

## CONTESTS OF *ANDREIA* IN PROCOPIUS' *GOTHIC WARS*

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Show them, therefore, as quickly as possible that they are Greeks<sup>1</sup> [Γραικοί] and unmanly [ἄνανδροι] by nature and are merely putting on a bold front when defeated, do not consent that this experiment of theirs proceed further.

(Procopius, *Wars* 8.23.25-26)

Throughout Roman history, notable wars often produced notable historians. The sixth-century conflicts of the Byzantine Empire were no exception.<sup>2</sup> In the *History of the Wars*, Procopius provided a memorable description of the Empire's battles against the Persians in the East and the reconquest of the lost Western Provinces of the Roman Empire against the Vandals in North Africa and the Goths in Italy. In his account, Procopius attempted to place the martial deeds of the sixth-century Romans alongside the accomplishments of the heroes of ancient Greek and Roman literature.<sup>3</sup> This paradigm is particularly prevalent in the *Gothic Wars*.<sup>4</sup>

Much of the recent work on Procopius has focused on *Secret History*. Procopius' views on gender—particularly his attitudes towards the imperial couple, Justinian (ruled 527-565) and Theodora, and the Eastern Roman general Belisarius and his wife Antonina found in the *Secret History*—have received particular attention.<sup>5</sup> Yet, the crucial role that gender constructions play in his other writ-

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<sup>1</sup> I have changed the translator Dewing's "Greeklings" for Γραικοί to "Greeks".

<sup>2</sup> The terms "Eastern Roman" and "Byzantine" Empire will be used interchangeably to describe what Procopius and his contemporaries thought of still as simply the "Roman Empire."

<sup>3</sup> For just two allusions in the *Wars* to the deeds of earlier Greek and Roman soldiers, see Procopius, *Wars* 1.1.6, 8.29.4-5. For a lucid exploration of this theme in Procopius' proem, as well as a discussion of how it differs from that of Thucydides, see MARIA KOUROUMALI, *Procopius and the Gothic War* (Ph.D. diss.). Oxford University 2005, 19-26.

<sup>4</sup> Following KOUROUMALI, Procopius (cited n. 3) I would suggest that Books V, VI, and VII of *Gothic Wars* covering events in Italy from 535-550 were published around 550-551. Book VIII, which described the on-going wars in Italy and Persia from 551-553 was probably published in late 553 or 554 shortly before Procopius' death.

<sup>5</sup> Much of this work has been the by-product of the upsurge of research focusing on the

ings has garnered far less notice. This essay concentrates on one theatre of war, Italy, and examines how Procopius used the field of battle as a means to comment on the role that courage and manliness played in determining the outcome of the war. The choice to limit the discussion to the *Gothic Wars* has been taken purposefully. I would suggest that the gendered theme is most prevalent in this section of *Wars*.<sup>6</sup> The conflict, in Procopius' telling, offered the Byzantines the opportunity not only to regain Italy, but also to test their military and manly virtues against a worthy enemy, the Goths. A close reading of the numerous character sketches found in *Gothic Wars* will reveal that issues of ἀρετή (“goodness”, “excellence”, “virtue”) and the age-old belief in the gendered dichotomy between ἀνδρεία (“manliness”, “manly spirit”, “courage”) and ἀνανδρία (“unmanliness”, “cowardice”) play a significant role throughout the narrative.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, in *Gothic Wars* Procopius often compared and contrasted the manliness and courage of the Eastern Romans with the martial Goths.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, we will see that the traditional trope concerning the subtle distinction between rashness and courage underlines much of Procopius' account. On the one hand, desperate circumstances often drove men to take reckless yet ultimately courageous and manly actions;

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role of women in the early Byzantine Empire. Some of the best examples of these studies include: J. HERRIN, *In Search of Byzantine Women: Three Avenues of Approach*, in AV. CAMERON – A. KUERT (eds.), *Images of Women in Antiquity*. Detroit 1983, 167-89; P. ALLEN, *Contemporary Portrayals of the Byzantine Empress Theodora* (A.D. 527-548), in B. GARLICK – S. DIXON – P. ALLEN (eds.), *Stereotypes of Women in Power: Historical Perspectives and Revisionist Views*. New York 1992, 93-103; A.-M. TALBOT, *Women*, in G. CAVALLO (ed.), *The Byzantines* (trans. TH. DUNLAP – T. LAVANDER FAGAN – CH. LAMBERT). Chicago 1997, 117-43; L. JAMES, *Empresses and Power in Early Byzantium*. London 2001; L. BRUBAKER, *Sex, Lies, and Textuality: the Secret History of Prokopios and the Rhetoric of Gender in Sixth-Century Byzantium*, in L. BRUBAKER – J. SMITH (eds.), *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300-900*. Cambridge 2004, 427-47. H. ZICHE, *Abusing Theodora: Sexual and Political Discourse in Procopius*. *Βυζαντικά* 30 (2012-13) 311-323.

