, then, although obviously advanced through *cultus*, appears in the *Letters* to conform to appropriately ancient rules and principles governing proper and improper *cultus*, and the cultivation in which he did engage is legitimized by this conformity. The reader is left with the impression that Symmachus was principled and consistent in his *cultus*, and directed it toward valid social and practical ends. In this way, the considerable advantages which he gained by these means, often on behalf of others, are not denied – or at least not all denied –, but are presented as legitimate.

4.3 Conclusion

Symmachus, then, organizes his *Letters* in such a way as to highlight his *cultus* of a variety of correspondents both as a friendly exchange of epistolary cultivation for immaterial benefactions, within the framework of existing and genuine friendships, and as an activity which contributed to his protégés' advancement, an organization which appears to be unique to him. As a *sine qua non* of highlighting this activity, he emphasizes that his *cultus* was pursued within appropriate limits, which he illustrates very largely from the Roman past, though generally not, with the exception of the most banal commonplaces, from models codified in connection with letter-writing or *cultus*. This ideal practice is also described in contrast to the general pursuit of

[348] For the consulship of the father of Symmachus, see Seeck, *Q. Aurelii Symmachi opera quae supersunt*, xliii-xliv, *PLRE* I p. 864, and Kelly, "Pliny and Symmachus," 282.

cultus at his time, which he describes as overly flattering and, in the form of *ambitus*, as being inappropriately directed toward public honours. Symmachus thus deflects criticisms which might naturally have been directed at his own cultivation of such magnates as Rufinus and especially Stilicho, and presents the activity to which he clearly owed his political success as wholly exemplary.

This is self-presentation; the sort of *cultus* which Symmachus did in fact offer through letters was probably conventional enough, though particularly successful and directed at particular prominent patrons. In this sense the *Letters* provides evidence of what was usual for senators and, to some extent surely, of local elites as well, and illustrates a larger late antique tendency toward long distance relationships described by Jennifer Ebbeler.[349] It must be recognized, however, that the purpose of the *Letters* was to distance his *cultus* from what was usually offered to the magnates at court, and therefore to insist that the letters of Symmachus were not products of their time.

The letters of Symmachus, then, offer a museum of late Roman *amicitia*, but they do so for Symmachus' own reasons, and they do not present senatorial correspondence as it was, but as it ought to have been, with certain features of Symmachus' actual *cultus* either removed or explicitly denied. Symmachus' friendships appear fully formed, without the letters which initially cultivated his correspondents as friends, and the *cultus* which maintains them is explicitly distanced from the pursuit of honours. The real-world utility of the letters of Symmachus is clear, as Matthews argues, but what is presented in the *Letters* is not quite a full picture of a real-world correspondence. It is with these caveats that the *Letters* should be used as a historical source.

[349] Ebbeler, "Pedants in the Apparel of Heroes? Cultures of Latin Letter-writing from Cicero to Ennodius," 108-109, 118, 156-157, 166-167 and *Disciplining Christians: Correction and Community in Augustine's Letters*, 228-229.

As a work of self-presentation, the *Letters* are rather more original than has often been recognized. The mere use of a collection of letters for self-presentation is certainly not original to Symmachus: to speak only of Latin authors, Pliny had done so, and, more recently, Jerome, presenting himself as a biblical scholar and ascetic.[350] Symmachus, in fact, though there is no particular reason to suppose that he actually read the letters of Jerome, was quite possibly aware of and perhaps even inspired by their publication to produce a collection of letters as his own work of self-presentation. What was unique to Symmachus was self-presentation not only through letters but specifically as a letter-writer, for which the notion of proper friendly *cultus* is elaborated. This elaboration likely occurred in the 390s, to which most of the letters discussed above date, though Symmachus demonstrated an (apparently unique) concern for proper *cultus* in other (public) contexts in rather earlier works, as seen in the previous chapter. In this sense, the *Letters* should not be taken as evidence of the narrow cultural horizons of the senatorial aristocracy at the end of the fourth century, and certainly not of its unresponsiveness to broader trends and recent models, but rather of its (here self-effacing) cultural creativity.

