ATTIRE IN AMMIANUS AND GREGORY OF TOURS*

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Abstract

The fourth century historian of the Roman Empire, Ammianus Marcellinus, focuses on attire and accessories that signify high rank, status and authority. In his narrative there are a number of cases where clothing and insignia feature in illegitimate or dangerous aspirations to power, and brought destruction upon the aspirants, or threatened to. An ongoing concern for Ammianus is how appropriately attired people are. He scorns the pretentious clothing of Roman nobles and bishops, took pleasure in retailing the reaction of the emperor Julian to his overdressed barber, and considered the craven Epigonius to be a philosopher only in his attire. Gallus Caesar's forced change from high to low status clothing portended his imminent execution. In his ethnographic excurses, Ammianus uses the attire of foreign peoples to define their otherness. The sixth century historian of Merovingian Gaul, Gregory of Tours, is largely oblivious to fine apparel unless it is the shining vestments of saints and angels. Humble and harsh clothing, such as skins and hair shirts denote spiritual commitment or reorientation, a change of "habit", a declaration that can be stripped away by enemies and persecutors while leaving the faith itself intact. Real ascetics eschew footwear in winter. The most striking feature of clothing in Gregory is the magical powers, to heal or punish, that it can absorb from the bodies of holy wearers. In both authors, clothes and character may be mismatched but Ammianus does not share Gregory's fondness for simple and uncomfortable attire, and certainly not his belief that a few threads from the clothing of someone long dead can work miracles.

Ammianus (c. 330–c. 395) and Gregory of Tours (538–594) both wrote large-scale histories and, as a soldier and a bishop respectively, had first hand experience of many of the persons and events they wrote of. But they lived in very different worlds, the splendid Indian summer of the Roman Empire on the one hand, and the fragmented, perpetually feuding Germanic kingdoms of sixth century, sub-Roman, Merovingian Gaul on the other, where not only bodily coverings and adornments themselves changed but some attitudes towards them did too.[1] When a Christian writer such as Tertullian (c. 160–c. 225) can dismiss the prestige of beauty on the grounds that the angels have no need for it, then some of the eternal verities that pervaded Greco-Roman culture about the body and its coverings are going to be found wanting when a different culture supersedes it.[2] To the extent that an ideology devalues the body as a symbol of a corrupt and artificial society, or sees enhancements through adornment as criticism of God's handiwork, one would not expect a premium to be placed on apparel that magnifies its beauty or size, such as the high tragic-actor

* My thanks to the SHT referees for advice on improving the presentation of this article's contents.

[1] And while both of them wrote of their own times, the first book of Gregory's history goes from the creation to 397, and the second and third books to 547. The *Decem Libri Historiarum,* abbreviated here when giving references to *H*., stops at 591. His extensive hagiographical writings have also been used in this study, as they provide much of relevance, and those cited from in this study are abbreviated as follows: *Vitae Patrum – VP*; *Gloria Confessorum – GC*; *De Virtutibus sancti Martini – VM*; *Gloria Martyrum – GM*; *De Passione et Virtutibus sancti Juliani – VJ*. Only the last 17 of Ammianus' *Res Gestae,* a 31 book history from 96 to 378 survives, covering 353–378.

[2] Raditsa 1985: 307. Cf. Reinhold 1970: 52 on 2nd century Christian attitudes to purple as "the devil's pomp". Tertullian thought colours were from the Devil and that it was better to seek rather the fine clothing of virtues (*De Habitu Feminarum* 1.8, 2.13).

boots (*cothurni*) that the somewhat short emperor Constantius II (ruled 337–361) habitually wore. Or rather, beauty and magnification might be achieved by more modest and simple means. Of course, unreconstructed attitudes would have lingered on in Merovingian Gaul, something Gregory is not entirely unaware of, but it is the world as perceived by him that is under study here and which is contrasted with Ammianus' more political and militaristic world, where identification of rank and appearing fashionable were more important.

The transmission in Gregory's world of divine, healing power through relics and clothing that has some association with holy men and women is far removed from the world of Ammianus, a world more focused on earthly power, on earthly gleam and scintillation, on clothes as ethnographic markers and solid surfaces and coverings, on what sheathed the body and covered that which in earlier times might have sought to express power by heroic nudity.[3] Ammianus' was a world where impressive insignia, such as crowns, tiaras and impressive robes were thought necessary if one was to be taken seriously, especially by foreigners such as the Persians.[4] Insignia were cherished for the prestigious status they advertised and, naturally, their loss was a humiliation.[5]

The three main reasons for wearing clothes/costume/garments/attire are the overlapping ones of modesty, decoration and protection. Clothes are a crucial part of the appearance that declares one's way of being in the world, and that includes the *way* they are worn. When worn tightly, garments not only provide a sense of boundedness for the wearer but, to Roman minds, can make a statement about the wearer's morals.[6] Dress, including the material it was made from, was thought to reveal character and intent as well as status. However, the emphasis in this paper is not on what Ammianus and Gregory tell us (not a great deal) about the fabric, colour, cut, weight, weave, stitching and transparency of their contemporaries' apparel. It is not primarily about the use by people in the fourth and sixth centuries of clothing to indicate sexuality or age. Nor is it about the extent to which the evidence provided by the authors is supported by contemporary visual or archaeological evidence.[7] Instead it is the authors' perceptions of the function and significance of worn apparel in their respective worlds that is the focus of attention.

In the comparison that follows, headgear, jewelry and footwear have been included and the discussion is restricted to civilian attire, although the militarisation of late Roman society[8] and loose or general use of terms (e.g. *vestis, habitus*) by the authors makes the dis-

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[3] Brown 1988: 437–38.