<sup>6</sup> The unity of the narrative on the Italian campaign found in books V, VI, VII, and VIII is discussed by KOUROUMALI, *Procopius* (cited n. 3) 12. The schematic nature of Procopius' depiction of the Gothic kings in *Gothic Wars* is discussed by A. KALDELLIS, *Procopius of Caesarea: Tyranny, History, and Philosophy at the End of Antiquity*. Philadelphia 2004, 107. For the more realistic depictions of battle found in *Gothic Wars* in comparison to those found in *Persian* and *Vandalic Wars*, see B.D. SHAW, *War and Violence*, in G.W. BOWERSOCK – P. BROWN – O. GRABER (eds.), *Late Antiquity: a Guide to the Postclassical World*. Cambridge 1999, 132-3.

<sup>7</sup> For the centrality of this concept in classical Greece and Rome, see R. ROSEN – I. SLUITER (eds.), *Andρεία: Studies in Manliness and Courage in Classical Antiquity*. Boston 2003.

<sup>8</sup> This gendered debate in late fifth and early sixth-century Italy is discussed in detail by J. ARNOLD, *Theoderic and the Imperial Restoration*. Cambridge 2014.

on the other hand, unthinking acts of rashness revealed weakness and unmanliness, and led regularly to difficulties for the Romans and the Goths. Victory on the field of battle, in Procopius' telling, was determined primarily by which side, Roman or Goth, best navigated the fine line between manliness and unmanliness.

### Theoderic: The Manly Protector

Procopius opened the *Gothic Wars* by relating his version of events that had led to Theoderic's and the Goths' rise to power in Italy. In his introduction, Procopius explained that his history would be a story of three peoples: the Goths, the Italians, and the Romans.<sup>9</sup> Military matters and men's martial virtues play a key role in Procopius' prologue. Indeed, the decline of the "native" Western army and the demilitarisation of the Italian populace, according to the historian, represented one of the primary reasons for the loss of Italy.<sup>10</sup> Similar to Synesius' argument from nearly a century and a half before, in Procopius' eyes, as the barbarian make-up of the Western army grew stronger, the native element grew weaker.<sup>11</sup> In Procopius' opinion, these "barbarians" had no grasp of Roman law and little respect for the "native" population. Barbarian control of the army led to an inability on the part of the Western Romans to protect themselves from the "foreigners" who "tyrannically" demanded a share of the lands of Italy.<sup>12</sup> Under the inept rule of the last Western Roman emperors, the "barbarian" generals became the true power behind the throne. In 476, a group of these rebellious barbarians proclaimed one of these strongmen, Odoacer, king. Odoacer deposed the Western Roman emperor.

<sup>9</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 5.1.1-2: "I shall now proceed to the Gothic War, first telling all that befell the Goths [Γότθοις] and Italians [Ἰταλιώταις] before this war". In the next sentence, he described the Eastern Roman Zeno, as "the reign of Zeno in Byzantium [Βυζαντίῳ]". Though Procopius used the term "Byzantine" or at times "Greek" to describe the Eastern Romans, the historian's preferred term was "Roman". He also distinguished (e.g., *Wars* 5.1.26) between Goths and Italians in the post-Roman kingdom. P. AMORY (People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy, 489-554. Cambridge 1997, 120) asserts that in the later part of the fifth-century Western Romans began calling themselves *Itali* in order to distinguish themselves from the Eastern Romans. He suggests that this development broke down some of the social barriers between the Western Romans and the Goths. In this essay, the terms "Roman", "Eastern Roman", and "Byzantine" army will be used interchangeably.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Procopius' comments at the opening of the Vandalic Wars (*Wars* 3.3.15) describing the two fifth-century Western generals, Boniface and Flavius Aëtius, "as the last of the Romans" immediately after he had described the enfeebled and effeminate rule of Valentinian III.

<sup>11</sup> Synesius, *On Kingship* 14.

<sup>12</sup> Procopius (*Wars* 3.5.12-13) described a similar land-grab by the Vandals in North Africa.