[350] See Andrew Cain, *The Letters of Jerome: Asceticism, Biblical Exegesis, and the Construction of Christian Authority in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). See also Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, 260-263.

CONCLUSION

Symmachus, then, by making his career through patronage, was participating in what Peter Garnsey emphasizes was a longstanding distinctive feature of Roman society;[351] by cultivating the emperor and benefactors at court, he was engaged in what must have been a normal and necessary activity for a fourth-century senator.[352] He is therefore a valuable source for contemporary patronage, and has often been cited as such. Symmachus is not, however, simply a typical actor within a network of patronage relations: the (considerable) extent to which he explicitly discusses cultivation, a phenomenon which must have normally operated discreetly, probably appears as unique as it does in surviving literature because it was in fact unique, certainly in literary self-presentation.[353] One finds contemporary counterparts for critiques of improper cultivation and degrading forms of patronage in Ammianus Marcellinus and Libanius, but the notion of proper *cultus* as an object of explicit discussion, a defining feature of his works, especially the *Letters*, was most likely invented or significantly elaborated by Symmachus himself.

In this thesis I have suggested a timeline for this elaboration of the notion of proper *cultus*. The most obviously original treatment of *cultus*, in the literary self-presentation of Symmachus in the *Letters*, can be dated primarily, perhaps entirely, to the later 390s, the last decade of his life and his time of greatest political success, in response, as I have argued, to public scrutiny of his friendships and patronage connections. One of his goals, it seems, was to disassociate himself, as a senator who properly cultivated

[351] Garnsey, "Roman Patronage," 33-54, especially 54.
[352] This is the premise of Sogno, *Q. Aurelius Symmachus: A Political Biography*.
[353] Lack of obvious antecedents is a feature of several late antique works of self-presentation, including Augustine's *Confessions* and Gregory Nazianzus' autobiographical poems, especially the long *De vita sua*.

powerful friends, from canvassing for honours; another must have been to demonstrate that he did not flatter his correpondents when cultivating them. Most likely, at least some of the letters about letter-writing that I discussed in the previous chapter were written at this time with an eye to publication.

The treatment of the notion in the *Letters*, however, had antecedents in much earlier works of Symmachus. In a public capacity, he had already engaged extensively with the way in which gifts conveyed affection between the court and the emperor both as urban prefect of Rome in communication with the emperors in 384-5, and to a limited but real extent as panegyrist at Trier in 370 CE, especially in *Orat*. 2.32. *Relat*. 3, on the rather different but related question of the possibility and necessity of cultivating the traditional gods under Christian emperors – the work for which Symmachus is most famous – can be located at the midpoint of this scheme; like the other works mentioned above it responds to imperial communications to the senate. There was little possibility of a discreet *cultus* in any of the public exchanges of gifts described in these earlier works, though Symmachus may have been unique in highlighting them in the way that he does in his panegyrics and state papers. It would appear, then, if the surviving works are indicative of what he wrote and if my dating of the publication of the first book of the *Letters* is correct, that Symmachus had been explicitly discussing *cultus* in situations in which *cultus* was always offered in a material and publicly visible form well before he considered publicizing, in the *Letters*, a *cultus* which was normally discreet.

So far I have considered the ways in which Symmachus explicitly engaged with senatorial cultivation of other senators, members of the court, and the emperors themselves. What about Christian cultivation? Did Symmachus parallel or was he influenced by Christian ecclesiastical authors in his *cultus*? There is evidence for some interaction. I have argued that at least a small part of the impetus for cultivation of benefactors at court more generally, by the later fourth

century, was competition with the most prominent and ambitious bishops. It is also obvious that *Relat*. 3 directly confronts the arguments about religious cult advanced at a largely Christian court, and Clifford Ando may be correct in seeing use of Constantinian rhetoric in the work.[354] It is also clear enough that the way in which Symmachus cultivated benefactors needed to be acceptable to lay Christians, at least, and that recommendations might, exceptionally, address (*Ep*. 3.30-37 to Ambrose) or seek to advance the interests of bishops (*Ep*. 1.64).[355] All this was true at least since the 380s, to which *Relat*. 3, *Ep*. 1.64, and many of the letters to Ambrose date.[356]

