In 1947, E.A. Thompson could justly lament the neglect of Ammianus Marcellinus’s historical work. For every reader of Ammianus nowadays, he said, there are perhaps a thousand readers of Sallust, Livy or Tacitus. Twenty-three years later it would not be an exaggeration to say that the picture has changed radically. Since 1965, new editions of Ammianus’s text have been appearing in Italian, French and German. In addition, since 1963, there have been numerous individual studies, to some extent independent of each other, devoted to the work of Ammianus.

It is with three of these that I wish to deal — those by Camus, Florio and Demandt. All three have, to some extent, attempted to assess Ammianus’s work against the background of his life and times and endeavoured, in making their interpretation, to comment on Ammianus’s conception of history, in each case building on the foundations laid by Ensslin’s monograph. It may be assumed that the authors’ approaches are independent of each other. Camus wrote his book in 1963, and it was published (posthumously, unfortunately) in 1967. Fontaine, who added the bibliography, mentions that it was impossible to take account of Demandt’s work. As far as time of publication is concerned, Florio could have consulted Demandt, and possibly Camus, but he does not mention either work in his bibliography or footnotes.

It is interesting to note, therefore, the points they have in common in their interpretations, as well as the differences in emphasis. Such a comparison may also indicate the trends of what is likely to be a growing volume of Ammianean studies in the next decade.

Camus’s work aims, as its sub-title indicates, to consider the figure of Ammianus in relation to fourth century society and
civilization, and further to use Ammianus's thought to throw light on that civilization. This approach points the way to a deeper understanding of Ammianus's position, for the last few years have also seen an increasing amount of interest in the later Roman Empire generally. Camus's precedent for treating Ammianus in this way was provided by Marrou's portrait of St. Augustine.

The book is divided into three sections. The first deals with the intellectual culture of Ammianus, and attempts to assess what Ammianus owed to the different elements of his background and upbringing — his milieu at Antioch, for example, his education, his experiences and opportunities as an officer in the Roman army.

Camus briefly synthesizes many of the more detailed nineteenth and early twentieth century studies of Ammianus's reading, and, without going into much detail, fits them into Ammianus's background. Hence it is a useful section, for although few new facts emerge, the detailed studies of Ammianus "borrowings" and the numerous "parallels" detected with earlier writers are set in perspective. However, there are still some important questions, of which Camus is aware, left to be explored more thoroughly as knowledge of the fourth century deepens — to what extent, for instance, could Ammianus have taken the names of the authors he mentions from handbooks or compilations?

Camus takes as his starting point Ammianus's epilogue in XXXI.16.9 "ut miles quondam et Graecus". Undoubtedly it is a significant phrase, because this is the way Ammianus chose to be remembered. One suspects that more integrated studies of Ammianus in the fourth century environment will find a deeper significance than Ammianus's apology for (allegedly) poor Latin, or an excuse for introducing Greek terminology especially in scientific contexts. Rowell points out that to be a soldier and a Greek was an unusual combination in those times. Some sort of political alignment may perhaps be detected in the words, if "Graecus" refers to the fourth century concept of Hellenism.

Another point raised by Camus and also by Florio is the relationship between Latin and Greek in Ammianus's work. On the one hand, the evidence of familiarity with Greek authors is not great — according to Camus the only certain element is that Ammianus drew on Homer for inspiration. The older theory was that
Ammianus learned Latin as a foreign language — possibly in the army. This whole question, the implications of which will be considered further below, cannot be divorced from a consideration of why Ammianus chose to write in Latin, and, in turn, from his didactic purpose which is stressed by Demandt.

Of the Roman writers, the one who most deeply influenced Ammianus was Cicero, despite the almost universally held hypothesis that Ammianus drew his inspiration from, and intended to continue, the work of Tacitus. Ammianus’s failure to mention Tacitus may be a result of literary convention — it may also be pure chance, since the first thirteen books, and with them the preface, of Ammianus’s history are missing. Ammianus’s fondness for Cicero, which is revealed in his style and in his moral judgements or reflexions, no doubt reflects the essentially rhetorical nature of Ammianus’s learning, which is stressed by Florio as well as Camus.