In contrast to the Western Romans, who accepted barbarian rule and domination of the army, Procopius suggested that the Eastern Romans' continued adherence to a martial lifestyle and control over their armed forces had allowed them to continue to utilise the barbarians as their pawns. One finds an example of this paradigm in Procopius' description of the Eastern Roman Emperor Zeno's adept use of allied barbarians to punish his enemies. In Procopius' version of events, Zeno convinced Theoderic the Amal to gather his forces in Thrace and the Balkans and to march into Italy to eliminate Odoacer.<sup>13</sup> Procopius depicted this confrontation as something more than a clash between two "barbarian" peoples. He, in fact, made an effort of "de-barbarising" Theoderic somewhat. He highlighted the Goth's patrician rank and the fact that Theoderic had attained "consular office in Byzantium". After a fierce struggle, Theoderic slew Odoacer and took control of Italy. Despite emphasising his subordinate position to the Roman emperor and his role as a barbarian "king" [ῥῆξ, 5.1.26], Procopius made the rather extraordinary claim in a work that would have been read in imperial circles that Theoderic held the qualities appropriate "to one who is by birth an emperor".<sup>14</sup> The historian even blamed Theoderic's "unjust" execution of the Roman senators and consuls, Boethius and Symmachus, on the treachery of his advisors.

Throughout the *Gothic Wars*, Procopius portrayed Theoderic's reign as a "Golden Age".<sup>15</sup> In a theme that marks many of his subsequent portraits of the Gothic leadership, Theoderic frequently acted the opposite way one might expect of a barbarian *rex*.<sup>16</sup> The Gothic king undoubtedly treated the Italians with justice and compassion, especially in comparison with what Procopius portrayed as the tyrannical rule of the Vandals in North Africa and of Odoacer's short reign in

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<sup>13</sup> Perhaps in an effort to magnify the Eastern Emperors' power, Procopius exaggerated the Byzantine leadership's ability to control men like Theoderic and to influence politics in the fifth-century Western Roman Empire.

<sup>14</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 5.1.29. J. ARNOLD (Theoderic, the Goths, and Restoration of the Roman Empire. Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan 2008, 75) goes so far to say "Theoderic's reign . . . constituted much more than simply a king along the same lines as other 'barbarian' kings of the West. He was a Roman emperor, acknowledged as such by his own subjects and presented as such, though in a deferential and conciliatory manner, to the East." Cf. the more restrained views found in J. MOORHEAD, *Theoderic in Italy*. Oxford 1992, 77-78.

<sup>15</sup> See, e.g., Procopius, *Wars* 7.9.10, 7.21.12, 23.

<sup>16</sup> For Procopius' use of such inversions in his accounts of the Gothic rulers, see G. HALSALL, *Funny Foreigners: Laughing at Barbarians in Late Antiquity*, in G. HALSALL (ed.), *Humour, History, and Politics in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*. Cambridge 2004, 106-11.

Italy. Procopius certainly respected the Gothic king's martial qualities. Theoderic ruled as a military leader, and, in Procopius' view, part of his success stemmed from his ability to provide stability and a renewed sense of military pride to the Western Romans. Procopius' portrait also revealed the Gothic king's mastery of the "intellectual" virtues that allowed a good leader to treat his subjects justly. Procopius emphasised that Theoderic's juxtaposition of "wisdom and manliness" [ξυνέσεώς τε καὶ ἀνδρίας] allowed him to both "observe justice" [δικαιοσύνης], and to protect Italy from barbarian invaders. These traits earned Theoderic "the love of the Goths and the Italians".<sup>17</sup> The question of whether the Italians owed greater loyalty to their current "protectors", the Goths, or to the Byzantines, represented a recurrent topic in the *Gothic Wars*. According to Procopius, this issue of fidelity had little to do with the Eastern and Western Romans' shared past, but more on which side, Goth or Byzantine, could both better protect the "non-martial" Italians from foreign threats and treat them "justly".<sup>18</sup>

These are remarkable views for a Byzantine writer to express. The irony that a barbarian ruler seemed the only man capable of protecting Italy from barbarian invaders would not have been lost on Procopius' contemporary audience.<sup>19</sup> Beside the fact that these sentiments may have represented Procopius' true feelings towards the Gothic monarch, I can think of three other possible reasons for such effusive praise.<sup>20</sup> Firstly, this flattering description of Theoderic may represent a barb aimed at Justinian, whose humble origins, lack of battle experience, and in-

<sup>17</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 5.1.27-29: ἔρωσ τε αὐτοῦ ἔν τε Γότθοις καὶ Ἰταλιώταις.

<sup>18</sup> See, e.g., Procopius, *Wars* 7.4.16, 7.9.10-15, 7.30.24.

<sup>19</sup> Western Italo-Roman propaganda frequently used the idea that the Goths under Theoderic were protecting the Italians from the barbarians, e.g. Ennodius, *Panegyricus dictus Theoderico* 12.69.