[4] Since for many, the wealth, prestige and power of a nation were conveyed by its clothing. See Stout 1994: 96; Edwards 1994: 155–56.

[5] *Insignia principatus* or *fortunae*. See 31.12.10, 31.15.2: the Goths were keen to underline their victory at Adrianople by seizing the imperial regalia that were kept within the city walls. Cf. 29.5.16 and the kudos attached to capturing enemy tokens of office, here the *corona sacerdotalis*. It might be prudent on occasion to remove insignia as a mark of deference. The Roman deserter, Antoninus, who had been honoured by the Persians with the bestowal of a turban (*tiara*), removed it as a mark of obeisance before the Roman general Ursicinus when he came to parlay (18.5.6, 18.8.5).

[6] And thus they show they are not lax or effeminate: cf. Seneca *Epp*. 114.4–8, 122.7; Bonfante 1994: 5–6; Dyck 2001: 123, 126. However, loosely worn garments were considered by Christians to be correct and noble dress for Jesus, saints and angels. See Hollander 1978: 2.

[7] For Ammianus the evidence largely does. See, for example, Bonfante 1964: 424–26. For Gregory, see James 1988: 225–29, a brief section on The Well Dressed Frank, using such evidence.

[8] For example, the *chlamys*, the military cloak fastened with a brooch at the right shoulder, became standard imperial garb. See McMullen 1963: 170–75, 179–80 for the militarisation of attire, his comment that military uniform

tinction difficult to maintain at times. Armour and weapons, however, have been omitted from consideration. The material is compared in the following categories: issues of status, rank and honour; fine clothing as a mark of luxury; loss, being stripped of garments or insignia, and what that might mean; mismatches between garments and the character or identity of the wearer. In addition, there are categories wholly or mainly applicable to one author, such as the significance of clothes as relics or as the source of miracles in Gregory, and, in Ammianus, clothes as ethnographic markers, and insignia as a source of peril.

A word on status and rank. They are often inextricably interwoven. Rank does much to determine status. But status can be a condition independent of rank or office and may indicate a state of mind. A person who has held high office can, by appalling behaviour, have little status in the eyes of some or many. Of two ex-consuls, one may seek to enhance his status by forms of conspicuous consumption and the wearing of ostentatious clothing, while the other may be indifferent to such pretension or seek to enhance his status by good deeds or other marks of exemplary character. Or an ex-consul might be in mourning or facing a capital charge, conditions indicated by dark attire, and to do with a state of being, not rank. When deliberately adopting a disguise there may be the assumption of a certain status, for example, of a pauper or beggar, that does not reflect one's true level in society, or one's occupation or origin. Rank and office are usually designated by certain agreed insignia, such as the robe (*trabea*) of the consul, the rods and axes (*fasces*) of the magistrate, the crown and purple mantle of a ruler. The assumption of such insignia, a change of attire (*mutatio vestis*), is often the clearest way of indicating a change (usually upward) of rank, just as the assumption of certain humble garments, a different kind of *mutatio vestis,* may indicate a change of mind and orientation that can, in Gregory, lead to sainthood or the martyr's crown.

In the fourth century Roman Empire, clues to a person's status or rank were carefully watched for. Readers of Ammianus and perusers of the pictorial evidence from his time quickly become aware of the theatricality, pomp and ceremony of the age that finds expression in colourful, bejeweled and decorated costume, insignia and fabrics that were generally more bright, ornate, showy and "cheerful" than in earlier periods of Roman history.[9] The entourages and costumes enclosing the persons of elite men and women, and those enclosing emperors, reflect a mutual imitation. Money permitting, clothing styles percolated down to those of the lower orders equally given to display.[10] Or patrons and employers enabled their subordinates to advertise, sartorially, their superior's impressive resources. Nor were clerics immune to finery, as Ammianus caustically observes, and then there were the barbarian and military influences. Novelty and stylistic fragmentation in styles of attire, and social strata trying to keep in touch with the ones immediately above, naturally attract the attention of

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is particularly attractive to those who like to see people neatly pigeonholed, and for evidence that in Ammianus' time, people on formal occasions were marshalled in assemblies by costume, title (*spectabilis*, *eminentissimus* etc.) and seniority. See too Wild 1981: 362.

[9] E.g. MacMullen 1964: 95; Newbold 1990: 197; McCormack 1981: 184, 202; Kelly 1998: 138–50. Ammianus' contemporary, the author of the Augustan History, clearly belongs to this world (Harlow 2005: 150–1). Phrases indicating colourful attire include "the king glowing bright red with the brilliance of his attire" (*regem vestis claritudine rutilantem*), "flashing and gleaming" (*fulgore conspicuum*), "gleaming in silken garments" (*fulgentes sericis indumentis*), "clothes flashing with light" (*vestes luce nitentes*), found at 18.6.22, 27.6.11, 28.4.8, 28.4.19.