Direct influence from Christian ecclesiastical authors is less clear, at least outside of *Relat*. 3. In terms of the *Letters*, the fact of publication of letter collections by ecclesiastical authors, perhaps especially Jerome, may very well have helped to inspire Symmachus to publish his *Letters*. His concerns in the collection, however, are at best parallel to these other letter collections. It seems unlikely that Symmachus, by presenting himself as a correspondent who appropriately cultivated his friends and benefactors, was directly responding to the self-presentation of Jerome as an ascetic and biblical scholar as described by Andrew Cain, or Augustine's attempts to mentor and correct his correspondents through friendly letters as described by Jennifer Ebbeler.[357] These appear to be three contemporary and creative but basically separate developments of the possibilities of Latin epistolography, during what Ebbeler persuasively describes as the golden age of the literary form.[358] Jerome and Augustine practice *cultus* without obviously

[354] Ando, "Pagan apologetics and Christian intolerance in the ages of Themistius and Augustine," 171-207.
[355] For Symmachus' cultivation of the devoutly Christian Rufinus, see Matthews, "The Letters of Symmachus," 89-91.
[356] For the dating of the letters, see Callu, *Symmaque I*, 121 and Callu, *Symmaque II*, 41-45.
[357] Cain, *The Letters of Jerome: Asceticism, Biblical Exegesis, and the Construction of Christian Authority in Late Antiquity* and Ebbeler, *Disciplining Christians: Correction and Community in Augustine's Letters*.
[358] Ebbeler, "Pedants in the Apparel of Heroes? Cultures of Latin Letter-writing from Cicero to Ennodius," 225.

making the arguments about it that Symmachus' letters do. Symmachus' interaction with or reaction against a specifically Christian notion of *cultus*, if any, must have been limited, though his interactions with Christian friends and patrons through *cultus* is clearly considerable.

What, finally, about traditional Roman models for *cultus*? There does not seem to be a Latin literary tradition for distinctively Roman *cultus* on which Symmachus drew: there is no category for cultivation in Valerius Maximus, and, despite some parallels with Pliny the Younger, Symmachus as letter-writer devotes much more attention to proper *cultus* than, and shows very little debt to, Pliny, whose interests are considerably more varied. All the same, Symmachus emphasizes simplicity and authenticity as opposed to flattery as marks of contemporary *cultus* which was faithful to the Roman past, and his self-presentation in the *Letters* as a follower of either general traditional or contemporary models is quite often connected to *cultus*. The notion that he was following Roman tradition when he offered appropriate *cultus*, even when Symmachus was clearly not following any specific ancient model, is important to the *Letters*.

In his cultivation, then, Symmachus responds to the rhetoric of the court, accommodates himself to the sensibilities of Christian elites, and observes what he understands to be traditional Roman practice. No doubt Symmachus was particularly successful at this, but all of the above must have been true to at least some extent of any senator engaged in the same activities, and this ability of *cultus* to adapt to its circumstances and to bridge social gaps between different members of the elite must have contributed in no small measure to the relative cohesion of late Roman society, as Matthews argues for Symmachus' letters.[359] Indeed, this must have always

[359] Matthews, "The Letters of Symmachus," 91.

been true of cultivation throughout Roman history, though the fourth century created new dynamics.

Symmachus was, however, probably unique in treating *cultus* quite as explicitly as he does and as often as he does, and almost certainly unique in making it central to his literary self-presentation and in spelling out its rules. This was not the way that he was remembered by Christian ecclesiastical authors outside the city, for whom Symmachus' paganism is fundamental, or for modern scholarship on Symmachus taken as a whole. For his senatorial peers in Rome itself, however, certainly by the end of his life, his status as the most prominent cultivator in the city was likely at least as apparently, and must certainly have been difficult to ignore. Their perspective, and Symmachus' own deceptively creative self-presentation as an appropriate cultivator of friends, is vital to consider if we are to understand Symmachus, the last prominent pagan of Rome, in his own terms.

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