The second section of the book is concerned with Ammianus’s moral ideals, and here Demandt and Camus are treading more or less the same ground in determining Ammianus’s criteria for the judgement of character, an aspect of Ammianus’s thought which has not been neglected. In certain respects Ammianus’s methods of judgement place him firmly in the Roman historiographical tradition. Both Camus and Demandt emphasize, as did Ensslin, that Ammianus’s censoriousness cannot be separated from what we know of his life. One important moral ideal of Ammianus is his concept of the just prince. In some places Ammianus’s work seems almost a manual for rulers, and this aspect of his thought has received attention in other recent work. Ammianus’s views on politics must be closely linked with his time of writing.

It would be beyond the scope of this survey to go too deeply into further details of Ammianus’s “Weltanschauung”. It is indicative of trends in Ammianean scholarship that Demandt and Camus should have singled out substantially the same areas of concentration — Ammianus’s patriotism — in connexion with which Demandt refutes the view held by Ensslin and others that Ammianus was biased against Germans in the Roman army and, more broadly, his attitudes to army, church and state. The extent of freedom of expression in the late fourth century political climate
must have been an important factor. The question of Ammianus’s religious and/or philosophical views is a very much more complex one, and Ensslin’s treatment is normally regarded as fundamental. The early commentators on Ammianus found the question a complex one, to the extent that his rather neutral references to Christianity were regarded by Claude Chifflet as evidence that Ammianus was actually a Christian, if a rather lukewarm one.\textsuperscript{28} Ammianus’s remarks have to be seen in a literary context, as a conventional type of reference.\textsuperscript{29} Nor can any significant conclusions, other than that Ammianus was using literary formulas, be drawn from his use of such terms as “fatum” and “fortuna”.\textsuperscript{30} Ammianus was not a deep philosophical thinker, and it is probably not very profitable to try to attach him to any school. Nonetheless, traces of Neo-Platonic influence have been detected, and it seems possible that further studies of Neo-Platonism will yield more points of comparison.\textsuperscript{31}

Demandt’s book, after a brief introduction establishing Ammianus’s didactic purpose, falls into two sections, the former of which, detailing Ammianus’s views on state and society, has been mentioned above. The latter section deals with Ammianus’s historical method, and in particular his idea of historical causation. Much space is devoted to a thorough discussion of the simile in XIV.6.3f. comparing the ages of Rome to the life of man.

To pass on to the third work under consideration, Sestino de Sanctis in the preface to Florio’s brief “profile” of Ammianus deplores the lack of synthesis in studies of Ammianus since Ensslin’s monograph.\textsuperscript{32} Florio’s aim, he says, is not to retread the ground thus covered, nor to handle the themes discussed by Ensslin, but to see Ammianus’s personality against the background of the historical changes narrated. However, only the third of Florio’s four chapters adds any substantial criteria to those generally used in evaluating Ammianus’s work.

The first chapter, on the biography of Ammianus, does not add anything significant to the accounts of Seeck, Ensslin and E.A. Thompson.\textsuperscript{33} Indeed, it could hardly be otherwise, because our sole source of knowledge about Ammianus is his own writings. Florio does lay less stress than others have done on Ammianus’s curial background, stress which the increasing studies of the
complexities of fourth century municipal history have perhaps led scholars to regard as justified.