[10] A tendency that usually impels the elite to move on to new fashions. See Davis 1992: 59.

those concerned with where society is headed. Late in the fourth century, widely ignored laws made the wearing of barbarian trousers in Rome illegal. A certain sartorial fluidity made it easier to profess and harder to assess rank and high status through fine clothing. However, laws against the making or possession of the purple clothing reserved for the imperial family were not lightly flouted. The manufacture of purple dye and the wearing of purple clothes were strictly regulated (*Codex Justinianum* 14.40.1, *Codex Theodosianum* 10.21.3). Ruin awaited offenders if detected.[11]

The vast majority of references to costume in Ammianus are to do with the (attempted) declaration of status and rank, the use or misuse of clothing to create an impression that advertises or belies the wearer's character, and the illicit or risky assumption of insignia that imperils the owner.[12] In Ammianus, to promote someone was to send or give them the insignia of their new rank (25.8.11, 27.2.1). To assume the insignia or trappings of rulership or

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[11] An excursus: some of the references to costume in Ammianus are mundane or incidental and include the use of an article of clothing to start a battle, as a signal to those laying siege, as an item of plunder, a means of protecting ramparts from missiles, as missiles (shoes) hurled at Constantius on a platform by a barbarian, as a container to receive gold from Julian, being cut into strips to let a cap down a well to bring water to the surface, and as a gift to gain a wish or impress a foreigner. See 19.5.5, 25.6.14, 31.6.3, 25.4.22, 19.11.10, 19.8.8, 14.1.3, 21.6.8. The elder Theodosius came to a somewhat banal end, expiring while pulling on a shoe (31.6.3). Providing sufficient apparel for his troops was one of the organizational tasks of Julian's Persian campaign (21.6.6, 22.7.7). Less mundane was the throwing of the shoes of the executed Caesar, Gallus, before the emperor Constantius, "as if they were the spoils of a slain Parthian king", to prove that he was really dead (15.1.2). Partly because Gregory writes of a more materially straitened world, one is made more aware of certain minimum standards of clothing and food needed to keep a person from being nude and needy (*nudus atque egens*, *H.* 9.19), that is, the modesty and protection functions of clothing. Cf. *H.* 10.16, the complaints of having to endure nakedness (*nuditas*), made by the Poitiers nuns opposed to the abbess and her regime. The abbess responded that they had more garments (*vestimenta*) than necessary. Bishop Nicetius' mother provided the monks in his monastery the basics of food and clothing (*victus atque vestitus*, *H.* 10.29). A wretched army was so hungry they had to sell their weapons and clothes to buy food (*H.* 10.3). Along with herds, slaves, gold, land, silver, raiment was an item of booty or tribute or dowry (*H.* 3.11, 4.14, 10.25) and was counted in one's estate (*H.* 10.8). Together with weapons, dogs, horses and jewelry, fine clothes made worthy gifts and tokens of friendship (*H.* 3.24, 6.38, 8.12). The murderous, pillaging sons of Duke Waddo sought to bribe king Chilperic with gifts that included a large, gilt belt studded with jewels. They failed (*H.* 10.21). Cf. Clovis' attempt to win those in allegiance to Ragnachar, king of the Cambri, with amulets and belts covered with copper to look like gold (*H.* 2.42). Gregory mentions Leobardes, a very rich man but not of noble rank, giving his betrothed shoes as a gift, and Chilperic giving clothes to St Lupicinius' indigent "brothers", thus inaugurating an annual custom (*VP* 1.5, 20.1). Clothes in Gregory can be used as pagan votive offerings, torn or seized in physical assaults, searched, taken off for swimming a river, become worn and stained by hard travel or "blood" falling from the sky, conceal a man hiding in a chest, and show, by the bloodstains, how savagely a Catholic wife had been beaten by her heretic husband (*GC* 2, *H.* 10.15, 6.35, 9.28, 3.5, 7.9, 6.14, 3.36, 3.10). An incidental reference that belongs very much to Gregory's world and not Ammianus', is the careful arrangement of clothes to prevent skin contact when St. Nicetius, bishop of Lyons, embraced the seven year old Gregory, lest there arise the slightest suspicion of or temptation to lust (*VP* 8.2).

[12] Garments provide a ready source of metaphors for actions or situations. We speak, for example, of cloaking our identity or motives. When lawyers, says Ammianus, seek a loan they are *soccati,* slipper-wearers, but when the time comes for them to repay they arrogantly put on airs and become buskin-wearers, *cothurnati,* trying to appear taller and more powerful (28.4.27; cf. 14.11.11, 19.11.4, 27.12.4). Gregory speaks of the teachings of a heretical bishop that cover with a veil the truth from the faithful (*H.* 2.3). A nun's disciplined life is her crowning glory (*gloria et corona*), a bride who seeks the preservation of her virginity values the crown of thorns more than gem-encrusted diadems (*H.* 9.39, 1.47). The crown of martyrdom or virginity (*H.* 1.26, 28) is partly metaphorical decoration, unlike the crowns for valour won by Roman soldiers, but is also something material. Martyrs and virgins in the afterlife really would wear these tokens.

higher rank (*infulae principatus/fortunae superioris)* is Ammianus' favoured way of describing accession (e.g. 15.6.3), whereas to be accused of preparing the insignia reserved for imperial rank was ruinous if the charge was upheld. To renounce the *insignia principatus*, as the emperor Julian, in a fit of exasperation with the disobedience of a prefect, and the emperor Valens, in a fit of depression, allegedly considered retirement by doing just that (20.4.8, 26.6.13). Receiving the insignia of consulship was the supreme mark of imperial favour. Assumption of the consular robe became a synonym for entering the consulship and one that Constantius, in contrast to Julian, never shared with anyone outside the imperial family.[13] A military tribune in Africa placed his necklace (*torques*) instead of a diadem (unavailable) on the Mauritanian prince Firmus' head to demonstrate support for the anti-Roman rebel (29.5.20). A later reference has Firmus wearing the other main symbol of rulership, a purple cloak (29.5.48). When the Persian king Sapor in 368 drove out the Roman appointee from the Hiberian throne and replaced him with his own man, it was by crowning him (*diademate addito*) that, says Ammianus, Sapor most clearly conveyed his disdain for Rome. This was how he showed he was being insulting (*ut se monstraret insultare*, 27.12.4).