<sup>20</sup> Procopius often provided a nuanced view of foreign peoples he generally labeled as barbarians. While, at times, he displayed the traditional Greco-Roman distrust of "barbarians", overall, his attitude towards foreign peoples like the Goths and the Vandals seems quite enlightened. Geoffrey Greatrex argues that Procopius' sympathetic portrayal of the Goths mirrored other sixth-century writers' flexible attitude towards "barbarians", and reflected the blurring of boundaries between Eastern Romans and foreign peoples in the sixth century. G. GREATREX, *Roman Identity in the Sixth Century*, in ST. MITCHELL – G. GREATREX (eds.), *Ethnicity and Culture in Late Antiquity*. London 2000. See too A. KALDELLIS' comment [Procopius of Caesarea (cited n. 6) 221] that Procopius "treated Romans and barbarians impartially, condemning the former as often as he praised the latter". Cf., however, AV. CAMERON (*Procopius and the Sixth Century*. London 1985, 239) who argues that Procopius attempted to preserve the "established order" by creating "a strong demarcation between civilised peoples and barbarians", and W. GOFFART (*Barbarian Tides: the Migration Age and the Later Roman Empire*. Philadelphia 2006, 94-96) who uses Procopius' account of the Herules to make the larger claim that Procopius wanted to expel all the barbarians from the Roman Empire.

ability to fend off barbarian incursions into Byzantine territory earned Procopius' scorn in *Secret History*.<sup>21</sup> Secondly, it may be a veiled insult aimed at the Italians, who in Procopius' mind were incapable of protecting their own lands. Finally, it allowed Procopius to present Theoderic as a manly archetype whose character could be compared to those of his Gothic successors and the leading Byzantine generals, and in particular, Belisarius.

Procopius based much of his esteem for Theoderic on the monarch's ability to be both a political and military leader. It was, however, Theoderic's martial virtues that the historian appeared to have admired most. At the close of his biographical sketch, in fact, Procopius explained that it was Theoderic's ability to make "himself an object of terror to all of his enemies" that contributed to his lasting legacy.<sup>22</sup>

### **Athalaric: Boys to Men**

For Procopius, Theoderic's strong leadership helped to unify the Goths. So too had the king largely succeeded in maintaining the bond between Italians and Goths. The historian's descriptions of the king's flawed successors revealed the difficulty of maintaining this unity. Before his death, Theoderic had named his ten-year-old grandson Athalaric as his heir, and appointed his daughter and the boy's mother Amalasuintha, as regent.<sup>23</sup> Many within the Gothic aristocracy had a difficult time accepting a dynastic succession dependent solely on the Amal line.<sup>24</sup> Yet, in Procopius' telling, the early years of Amalasuintha's regency were a relatively peaceful and stable time for Italy.<sup>25</sup> Amalasuintha sought to restore harmonious relations between the Goths and the Romans by distancing herself from some of the less tolerant policies of Theoderic's final years (proof too that Procopius' praise of Theoderic may not have been completely heart-felt). Procopius declared that she protected the Romans from the Goths' "mad desire to wrong them" [ξυνεχώρησεν ἐς τὴν ἐκείνου ἀδικίαν ὀργῶσιν]. Additionally, she

<sup>21</sup> As KALDELLIS [Procopius of Caesarea (cited n. 6) 60] points out, contrasts can be made as well with Procopius' negative portrait of Justinian in *Secret History*, where the historian described the eastern Emperor as a land-hungry tyrant.

<sup>22</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 5.1.31. As WHATLEY explains (Descriptions of Battle in the *Wars* of Procopius. Ph.D. diss., University of Warwick 2009, 318), Procopius praised Belisarius for being an object of fear amongst his soldiers. See, e.g., Procopius, *Wars* 3.12.8-22, 6.8.1-18.

<sup>23</sup> Amalasuintha was the daughter of Theoderic's second wife Audofleda, the sister of the Merovingian king Clovis.

<sup>24</sup> P. HEATHER, *The Goths*. Oxford 1996, 250-55.

<sup>25</sup> Procopius tells (*Wars* 7.21.12) his readers that by 550 many Goths recalled the years of Theoderic's and Athalaric's rule fondly.

attempted to reconcile herself to the senate by returning Symmachus' and Boethius' confiscated lands to their families.<sup>26</sup> Amalasuintha and her supporters reigned supreme, yet trouble lurked in the hearts of Gothic men spurned by the new regime.<sup>27</sup>

Procopius compressed the ten-year period of Athalaric's rule into a didactic tale that appears to unfold over a much shorter time-frame.<sup>28</sup> According to Procopius, the struggle began as a dispute over the proper way to educate Athalaric. Amalasuintha felt compelled to raise the boy as a Roman aristocrat.<sup>29</sup> She sent him to a Roman school of letters and hired three "prudent and refined" [ξυνετούς τε καὶ ἐπιεικεῖς, 5.2.7] Gothic tutors to further educate the future king. Procopius illustrated how this decision created a backlash among some members of the Gothic nobility who wanted to raise the boy in "the barbarian fashion". He wrote:

All the notable men among them gathered together, and coming before Amalasuintha made the charge that their king was not being educated correctly from their point of view nor to his own advantage. For letters, they said, are far removed from manliness [ἀνδρίας], and the teaching of old men results for the most part in a cowardly [δειλὸν] and submissive spirit. Therefore the man who is to show daring [τολμητήν] in any work and be great in renown ought to be freed from the timidity [φόβου] which teachers inspire and to take his training in arms. . . . 'Therefore, O Queen,' they said, 'have done with these tutors now, and do you give Athalaric some men of his own age to be his companions, who will pass through the period of youth with him and thus give him an impulse toward that excellence [τὴν ἀρετήν], which is in keeping with the custom [νόμον] of barbarians'.