Again, the second chapter, on the personality of Ammianus, follows along familiar lines and the topic is treated more fully by Demandt and Camus. The relevance of Ammianus’s love of learning to his judgement of individuals is emphasized.34

Ammianus’s language is of such complexity that nineteenth and early twentieth century studies of Ammianus largely concentrated on his stylistic and syntactical peculiarities.35 Although this chapter is regrettably brief, for in the twenty-nine pages devoted to the subject he can do no more than outline a few features, Florio has opened the way for a more integrated view of Ammianus as a stylist and historian.36 Florio rightly stresses Ammianus’s dual heritage and his rhetorical outlook as important for the consideration of his style. He also gives a summary of Ammianus’s knowledge of Homer and Vergil, Sallust, Livy, Tacitus and Cicero.37 He comes to virtually the same conclusion as Camus — that Ammianus is apparently most influenced by Homer, Vergil and Cicero – it seems likely that a more synthetic approach may reveal more indebtedness in style to Sallust and Tacitus. Like Camus, Florio is aware of the difficulties involved in the whole topic of imitation of one writer by another.38 It is extremely difficult to ascertain how much of this material Ammianus could have obtained from handbooks in view of the large body of such material which must have been available in the fourth century and would have since perished.

Florio does not come to grips with the important question of when Ammianus learned his Latin – a question with which Camus, too, is necessarily concerned.39 For instance if we, with Florio, refer the question of Ammianus’s acquaintance with Vergil to fourth century education generally, the older view that Ammianus learned his Latin in the army would have to be discounted. Florio sees “ut miles quondam et Graecus”, as did the earlier commentator Lindenbrog, as Ammianus’s apology for his Latin. The trend of other recent studies is, as was mentioned above, to see a deeper significance in these words which Ammianus selected as the seal he set on his work.

Florio’s attempt to integrate linguistic and literary studies
of Ammianus would gain much more depth if it were accompanied by a comparative study of other near contemporary writers – for example the Theodosian Code. For instance it is noted that abstract substantives are a feature of Ammianus’s style, but no attempt is made to see how general this was in the period. Again, Graecisms cannot be taken in themselves as evidence that Ammianus was not at home with Latin, because certain features which have been regarded as indicative of Ammianus’s failure to master the tongue in which he elected to write, are in fact characteristic of later Latin.

Again, more research is needed into levels of style in Ammianus. Florio asserts that Ammianus does not distinguish between poetic and prosaic language, but he does not attempt to consider what distinction there was generally in the fourth century between so-called poetic and prosaic vocabulary. It would also be worth investigating whether Ammianus’s imitations of poets, and use of poetic words, occurs more frequently in certain types of contexts, in particular in “set pieces” such as digressions or battle scenes.

Florio is right to emphasize Ammianus’s talent, as he does in his final chapter, which brings together in an appraisal some of the themes he has been pursuing, the well-known declamatory nature of Ammianus’s work, seen for instance in the fondness for commonplaces, and the battle scenes reminiscent of Lucan. In conclusion brief mention is given to an aspect of Ammianus’s thought which Earl has developed and put into a Roman setting – the faith in justice.

It will be clear from the references given in the course of the above accounts that these three works by no means represent all the current trends. The upsurge of study devoted to the last important Roman historian is a reflection of the increased interest in the late Empire, as well as of Ammianus’s intrinsic importance as a historian. The three works selected show very much a trend towards synthesis of Ammianus and his environment. Other recent studies too have sought to involve Ammianus yet more deeply in the social, religious and political controversies of his day, while emphasizing from a historiographical point of view the dual tradition to which he was heir.
1. The Historical Work of Ammianus Marcellinus (Cambridge, 1947), xi.

2. The editions are by A. Selim (Torino, 1965), E. Galletier and J. Fontaine (Budé series, Paris, 1968) — only vol. I has so far been published, and W. Seyfarth (Berlin, 1968), vols. I and II (vols. III and IV should appear in 1970). The last two editions are accompanied by French and German translations respectively. These fill a great gap, as is indicated by the facts that the previous French translation was that of T. Savalèse, published as long ago as 1849, and the previous complete German one that of C. Büchele (Stuttgart, 1827). English has been relatively well served with translations. The earliest was that of Philemon Holland in 1609, succeeded by that of C.D. Yonge in 1827. The Leob translation, by J.C. Rolfe (1st edition 1935-39) is the most accessible.