The *insignia principatus* may, however, fail to protect one from humiliation or execution however legitimately acquired, so that the Caesar, Galerius, at an earlier time, had to walk clad in purple, *purpuratus*, for a mile before the angry Augustus, Diocletian (14.11.10). Better to undergo some humiliation via one's insignia than be put to death, however. Writing with approval of the clemency of the fifth century BC Persian king Artaxerxes, Ammianus contrasts his conduct with the cruelty of the emperor Valentinian: Artaxerxes cut off the turbans (*tiaras*) of prominent subjects rather than their heads (30.8.4). But for the Gallus Caesar, the forced exchange of his royal robes (*indumenta*) for a soldier's tunic and cloak (*paludamentum*) signalled his impending doom at the hands of Constantius (14.11.20). The Armenian king Papa was sent back to rule his kingdom without the royal insignia, and was eventually murdered. This was not direct cause and effect, of course, but certainly an unhappy omen (27.12.10).

In what amounts to an improper or inadequate use of insignia, usurpers tend to be caught inadequately attired for their ascensions, to be without the full array of insignia and garments when they verbally declare their new rank. When Julian (361–363) was proclaimed Augustus by his troops and raised on a shield, no diadem was available, so his troops called for his wife's necklace to serve as a substitute, and it was not until later that he assumed a crown (20.4.17, 4.19). Julian had to look the complete emperor before his troops were convinced that they had achieved their objective and that the rumours of his death were false (20.4.22). Later, his cheap (*vilis*) crown made him look, Ammianus thought, like a gymnasium director, until he donned a splendid gem-encrusted diadem (21.1.4). In contrast, his earlier *mutatio vestis*, investment by Constantius as Caesar with the *amictus principalis*, the purple cloak, proceeded more smoothly (15.8.10–11). The assumptions of imperial regalia by the emperors Valentinian (364–375) and Gratian (375–383) were unproblematic but Jovian's (363–364) was disrupted by a tallness that made it difficult to find a purple cloak that fitted him, especially since his predecessor was rather short (25.10.14, 26.2.3, 27.6.11–14). Much more problematic and ill-omened was the inability of the usurper Procopius in 363 to find a

[13] 14.11.27, 16.10.12, 27.2.1; cf. 21.6.5, 21.10.8. The *trabea* was also worn by ex-consuls.

purple robe to mark his accession.[14] The purple shoes, gold embroidered tunic and piece of purple held in his left hand made him look more like a palace page or a ludicrous actor than an emperor, thought Ammianus. If Julian had, as rumour said, given his purple robe to Procopius, it was not now to be found (23.3.2). Silvanus was similarly embarrassed on his usurpation, having to use purple decorations from cohort standards to serve as imperial insignia.[15] It was important to get these things right since the *habitus principatus*, the attire of rulership, not only marked the wearer as more powerful than others (*potior aliis*) but also testified to the support he enjoyed (27.6.6; cf. 20.5.4). Splendid regalia conveyed an aura of divinity that was meant to deter usurpers and encourage others to dress up (but not too splendidly) as if making a visit to a palace or heaven.[16]

Returning to the issue of misusing costume, there are instances of luxurious display that amount to claims to or advertisements of high status that Ammianus finds absurd or morally reprehensible. His satirical and scathing excurses in books 14 and 28 on the inhabitants of Rome, satirical attacks worthy of Juvenal and St. Jerome, contain several references to the pretentious finery of ostentatious and wealthy grandees. They wear sumptuous clothing (*vestes*), heavy cloaks (*lacernae*), and elaborately embroidered tunics and silken garments of such brilliance and lightness that they were bound to attract wonder and admiration but formed a sorry contrast with the simple and proper tastes of the Roman elite in past centuries (28.4.8, 4.19; cf. 14.6.9–10.). No less pretentious and deserving of censure was the pretentiously dressed barber (*ambitiose vestitus*) who arrived to tend to Julian (22.4.9) and the metropolitan bishops who dressed with unbecoming concern (*circumspecte vestiti*) and with an exaggerated idea of their status. Their provincial counterparts, Ammianus observes, dressed more simply (27.3.14–15). Fifth century Athenians, he recalls, had a healthy disdain for Persian body adornments.[17] If some people failed to display a moral quality similar to the splendour of their raiment, there were inverted snobs who dressed down to impress others with the loftiness of their character, such as the craven philosopher Epigonus, who shamefully and falsely confessed when threatened with death. This mismatch moved Ammianus to observe that he was a philosopher only in his clothing (14.9.5). Jovian is specifically censured by Ammianus for acts unworthy of his imperial attire (*amictus*) in making the peace with Persia that he did (25.9.8). Hostile courtiers of Constantius thought that Julian's nature, behaviour and appearance unfitted him for the imperial garments that he wore, mocking him as an ape in purple (17.11.11). A different kind of misuse of clothing involves those who deliberately disguised their identity, such as those spies who pretended to be travellers or indigents in order to gain access to the houses of the rich and to spy upon them (14.1.6).

We have seen that being without the full array of the insignia of rulership did not bode well. Julian survived an inauspicious start, Procopius and Silvanus did not. However, rulers were nervous about anyone acquiring even one of the insignia. Insignia, if illicitly sought, possessed or worn could be linked to imminent rebellion and treasonous design.

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[14] 26.6.15–16. On this ill-starred accession, see Blockley 1975: 57–58; Hunt 1999: 59; Valensi 1957: 72.