The "martial" faction emphasised the "dangers" of a literary education by claiming that Theoderic refused to allow the Goths to send their children to school; they suggested that he took this stance because he believed that a literary education

<sup>26</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 5.2.5-6.

<sup>27</sup> Herwig WOLFRAM claims (*History of the Goths*, trans. Thomas Dunlap. Berkeley 1999) that these men were Gothic hardliners who took a tough stance against Constantinople. He suggests that members of this faction, who probably included Theodahad among its members, realised by late 532/early 533 that they needed to gain control over Athalaric before he reached his majority. It remains, of course, difficult to know how much of Procopius' depiction is based on actual events. Procopius revealed (*Wars* 5.4.12-13) that Theodahad had initiated a coup in 535 with the support of the relatives of the large numbers of Goths who had been slain by Amalasuintha and her followers.

<sup>28</sup> Discussed in AMORY, *People and Identity* (cited n. 9) 156.

<sup>29</sup> For further contemporary evidence of Amalasuintha's adulation of classical learning, see Cassiodorus, *Variae* 10.3.

would cause them “to despise sword or spear”.<sup>30</sup> One assumes that Procopius and his contemporary audience were aware of the illogic of this argument, since Procopius tells his audience about Theoderic’s daughter Amalasuintha’s and his nephew Theodahad’s excellent classical educations.<sup>31</sup> While this discrepancy and other incongruities in his history may be the result of Procopius’ heavy emphasis on rhetorical themes and disregard for the “truth”, it is also possible that he purposefully has the “martial” Goths tell a known non-truth. As we will see throughout the remainder of this chapter, Procopius often utilised such inaccuracies in his set-speeches as a means of later undermining the speakers’ overall argument.<sup>32</sup>

In this stylised episode, Procopius transformed an internal Gothic power struggle into a didactic debate about the proper way to educate young men. While he simplified a complex political dispute, Procopius provided his audience with the differences—real and imagined—between Roman and Gothic methods and beliefs about the best way to transform boys into manly men.<sup>33</sup> Each of the Gothic factions suggested that boys travelled a long and hazardous path to manhood. The two sides only differed on the best methods to overcome these obstacles. The “conservatives” preached that in order to instil courage in a young man, he needed to be surrounded by companions of a similar age and “take his training in arms”, while Amalasuintha and the Goths presumably following Roman traditions, focused on the development of a boy’s mind.<sup>34</sup>

Despite its obvious rhetorical aspects, this episode has some historical basis. Evidence from the Gothic side supports Procopius’ characterisation of Amalasuintha as being devoted to Roman literature. For example, in a letter to the Roman senate, Amalasuintha espoused the benefits of a Roman education by suggesting

<sup>30</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 5.2.11-17.

<sup>31</sup> The sixth-century historian John Malalas (*Chronicle*, 15.9) tells us that Theoderic had received an education during his years in Constantinople, a point that Procopius, with his focus on the Gothic king’s early embracing of Byzantine culture, may have been aware of. So too does Theoderic’s panegyrist Ennodius (*Panegyricus dictus Theoderico* 3.11) make it clear that Theoderic had received an education in Constantinople. Cf. Theophanes (AM 5977). Contra Anon. Valesiani 12.61.

<sup>32</sup> So too, as Jonathan Arnold has pointed out (pers. comm.) did the “martial faction” support ultimately the unmanly Plato-loving Theodahad.

<sup>33</sup> Of course, some young men from the Byzantine literate classes would have received military training as well. On the increasing militarization of the sixth-century ruling classes in Byzantium, see C. WHATELY, *Militarization, or the Rise of a Distinct Military Culture? The East Roman Elite in the 6th Century AD*, in: ST. O’BRIEN – D. BOATRIGHT (eds.), *Warfare and Society in the Ancient Mediterranean: Papers arising from a colloquium held at the University of Liverpool, 13th June 2008*. Oxford, 2013, 49-57.

