

INTRODUCTION: LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL ALTERITY
IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE: HISTORIOGRAPHY AND PANEGYRICS

Isabella Gualandri

In AD 400, celebrating Stilicho's consulship, Claudian praises Rome's achievements and stresses in one of the most famous passages in his whole poetry, *inter alia* how, bringing different peoples together under her laws, it succeeded in creating among them such bonds of affection that they became a single nation: *cuncti gens una sumus* ("We all are one people": Claud. *Cons. Stil.* 3.159).

Some years later, around 417, after the world had been shocked by Alaric's sack of Rome in 410, Rutilius Namatianus expresses himself in a similar way, directly addressing Rome: *fecisti patriam diversis gentibus unam* ("You made one country from a variety of peoples": Rut. *Namat. De red.* 1.63); *urbem fecisti quod prius orbis erat* ("You made a city from what was once a whole world": *idem:* 66); and Orosius, who wrote from a Christian point of view likewise extols the political and religious unity of the late Roman empire (*ubique patria, ubique lex et religio mea* ("Everywhere is my homeland, everywhere my law and religion": Oros. 5.2.1 [tr. editors]), suggestively evoking the different countries under its rule: *latitudo Orientis, septentrionis copiositas, meridiana diffusio, magnarum insularum largissima tutissimaque sedes mei iuris et nominis sunt, quia ad Christianos et Romanos Romanus et Christianus accedo* ("The eastern vastness, the southern abundance, the central expansiveness, the vast and safe territories of large islands are under my jurisdiction and state, because being Roman and Christian, I turn to Christians and Romans alike": Oros. 5.2.3 [tr. editors]).

Claudian came from Greek speaking Egypt, Rutilius was a native of Gaul, Orosius of Spain: although they were probably echoing literary *topoi* suggested by rhetoricians to praise a city, they were also mirroring a common ideal image of unity, while their real world, as scholars are well aware of, was becoming less and less homogeneous from many points of view – linguistic and cultural, political and religious – so that 'Alterity' and 'Otherness' may be considered its true key words.

Developing in this frame a productive line of inquiry, whose main subject is biculturalism and bilingualism in the Roman Empire, the Research Group *Graecapta*, who have to their credit two previous books on such topics (Á. Sánchez-Ostiz/J.B. Torres Guerra/R. Martínez (eds.), *De Grecia a Roma y de*

Roma a Grecia: un camino de ida y vuelta, Pamplona 2007; J.B. Torres Guerra (ed.), *Utroque sermone nostro*, Pamplona 2011), have now promoted this new volume, the focus of which is the linguistic and cultural Alterity in historiography and panegyrics in 4th-5th century authors.

Needless to say that in Late Antiquity, when the Eastern and Western parts of the Roman Empire were gradually drifting apart and, following their separation, Greek language and Greek literary tradition began to disappear in the Latin speaking West, Greek-Roman bilingualism is a most relevant subject; and as élite bilingualism, “existed, no doubt in many degrees of competence, but its extent cannot be determined” (to quote what J.N. Adams pointed out about republican Rome, in 2003, 14), each new result in this area is truly significant.

No wonder that an emperor’s bilingualism might be perceived as a positive feature in this context, to be emphasized in an encomiastic text, like Eusebius’ *Vita Constantini*, that, as José B. Torres Guerra points out, is particularly sensitive to this topic. Although Constantine wrote his speeches in Latin, his mother tongue, and then had them translated into Greek, he had a sufficient knowledge of Greek language (probably not due to school learning, but mostly to everyday contact with Greek speaking people), to enable him, for instance, in the first Council of Nicaea (325) to follow the debates and partake in them. In addition to that, José B. Torres Guerra contrasts Eusebius’ praise of Constantine’s bilingualism with Ammianus’ judgement of Julian’s competence in Latin, and cautiously suggests that Ammianus may have known the *Vita Constantini* and tried to reply to Eusebius.

Diederik Burgersdijk highlights some significant similarities between the *Historia Augusta* and Eusebius’ *Vita Constantini*, first detecting in the former a ‘Constantinian’ flavour and proving that many details related to various emperors can be connected to episodes from Constantine’s life and reign; then showing that the two works, both blending biography and panegyric, although with a different ideological approach, employ similar strategies of composition. Their most peculiar common feature is the quotation of documents, particularly imperial letters, that not only contribute to the reliability of their reports, but become a significant item in the praise of an emperor. The way in which imperial letters are presented in both works prompts the question whether the pagan author of the *Historia Augusta* knew the *Vita Constantini*, and in a subtle way, concealing his criticisms under the surface of the text, tried to compose a sort of direct response to Eusebius’ praise of the emperor.