[15] 15.5.16; cf. 15.6.3. Silvanus is later described as a too-high-aspiring purple wearer, *anhelantem celsius purpuratum* (15.5.27). Julian *Oration* 2.98D–99A says he (Julian) had to get the purple from the women's quarters.

[16] Kelly 1998: 140–46.

[17] 22.4.48, 30.8.8. Loose garments might not only suggest moral laxity but could even endanger life, as when the Persian king Cambyses tripped over his flowing robes and seriously injured himself, impaling himself with his own dagger (17.4.4).

In the paranoid atmosphere of the final phase of Gallus' rule in the East, a man was convicted for allegedly wearing a magic cap and seeking to find out whether he would become emperor (14.7.7). There was an investigation into corruption amongst imperial purple dyers, sparked off by the report that a royal robe (*indumentum regale*) had been clandestinely manufactured at Tyre (14.9.7–8). The task was to find the person who had ordered it (14.7.20). Several prominent men were subsequently put on trial and punished although only a short tunic without sleeves was produced as evidence. As part of this investigation, the governor of the province was brought to trial as an accomplice when a secretly made royal robe was found at Tyre. In another incident, a rich estate was destroyed by a guest at a banquet who noticed the wideness of the purple borders of linen couch covers. So much purple allegedly made it usable as an imperial garment.[18] A charge of preparing *principalia indumenta* for usurpation was also made under Valentinian (29.2.9). Ammianus makes such suspicion and nervousness appear almost normal when he recalls that even in the free atmosphere of the late Republic, Pompey, absurdly, could be suspected of royal ambitions because he bound his leg with what could be taken as a royal emblem, the white fillet (17.11.4). In yet another incident illustrating the dangers of hankering after the tokens of rulership, a wife ruined her husband by revealing that he had stolen a purple robe from the tomb of Diocletian. His accusers alleged that he was planning to usurp power (16.8.4). By contrast with other rulers, Julian, when hearing a man accused of making a purple robe out of a silk cloak (*pallium*), dismissed the charge. When the accuser persisted, Julian gave to the accuser to give to the accused a pair of purple shoes to show how little he (Julian) cared about such tokens. Without power, he said, what did a few rags matter, thereby challenging the beliefs of many of his contemporaries, not least Ammianus.[19]

Compared with Ammianus, mention in Gregory of insignia to denote any kind of rank is rare. The introduction to *Vitae Patrum* 8 mentions the insignia of priestly grace (*sacerdotalis gratiae infulae*) and the *Historiae* has a reference to the Pope once wearing the silken garb of high office (10.1). Gregory has to write of the Eastern Roman Empire to describe scenes and use phrases familiar to Ammianus, as when the emperor Tiberius II was invested with the purple and crowned with the diadem, seated on the throne amidst acclamations.[20]

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[18] 16.8.8. Cf. Bonfils 1986: 28, and Reinhold 1970: 63–64. *Some* use of purple (described by Reinhold (1970: 71) as "the most enduring status symbol of the ancient world") was permissible at the time and was used by Christians for sacred purposes.

[19] 22.9.11. Another and rather different way in which royal insignia could bring danger by rendering the wearer conspicuous is illustrated by the Persian ally, king Grumbates of the Chionitae, in 359. During the siege of Amida, Grumbates narrowly escaped with his life when assailed by a hail of missiles because his impressive Parthian tiara, featuring a ram's head made of gold and set with jewels. This ornament seemed extraordinary to Ammianus but was in fact a traditional Babylonian mark of divinity and rulership (18.6.22, 19.1.3, 1.5). Cf. 19.11.11, where the *absence* of imperial insignia may have saved Constantius' life during an attack by barbarian Limigantes. Ammianus notes however that they were able to seize the royal chair with its golden cushion, no-one preventing (*nullo vetante*).

[20] *H*. 5.30. However, Clovis, thanks to the emperor Anastasius, received the imperial insignia of purple tunic, *chlamys* and diadem in St. Martin's church when he was awarded the consulship, 2.38. See Fanning 2002: 321–35. A local story that recalls the adoration of the purple (*adoratio purpurae*) of imperial ceremonial, and which shades into those several stories that manifest the miraculous power of saints' clothing, is that of the crowd who surrounded St. Portianus, trying to at least touch the fringe of his robe if they could not enjoy the honour of kissing it (*VP* 5.2).

In Gregory, it is articles of clothing such as the white vestments (*in albis*) of the baptized, of saints or priests (also worn, shiningly, by angels, by priests in one person's vision of the afterlife, and by Jesus) that carry prestige and demand respect.[21] Other considerations aside, the fact that an archdeacon was wearing an alb at the time aggravated the assault on him in a church by the governor Albinus (*H.* 4.43). But the black garb of nuns, the hair shirts, skins and chains of ascetics are for Gregory the garments of even higher status, their harsh and humble attire a visible mark, usually, of extreme holiness and miraculous powers.[22] The priest Julian always wore a hair shirt under his tunic (*H.* 4.32) and another ascetic wore his hair shirt over chains (*H.* 6.6). Senoch proved his ascetic hardiness by eschewing feet coverings in the cold of winter, and wore chains on his neck, feet and hands (*VP* 15.1). Such attire, such marks of piety, likewise demanded respect. It was doubly heinous that Eulalius' mother should not receive such respect and be strangled when at prayer in her household oratory. For she was wearing a hair shirt at the time (*H.* 10.8; this her assailant may not have known, although such knowledge may not have made any difference). In contrast, there is the story of the besieged population of Saragossa, who donned hair shirts, in the hope that such pious discomfort would attract God's aid and love. Women wore black and put ashes on their heads (*H.* 3.29). The inhabitants also carried the tunic of the martyr St. Vincent around the walls, as a way of invoking his aid or because they believed that the garment itself had powers to thwart the besiegers. Indeed, the besiegers quickly withdrew in fear, respecting a garment that betokened great holiness and power.