<sup>34</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 5.2.11-17.

that literary learning allowed the warrior to discover “what will strengthen him with courage; the prince learns how to administer his people with equity”.<sup>35</sup> In the Greco-Roman literary tradition even innate virtues like ἀνδρεία and one's martial skills could be enhanced by a literary education.<sup>36</sup> Although we know very little about what constituted a “Gothic” education, we do know that officers' children received substantial military training, and that the upper echelon of Gothic society embraced the soldier's life.<sup>37</sup>

Evidence from the remainder of Athalaric's biography appears to show that Procopius rejected the barbarians' idea that a young man's curriculum should involve military training alone. Procopius, in fact, responded to the barbarians' claims about the unmanliness of a Roman education, by demonstrating how Athalaric's exposure to the “customs of the barbarians” produced a “failed man”. Fearing her political rivals, Amalasuintha dismissed the tutors and replaced them with a group of Gothic boys who, like Athalaric, “had not yet come of age”.<sup>38</sup> Predictably, in Procopius' view, this decision proved disastrous. Instead of providing Athalaric with an inclination towards manly ἀρετή, his comrades only enticed the future king “to drunkenness and to intercourse with women” [μέθην καὶ γυναικῶν μίξεις], qualities that in the classical tradition represented typical vices of not only barbarians, but of unmanly men as well.<sup>39</sup> For Procopius, Athalaric's inability to control both his drinking and sexual appetites marked him as flawed—and ultimately—as an unmanly man.

<sup>35</sup> Cassiodorus, *Variarum*, 10.3 (trans. Barnish).

<sup>36</sup> J. CONNOLLY, Like the labors of Heracles: *Andreia* and *Paideia* in Greek Culture under Rome, in *Andreia: Studies in Manliness and Courage in Classical Antiquity*, R. ROSEN – I. SLUITER (eds.). Boston 2003, 287, 328.

<sup>37</sup> AMORY, *People and Identity* (cited n. 9). For the Goths' military ethos, see P. HEATHER, *The Goths*, 322-26; M. WHITBY, *Armies and Society in the Later Roman World*, in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, XIV, AV. CAMERON – BR. WARD-PERKINS – M. WHITBY (eds.). Cambridge 2000, 472.

<sup>38</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 5.2.18-20.

<sup>39</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 5.2.19. Athalaric's alcoholism is hinted at in the *Variarum* of Cassiodorus, see S.J.B. BARNISH, introduction to *Variarum*, 16. Procopius revealed that an addiction “to the disease of drunkenness” [μέθης νόσος] was particularly prevalent among barbarian peoples (*Wars* 4.4.29, 6.1.28, 7.27.5-6). This point is illustrated when Procopius praised the Herul Pharas for his energetic and serious nature, but noted sarcastically: “For a Herulian not to give himself over to treachery and drunkenness, but to strive after uprightness, is no easy matter and deserves abundant praise (*Wars* 4.4.29)”. The susceptibility of barbarian armies to drunkenness served as a topos in classical literature. This drunkenness made “barbarians” unreliable soldiers. For instance, Polybius (*Histories* 11.3) partly blamed the Carthaginians' defeat in Spain on the Gauls' drunken state during the battle of Metaurus (207 BC).

Procopius closed his didactic tale by showing how Athalaric, having abandoned Amalasuintha and a “civilised” way of life, fell victim to this “debauched” Gothic lifestyle and died of a wasting disease brought on by the overindulgence in wine and the relentless pursuit of women.<sup>40</sup> Procopius appears to have wanted to highlight the folly of permitting mere boys to educate a future king about manly ἀρετή. Torn between two worlds, Athalaric fell short of becoming either a Gothic warrior or a cultivated Roman aristocrat. I would suggest, however, that this account is less a tale about the “impossibility” of amalgamating “Roman” and “Gothic” ideals, as has been suggested by one recent study,<sup>41</sup> but more a way of comparing and contrasting the martial and manly qualities of the Romans and the Goths. We shall see that each time a Goth made a claim of masculine and martial superiority, shortly after Procopius “proved” the assertion patently false. One may observe this paradigm in the case of Athalaric. Ultimately, in Procopius’ mind, it was his “barbarian” and not his “classical” education that turned Athalaric into a leader with an unmanly lack of self-control.

### **Amalasuintha: Manly Woman**

Procopius repeated his gendered theme with a slight twist in his depiction of Amalasuintha. In the *Wars* and the *Secret History* Procopius described Amalasuintha as “an aristocrat and a queen”.<sup>42</sup> He continued by illustrating her beauty and wit (Procopius’ praise may be a veiled attack at the empress Theodora). Procopius attributed many of Amalasuintha’s virtues, however, to her “extraordinary masculine bearing” [μεγαλοπρεπὲς καὶ διαφερόντως ἀρρενωπὸν].<sup>43</sup> By overcoming her enemies’ attempts to usurp her control over Athalaric, she earned Procopius’ praise for not acting “woman-like” and feebly giving way to her enemies.<sup>44</sup> The historian claimed that the queen overcame the “limitations” of her sex and took on the qualities of an ideal and manly leader. Similar to his praise of Theoderic’s intelligence and manliness, Procopius proclaimed that she was wise, just, and “displayed very much a masculine nature” [τῆς δὲ φύσεως ἐς ἄγαν τὸ ἀρρενωπὸν ἐνδεικνυμένη].<sup>45</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 5.4.4.

