

## Imagining the Capitolium in Late Antiquity

Lucy Grig  
University of Edinburgh

In his account of Constantius II's visit to Rome in 357 Ammianus presents us with a sweeping visual cityscape: a view of the city as seen through the eyes of the emperor himself. The first landmark to catch the emperor's eye is 'the sanctuary of Tarpeian Jupiter, so far surpassing as things divine excel those of earth'. (Ammianus, *Res Gestae* 16.10.14) The paradigmatic status of the temple of Capitoline Jupiter, the monument against which all others should be measured, is also stressed in a number of other late antique texts.

Nonetheless, scholars have all too often been swift to accept at face value the claim made by St Jerome, that '*auratum squalet Capitolium*'. (*Ep.* 107.1) In fact, Jerome contradicts his own claim about the languishing state of the Capitoline when he describes it as the destination of the (probably) sacrificial procession led by the Consul elect, Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, just a few days before his death, in 384. (*Ep.* 23.3)

The status and role of the Capitoline Temple in Late Antiquity appears, according to our different literary sources, as contradictory and contested. The symbolism of the Roman Capitolium, once the ultimate signifier for power and religion combined, once the supreme metonym for Roman *imperium*, had clearly entered a new phase. What was the role of the Capitoline Sanctuary to be in the Christian Empire? Could it ever be neutralised as a secular symbol?

This paper looks at the differing literary representations of the Capitolium in Late Antiquity but also considers recent research that has illuminated our understanding of the topography of late antique Rome. In this way I shall show how we can move beyond a picture that is purely dichotomised, towards one which is more nuanced and complex. Finally, a focus on this highly evocative temple-icon will further our understanding of the complex ways in which 'power' and 'religion' interacted in late antique Rome and beyond.