Saints or saints-to-be know that fine garments are not to be cherished. In his most famous act of charity, St. Martin, the saint most dear to Gregory, was not ashamed to ride away clad in half a cloak, having torn off the other half to give to a shivering beggar. If one of the reasons behind wearing splendid clothing is to reassure oneself about a lack of feeling loved,[23] those thus humbly or uncomfortably attired may have felt they enjoyed God's abundant and sufficient love.

Examples in Ammianus of costume to indicate status in the sense of a state of being, such as supplication, mourning, dependency, include the general Theodosius wearing black (*atratus*) as if about to die (29.1.14), Valentinian's pre-death dream of his wife with dishevelled hair and in mourning garb (30.5.18), and a former prefect of Egypt's precognitive dream of shadowy figures in tragic attire escorting him into exile (19.12.10). To have no shoes (*calceorum expertes,* 28.4.28) is one of Ammianus' ways of designating the urban poor. The *torques* around a lost boy's neck is taken to be reliable sign that he was the son of someone of status (18.6.10). Student status, *palliatus*, is indicated by wearing the *pallium*, the cloak worn by Julian before his elevation to Caesarship (15.8.1). The *pallium* was also the signature garment of the philosopher, and the frugality of Julian's life as emperor allegedly made people of good judgment wonder whether he was about to resume this garment and lay

[21] *H.* 5.21, 8. 34, 10.8. That is, unless the wearer was an impostor.

[22] *H.* 2.23, 2.29, 4.5, 6.6, 8.5, 10.24; *GC* 20; *GM* 50; *VP* 1.Intro., 1.5. The angels who appeared to St. Gallus had hair and robes like snow (*VP* 6.6). And then there were the crowns that confirmed the glory of the martyrs (*GM* 95). An exception to the exaltation of rude and simple attire occurs at *H.* 6. 29, the report of a nun's vision where she is disrobed by an abbess and clothed in royal robes which shone and gleamed supernaturally bright with gold and jewels (*tanta luce auroque et munilibus refulgebat*). As apparent gifts from her divine spouse, Jesus, they would need to be that splendid.

[23] Flugel 1930: 73.

down the imperial regalia (25.4.4). *Togati*, toga-wearers are civilians, as distinct from soldiers (22.2.4), or comprise the assortment of people who made up a city prefect's legal suite (15.7.3). The purple imperial robe is functioning as more than a mark of rank when it is offered to subjects to kiss, because this act confers the status of a privilege and honour upon the subject as it reaffirms the status of the wearer. Ursicinus was offered the purple to kiss much more graciously (*placidius*) than before (15.5.18). Here Ursicinus could only comply but when Julian gave count and cavalry commander Lucilianus the opportunity to make obeisance to the purple so that, bolstered by this favour, he might cease to fear, Lucilianus did so but continued to behave arrogantly, apparently feeling that his arrogance was being rewarded or condoned (21.9.8). One of the clearest examples of status independent of rank is the awarding of marks of honour, victory, bravery, success, as when Gallus placed a crown on the head of a victorious charioteer (14.11.12) and when Julian bestowed various military crowns for battlefield exploits (24.4.24, 24.6.16, 25.3.13) or received homage from Saracen princes (23.3.8).

In Gregory's mixed Frankish and Gallo-Roman world, there must have been splendid dressers of questionable character, and there are several references to jewels.[24] He follows the conventional Christian teaching that memories of banquets and rich clothing do one no good while burning in hell (*H*. 10.13). When Queen Radegund turned to God and built a monastery, changing her habit was a sign of a life oriented towards fasts, vigils, prayers and good works, a transformed self, a prospective new identity (*H*. 3.7). But when an unnamed husband and wife, respectively, adopted the tonsure and the nun's habit after a long, sexually abstinent life together, the changed appearance was recognition of a dedication to celibacy that had occurred long previously (*GC* 31; cf. *GC* 6). This was a retrospective and confirmatory change of habit. Entirely venial and worthy of praise was the deception of St. Papula, who, forbidden to become a nun by her parents, disguised herself as a monk, lived in a monastery and performed many miracles. However, there are examples of disguise and illicit assumptions of status that imperil the wearer, such as when a woman dressed as a man and tried to enter the church dedicated to St. Symeon and his pillar, and thus defy Symeon's ban on female visitors (*GC* 26). If, Gregory tells us, this woman thought she could deceive and mock God she learnt otherwise when she fell over and died when she tried to cross the threshold: a warning and a deterrent. Another example is the story of a lecherous priest who tried to conceal his conduct by dressing his mistress as a man (*H*. 6.36). Her relatives burnt her alive and would have killed the priest had not bishop Aetherius intervened.

But it is the impostors and users of clothing to create a false impression who endanger others by their deceptions and false claims to spiritual status that Gregory shows most interest in, rather than the flashy show-offs and the people, like those above, who endanger themselves.[25] Because, for Gregory, a change of clothing and *habitus* was such a clear reorientation of one's life, and because an orientation towards the spiritual life was so clearly advertised by one's garments,[26] it was generally important that people not betray their

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[24] O*rnamenta*, e.g., *H*. 5.34, 9.9, 9.34. James has numerous references to jewelry found in graves, e.g., 60, 61, 75, 223.