<sup>41</sup> KALDELLIS, Procopius of Caesarea (cited n. 6) 108.

<sup>42</sup> For a similar gendered presentation of Amalasuintha in Cassiodorus’ *Variae*, as well as a full discussion on the historical context of the gendered relationship between Amalasuintha and Theodahad, see CR. LA ROCCA, *Consors regni: a problem of gender? The consortium between Amalasuintha and Theodahad in 534*, in *Studies in the earlier middle ages of Pauline Stafford*, J. NELSON – S. REYNOLDS – S. JOHNS (eds.). London 2012, 127-143.

<sup>43</sup> Procopius, *Secret History* 16.1.

<sup>44</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 5.2.21.

<sup>45</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 5.2.3 (my trans.).

Procopius' depiction of Amalasuintha as a "manly woman" needs some explanation because it seems to go against his assertions elsewhere that "masculine" women transgressed nature. The first five chapters of *Secret History*, in fact, traced the disastrous consequences of allowing women to take on men's dominate masculine roles in the political and the private arenas. A closer examination of Procopius' description of Amalasuintha's character reveals, however, that she fit into his and classical Greco-Roman literary visions of femininity. Some of the virtues of the ideal political leader—restraint, courage, and wisdom—were seen typically as masculine traits; on the other hand, feminine virtues "had little to do with political rule".<sup>46</sup> Despite her manly virtues, Amalasuintha's leadership depended on men's support, and Procopius portrayed her as a defenceless woman in need of Justinian's protection. When her political position became too tenuous she attempted to hand "over the power of the Goths and Italians to the Emperor Justinian, in order that she herself might be saved".<sup>47</sup> Although Amalasuintha ruled briefly within her own kingdom, she remained subordinate to Justinian and dependent upon men within the Gothic aristocracy for her survival.<sup>48</sup> Procopius suggested that only under exceptional circumstances should women take on masculine roles. He suggested that Amalasuintha faced such a situation at the outset of Athalaric's reign when she needed to take on an active role in order to protect her family from her enemies within Gothic Italy.<sup>49</sup>

An examination of Procopius' depiction of the Amazons from book eight of the *Gothic Wars* adds further insight into his attitudes towards Amalasuintha's or any women's ability to take on what he considered "masculine" responsibilities. He made it clear that the Amazons were not "a race of women endowed with the qualities of men", but the remnants of a people whose men had been destroyed in

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<sup>46</sup> A point made by KALDELIS, Procopius of Caesarea (cited n. 6) 144-45.

<sup>47</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 5.3.13.

<sup>48</sup> A. D. FRANKFORTER, Amalasuintha, Procopius and a Woman's Place. *Journal of Women's History* 8 (1996) 42.

<sup>49</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 5.2.10-18. A similar instance (*Wars* 1.24.32-9) of this paradigm occurs when Theodora stiffened Justinian's resolve during an uprising known as the Nika revolt, convincing him not to flee Constantinople but to remain in the capital and fight. L. GARLAND (Byzantine Empresses: Women and Power in Byzantium, AD 527-1204. London 1999, 32-33) regards this episode as an instance of Theodora taking on a masculine and martial role. I would agree with AV. CAMERON, Procopius and the Sixth Century (cited n. 20) 65, however, that the speech is better understood as an example of the traditional "protective wife" supporting and defending male family members. Cf. *Wars* 3.13.24 where Procopius praised Belisarius' wife Antonina – a woman he attacked ruthlessly in *Secret History* – for saving her husband's life and helping avert a disaster by safeguarding a warship's water supply.

war. Fear of their people's annihilation, not a reversal of human nature, had forced these women to embrace "manly valour [ἀρρενωπὸν]", by arming themselves and performing "a deed of the utmost courage [ἄριστα ἔργα ἀνδρεῖα]".<sup>50</sup> According to Procopius, although women like the Amazons and Amalasuintha could put on temporarily a "masculine nature" and perform heroic deeds, it went against the natural order. Sheer necessity compelled both the Amazons and Amalasuintha to take on masculine roles. In the case of the Amazons, the death of all of their male soldiers drove them to take up arms to face their enemies. Similarly, after the death of Theoderic, a lack of suitable male heirs and the rather exceptional attempt to maintain the Amal line, forced Amalasuintha to fill the void and take on a leading role in protecting her son and the Italian people from the (barbarous) elements in the Gothic leadership.<sup>51</sup> For Procopius, this reversal of gender roles had its limits. While Amalasuintha and the Amazons could for a time display manly valour and emulate the excellence of men, without the support of real men, they all were fated to die young.