Roger Rees explores the contrasting images of ‘Alterity’ and ‘Unity’ which are exploited with a sophisticated rhetorical strategy by the Gallic orator Pacatus Drepanius in the *Panegyric to Theodosius*, that he performed in Rome in 389, in front of the emperor and the Senate. His difficult task was to avert suspicions about Gallic loyalty to the Empire in the previous years, when Magnus Maximus had seized power in Gaul, Britain, and Spain. Roger Rees’s careful analysis shows that he fulfils it with superb rhetorical skill, accentuating at the beginning of his speech his own cultural ‘Otherness’ and the ‘Alterity’ of his homeland,

depicted as a distant and wild country; then, with subtle nuances, moving to the assertion of its *Romanitas* and ending with an image of unity with his Roman audience.

While the praise of an emperor's command of both the major languages of the Empire seems to hint at an ideal unity, Alberto J. Quiroga Puertas argues that 'Otherness' and 'Alterity' are prominent features in Libanius' imperial *Panegyrics* for Constantius, Constans, Julian, and Theodosius. Looking at the world from a strictly Hellenocentric perspective and from a pagan point of view, Libanius expresses a steadfast opposition to those who, not practicing the Hellenic *paideia* ('upbringing'), can be labelled in the category of 'Cultural Alterity': first of all the uncivilized barbarians threatening the safety of the Empire, whose Otherness is emphasized in order to praise the emperors who took measures against them; secondly Rome itself, her culture and the Latin language; then Christianity, towards which he displays a hostility based on cultural rather than religious disagreements.

Ammianus and Claudian, who both had Greek as a mother tongue but chose to write in Latin, deserve a careful scrutiny. On the linguistic side, Gavin Kelly argues that, although Ammianus had deeply absorbed Latin culture, the mark of Greek is still detectable in his text, not only for some syntactical features or for the presence of Greek words and short Greek phrases in his Latin, but also in more subtle linguistic interferences. Indeed Ammianus' Latin is characterized by a fundamentally accentual prose rhythm, the *cursus*, whose regular use not only helps to reconstruct how he pronounced some words, but also recalls the habit of some Greek authors. Furthermore, showing that Ammianus, when incorporating Greek words into his text, stresses them by the Greek rules, not by the Latin ones, Gavin Kelly draws the conclusion that Ammianus deliberately chose this practice in order to display his Greekness.

From a different point of view, Ammianus' Roman side is stressed by María P. García Ruiz, who highlights his skilful ways of mixing history and rhetoric in the account of the beginnings of Julian's military career in Gaul, where, extolling the young Caesar's bravery, Ammianus' narrative dims Julian's impulsive character and lack of experience, which endangered the army and caused Constantius' intervention. A careful linguistic analysis of the passages in which, in Ammianus' and Julian's works, Julian asserts his loyalty to the emperor, allows to establish between them an essential cultural difference: although both pagan and Greek, Ammianus shows a strong identification with Roman culture and values, which leads him to portray Julian as a hero worthy of the Roman tradition, while Julian's text is exclusively linked to Greek cultural models.

As Álvaro Sánchez-Ostiz points out, literary bilingualism proves to be a key theme in Claudian's *Panegyric* for the consulship of the philosopher, orator, and statesman Manlius Theodorus (in 399), who, reworking and translating Greek philosophical texts into Latin, succeeds in shedding new light on them, thus creating a bridge between Greek and Latin culture. The extensive *ekphrasis* ('description') of Greek philosophical schools, which plays a prominent part in

the poem (Claud. *Manl. Theod.* 61-112), is rich of significant echoes from Lucretius' language; while in the image of the new consul-philosopher striking similarities to Cicero are detected, the paradigm of philosophical orator and statesman is hinted at through intertextual references and thematic parallels. Most of all, Theodorus' Graeco-Roman cultural background and literary bilingualism acquire a political significance and mirror well Stilicho's effort to draw together the Eastern and Western part of the empire, thus ensuring the continuity of Theodosius' legacy.

Claudian himself, of course, epitomizes a bridge between Greek and Roman worlds. In my contribution, I am following the autobiographical clues he provides in the prefaces to his public poems, which show how he strove to identify himself as much as possible with the Roman cultural world, and I try to detect some formal traces of Greek poets (more specifically Pindar), which he often hides under a Latin surface.

In the Final Remarks to this volume, Alberto J. Quiroga Puertas summarizes the contributions of the different scholars who shed light on major topics concerning the culture of Late Antiquity from various points of view: in a sense their own 'Otherness' of approach proves to be effective in providing helpful suggestions for further research.

Isabella Gualandri
Università degli Studi di Milano
Dipartimento di Studio Letterari, Filologici e Linguistici
Via Festa del Perdono 7
20122 Milano
Italia
isabella.gualandri@unimi.it