[25] See Brown 2002: 19–24 for his strong general concern about trickery and deceit.

[26] Ammianus would agree if Gregory were talking about philosophers. The phrase *mutato veste* or *habitu* occurs 8 times in Gregory's history to denote such a reorientation. It is the equivalent of the assumption of insignia in Ammianus.

bodily coverings and claim illicit status. One phony preacher and healer wore a monk's hood (*cucullus*) and a tunic of goatskin. (In public. He lived less austerely in private.) His garb persuaded many to think he could heal them. The unfamiliarity of the garb of another impostor, a long tunic without sleeves and a fine muslin mantle with a cross, fooled people. He attracted a large following until he was exposed as a runaway slave.[27]

Turning to the topic of forced loss of apparel, while Ammianus feels no sympathy for Gallus' loss of royal robes, he is horrified by the humiliation inflicted on a woman who was stripped of all her clothes and dignity before being executed.[28] In Gregory's world when people are robbed and they are forced to relinquish property, such despoilments are more common. Clothes are among the possessions forfeited to superior force (*H*. 7.27). But while noting the loss of status, property, including attire, and dignity even in death (*H*. 9.9), when people are stripped of clothing Gregory knows there are worse fates that can befall a person unless, that is, the assault amounts to a sacrilegious attack on religious authority or sanctity.[29] A Visigothic Spanish prince, Hermangild, was stripped of his finery (*indumentum*), and forced to don vile raiment, as were Chlodovich, son of Chilperic, the archdeacon Plato and the ex-domestic Leunard when stripped of their arms and clothing (*H*. 5.38, 39, 49, 7.15). Such deprivation was a prelude to trial, imprisonment, exile or a flogging, or a postlude to death. But, on the other hand, when a guard sees the remarkable, if not miraculous, sight of crowns falling from heaven onto martyrs, he was so impressed that he wanted to die a Christian with them. Although tortured and stripped of his clothing, he was not, Gregory assures us, stripped of his faith (*GM* 95). Instead, he won a martyr's crown. Here, being stripped was a prelude to salvation. Meritorious and steadfast in her Catholic faith, too, was the princess Ingund, daughter of Sigibert, when, in Spain, she was attacked and stripped by the Arian queen, Goiswinth (*H*. 5.38).

Ammianus shows more interest than Gregory in garments as ethnographic markers. At *H*. 10.9 Gregory refers to the Bretons and Saxons wearing clothes similar to each others' but he does not elaborate and the apparel of foreigners is of little interest to him. For Gregory, skin-wearers denote a saintly kind of Otherness, quite different from the non-Roman Otherness that Ammianus describes in his ethnographic excurses. Thus, he tells us that the untamed, barbarous (*feri*) Geloni and Vidini strip skins from the corpses of their enemies to make garments for themselves (31.2.14). Huns wear leggings of goatskin and body garments of mice skins sewn together, indoors and outdoors, wear the clothes until they fell off, never changing them, unlike the Gauls, who are never seen in dirty or ragged clothes.[30] The nomadic Saracens go about semi-nude in dyed cloaks (*coloratis sagulis*) that reach as far as

[27] *H*. 9.6. This could be an example of what Tertullian, *De Habitu* 2.2, deplores about unconventional clothing: it evokes unpredictable responses. Misreading attire can be an unintentional effect. The wife of bishop Namatius, clad in black and sitting in church, was given money by a poor man who thought she was even poorer than he was, ignorant as he was of her *persona* (*H*. 2.7).

[28] 28.1.28, and at the shudder-inducing injustices inflicted upon men such as ex-consuls who had borne sceptres and worn *trabeae* (*horret mens reminisci*, 29.2.15).

[29] As we have seen above. Cf. *H*. 10.15, a deputy abbess' clothes are torn off in an attack, and 5.20, the assault by thuggish fellow bishops on bishop Victor, which included rending his garments.

[30] 15.12.2, 31.2.5–6, 2.10. The Huns also wear linen garments, like the Sarmatians, 17.12.2. King 1987 [1995]: 77–95 casts considerable doubt on the accuracy of Ammianus' evidence and argues that he is more interested in stressing the primitiveness and savagery of Hun society, so that they could not make proper clothes.

their loins whereas Persians are covered from head to shoes, even though the garments are open at the front and flutter in the breeze (14.4.3, 23.6.84).

But nowhere does Gregory's treatment of costume differ more from Ammianus' than in the miraculous powers it is able to absorb and to transfer from the radiant, charged persons of often dead holy men and women. Such is the emanation of saintly power that even a few threads removed from a garment can heal. Nicetius' tomb covering and the cloth that covered his corpse had miraculous powers, and the threads of the decorated napkins that once covered his head and lay on the altar were enough to cure a blind man.[31] Martin's tomb contained a power that could make a silk cloak left on it overnight weigh more next day. (It duly became a relic, *VM* 1.11.) The robe once worn by a martyr, Vincentius of Agen, not only sparkled but gleamed forth with amazing miracles. It inflicted a painful death upon sacrilegious thieves (*GC* 104). The white cloth around the corpse of the hermit Patroclus gleamed with exceptional brilliance (*eximio albere nitore, VP* 9.3). *GM* 60 is the story of a pious man who placed on an altar of the church of the martyr Nazarius a beautiful gold belt that was supposed to help the poor but was removed, despite a warning of its potential lethality to the thief. The warning proved justified. In similar vein, a shroud stolen from a tomb caused the death of the thief by drowning (*GM* 71). When an arrogant and ignorant deacon went about wearing a cape of Nicetius and dared to use some of the material for making socks, fire devoured his feet (*VP* 5). Saintly effluence and transmission of power through cloth manifested in other impressive ways. The draperies in Martin's church held his healing force, and Martin's healing power could work through contact with a fragment of clothing worn by an afflicted man when he had earlier visited Martin's church and his clothing had then become charged.[32] Bishop Brictius used a garment that refuses to burn when containing live coals to assert his innocence of impregnating his washerwoman, a woman who had changed her clothing to seem to be of a religious order (*vestis sub specie religionis*). Brictius said that just as the *vestimentum* was unaffected by the embers, so his body was undefiled by sexual activity.[33] Other marvellous stories involving apparel include the handkerchief of a beheaded martyr ascending to the clouds and shining brightly there (*GM* 92), and the body of a girl and her white baptismal silken robe that were preserved after her sarcophagus was destroyed a year after her death, proof of her great virtue (*GC* 34; cf. *VJ* 2). In different ways, then, clothing attests the glory and power of ascetics, martyrs, and the pious. Part of the