3. Leaving aside the articles which have been appearing in increasing numbers in Russian as well as Western periodicals, studies have been made by the following:

   J. Vogt, Ammianus Marcellinus als erzählender Geschichtsschreiber der Spätzeit, (Mainz Akademie der wissenschaften und der Literatur, 1963)
   A. Demandt, Zeitkritik und Geschichtsbild im werk Ammians (Diss. Bonn, 1965)
   H.T. Rowell, Ammianus Marcellinus, Soldier-Historian of the Late Roman Empire, published in Lectures in Memory of Louise Taft Semple (Princeton, 1967)
   P.M. Camus, Ammien Marcellin, témoin des courants culturels et religieux à la fin du IVe siècle (Paris, 1967)


6. Admittedly the bibliography is not very comprehensive.

7. In the 1969 Journal of Roman Studies, for instance, four articles are devoted to the third century A.D. or later.


9. For instance,

   M. Hertz, De Ammiani Marcellini studiis Sallustianis (Breslau 1874)
   M. Hertz, “Aulus Gellius und Ammianus Marcellinus”, Hermes VIII, 1874, 257-302
   H. Michael, De Ammiani Marcellini studiis Ciceronianis (Diss. Breslau, 1874)
   S. Weinstein, “Quibus in rebus Ammianus respexerit Sallustium et Tacitum” (Progr. Radautz, 1914) etc.


15. See below, p. 23.


18. Camus, *op.cit.*, 61. He also points out the influence of Cicero on St Jerome and St Augustine.

20. – and possibly more. The theory put forward by H. Michael, "Die verlorenen Bücher des Ammianus Marcellinus" (progr. Breslau, 1880) that Ammianus, like Tacitus, in fact wrote two historical works, has been revived with new arguments by H.T. Rowell, *op.cit.*, 276 ff. and “The first mention of Rome in Ammianus’s extant books and the nature of the History” in *Mélanges Carcopino* (Librarie Hachette, 1966), 839 ff.


22. Camus, *op.cit.*, 41; Florio, *op.cit.*, 73.


25. E.g. XIX.12.17; XXIX.1.20-22.


28. “De vita Ammiani Marcellini” reproduced in the edition of
29. See Averil and Alan Cameron, "Christianity and Tradition in the Historiography of the late Empire". CQ NS XIV, 1964, 316 ff.
31. The last five years have also seen an increased amount of attention given to Neo-Platonism — cf. the works of J.M. Rist, Plotinus: the Road to Reality (Cambridge, 1967) and A.H. Armstrong (ed.), Cambridge History of later Greek and early Medieval Philosophy (Cambridge, 1967).
33. Seeck, RE 1, 1845 f.; Ensslin, op.cit., 3-9; Thompson, op.cit., Ch. 1.
34. E.g. Orfus XIV.6.1; Eutherius XVI.7.5. This point was noted by Dautremer, op.cit., Cf. R.Syme, Review of Demandt, loc.cit., 217.
35. Cf. the works mentioned in footnote 9 and others such as
H. Hagendahl, Studia Ammiana (Diss. Uppsala, 1921), and “De abundantia sermonis Ammianei”, Eranos XXII, 1924, 161-216.
H. Ehrismann, De temporum et modorum usu Ammianaeo (Diss. Strasburg, 1886).
36. Rowell makes a plea for such a view, Soldier-Historian, 266, 272.
37. Florio, op.cit., 47-54.
38. Florio, op.cit., 42, 46.
40. Florio, op.cit., 55 ff.
41. Florio, op.cit., 70, comments that the freedom in using the infinitive is Greek, but see E. L’ofstedt, Late Latin (Oslo, 1959), especially Ch. VI. The problem of Graecisms in late Latin is complicated by the particular influence of Greek on Christian writers. The wider use of the infinitive was also a characteristic of vulgar Latin, and passed into Romance Languages, cf. C.H. Grandgent, An Introduction to Vulgar Latin (New York, 1962), 50 ff., 57.
42. Florio, op.cit., 60.
43. Earl, op.cit., 111.