[31] *VP* 6, 8, 12, 14.4. In one case threads from the cloak of a king, Guntram, healed a boy, *H*. 9.21. Here Guntram's power was acting like that of a bishop or ascetic, rivals to kingly authority. Cf. Van Dam: 97–98. On the healing power of tomb shrouds and cloth relics, see *VJ* 34, 43, Van Dam 1993: 33, 89. Although Gospel evidence said otherwise, Gregory cannot resist reporting a claim that the tunic Christ wore at his crucifixion made its way to a church in Galatea (*GM* 1.7). Cf. the bloodstained clothes of the martyrs, Gervasius and Protasius, that became relics in Milan (*GM* 1.46). That clothes can absorb and transmit qualities of the original wearer is taken for granted by, for example, the indigenous Canadian Dene Tha. They think mental and physical problems can be caused by wearing clothes worn by another. See Goulet 1998: 95.

[32] *VM* 1.13; cf. *ibid*. 2.36, 4.1, 4.2. Martin was even able, while alive, to make a man whom he saved from drowning in a river emerge with dry clothes (*VM* 1.2).

[33] *H*. 2.1. Cf. *GC* 75, where non-combustible clothes again indicate that the flames of lust have been extinguished in the wearer.

reason for this is that for Gregory and like-minded Christians, the sources of these marvellous powers were not really dead, but lived on as ideal companions.[34]

To conclude: for Ammianus, power and pomp are interwoven. "Grand possessions, long speeches and costly purple robes were as much a part of imperial rule as the capacity to issue decrees or command armies."[35] He is more interested in whether the holders of certain positions really belonged or rightly aspired there. For Gregory, the healing power of garments and cloth covers associated with saints and ascetics goes beyond the magical powers that had previously been thought to reside in the garments of priests.[36] Costume that gleams and scintillates belongs to the afterlife. Sanctity can now emanate from clothing even after death, and heal or work miracles, as if the saint is not fully dead. In both authors, to be allowed to touch a prestigious garment was an honour and indicated one was within a sacred presence: the difference is what constitutes a prestigious garment. In studying their respective references to clothing one gets the impression of a clearly understood visual code, notwithstanding that some people sought to deliberately mislead by their garb, and notwithstanding the contextual factors of place, occasion, company, concomitant gestures, facial expressions and behaviour that affect perception.[37]

Gregory's world has moved on from Tertullian's strictures on vainly and pridefully making oneself feel good about the body and fine clothes to one that ignores Tertullian's warnings about going too far in the opposite direction and which privileges squalid, dirty or destitute appearance when it is a genuine mark of sanctity, a way of differentiating oneself from normal society and returning to a pure and more "natural" state of being.[38] Fine clothes, like cattle, slaves, gold, silver and the other accoutrements of material living are exchanged for a different kind of status, wealth and power if the ascetic life is embraced willingly. Otherwise, one suffers from the loss of material and position, like anyone would in Ammianus' world. Attacks on the clothing of people of status, whether it is their religious status (e.g., of a nun) or their status won through piety and virtue is particularly shocking to Gregory. The clothes of such people, however mean in appearance, should have been paid more respect. Disrespect is shown too by impostors who are not fit to appear as holy men and who can do much harm. The decorations that declare status and rank are one of the ways people in Ammianus seek to protect themselves, although the quest for insignia can be hazardous.[39] In Gregory, monks, for example, use their clothing to protect themselves against moral, rather than physical, danger, and to manifest their virtue. Should anyone value the clothing of holy men and women, it is not for its fine appearance but for its capacity to work

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[34] Brown 1977: 7. If one of the signs of transition in late antiquity is that the grave and the corpse could be perceived as holy and healing, not loathsome, it is not surprising therefore that Gregory evinces more interest in the care of the corpse. The garb of the dead and therefore the status of the corpse receive considerable attention in Gregory. For example, he considers it important to note that Chilperic's corpse is not only washed but clothed in better (*melioribus*) vestments (*H.* 6.46). King Theudebert, having been killed and stripped on the battlefield, is then clad in worthy (*dignis*) garments (*H.* 4.50). The bodies of dead holy men are fittingly wrapped in clean raiment (*VP* 6.7, 13.3).

[35] Kelly 1998: 138.

[36] Bonfante 1994: 5.

[37] Davis 1992: 3.

[38] See Gager 1982: 345–54.

[39] As Raditsa (1985: 307) puts it, elaboration and care in appearance both invite attention and defend against it.

wonders, to act as a field of force within a world of interpenetrating, flowing emanations and secretions.[40]

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[40] DeNie 1991: 73–75, 87.

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