This reliance on ancient Greek literary conceptions of "manly women" helps to explain why Procopius depicted Amalasuintha's taking on a masculine role positively, whilst he attacked Theodora and Antonina in *Secret History* for doing the same thing by stepping outside their gender constraints.<sup>52</sup> It seems likely that, in Procopius' mind, as a "barbarian", Amalasuintha could more easily break established gender roles. Indeed, in the classical tradition "manly women" represented largely a foreign phenomenon. In addition, manly women ruled typically in places where men were unmanly.<sup>53</sup> One may presume then that Procopius' depiction of Amalasuintha was based on these traditional precedents, and as such, Procopius used her manliness as a means to, on the one hand, praise the Gothic queen and, on the other, to comment on the character defects of her male rivals to the Gothic throne, and in particular, her royal colleague after Athalaric's death, the Gothic king Theodahad (ruled 534-536).

### **Theodahad: Unmanly Man**

The defeat of the Vandals gave Justinian the confidence to retake Italy from the Goths. Procopius explained that the emperor had secretly negotiated with Amala-

<sup>50</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 8.3.7 (my trans.).

<sup>51</sup> LA ROCCA suggests (*Consors regni*, 131) that Amalasuintha was "retained in Italy, to give a successor to Theoderic's kingdom."

<sup>52</sup> CAMERON, Procopius and the Sixth Century (cited n. 20) 199-200, in particular, criticises Procopius for this seeming inconsistency.

<sup>53</sup> S.E. HARRELL, *Marvelous Andreia: Politics, Geography, and Ethnicity in Herodotus' Histories*, in ROSEN – SLUITER (eds.), *Andreia* (cited n. 7) 83.

suintha to restore Italy to Roman rule. However, when Athalaric died in 534, political considerations forced Amalasuintha to ally herself to her cousin Theodahad by making him co-ruler. Ingratiating himself to Amalasuintha's enemies, Theodahad, however, imprisoned and then murdered her in 535.<sup>54</sup>

Though the modern political scientist might see Theodahad's moves as the actions of a prudent and astute politician, Procopius depicted these deeds as evidence of Theodahad's unstable and unmanly nature. Procopius used his rather banal characterisation of Theodahad as another example of men destroying their ἀρετή, by failing to balance study and military training. He wrote:

There was among the Goths one Theodahad by name, son of Amalafriada, the sister of Theoderic, a man already of mature years, versed in the Latin literature and the teachings of Plato, but without any experience whatever in war and taking no part in active life [δραστηρίου], and yet extraordinarily devoted to the pursuit of money[φιλοχρηματίαν]. This Theodahad had gained possession of most of the lands in Tuscany, and he was eager by violent methods to wrest the remainder from their owners.<sup>55</sup>

Procopius did not necessarily criticise Theodahad for his love of learning, but primarily for his failure either to follow the virtues he had learned in writers like Plato, or to balance his zeal for literature with a zest for the military life.<sup>56</sup> In fact, Theodahad represented the antithesis of the ideal ruler praised by Plato, who typically rejected φιλοχρηματία and sought to safeguard his subjects' property.<sup>57</sup> Theodahad represents an anti-Theoderic. It is important to point out, however, that Procopius did not necessarily see the Gothic king's hunger for other peoples' land as a barbarian trait. In *Secret History*, Procopius condemned Belisarius for similar "crimes" in Italy. I would suggest that Procopius saw both instances as examples of unmanly behaviour.<sup>58</sup>

Moreover, Procopius did not necessarily fault Theodahad for his attempt to become a Romanised Goth; Procopius, who claimed Theodahad was by "nature unmanly" [φύσει ἀνανδρός], criticised the Gothic king for allowing his love of

<sup>54</sup> Procopius (*Secret History* 16.5) claimed that Theodahad had murdered Amalasuintha at Theodora's behest.

<sup>55</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 5.3.1. Further evidence of Theodahad's literary learning is found in Cassiodorus, *Variarum* 10.3. On the Goths' seizures of Italian land, see Cassiodorus, *Variarum* 8.28.

<sup>56</sup> KALDELLIS, Procopius of Caesarea (cited n. 6) 110, contends that Procopius presented Theodahad as a failed "philosopher king," proposing that this analogy reveals the influence of Plato's *Republic* on Procopius' perceptions of ideal and non-ideal kingship.

<sup>57</sup> Plato, *Republic* 391c.

<sup>58</sup> Procopius, *Secret History* 5.4-7.

learning to thwart his fighting spirit.<sup>59</sup> When the Gothic king faced the prospect of confronting Justinian's invading forces, Procopius described how Theodahad's lack of a "firm mind", combined with his fear of war, caused Theodahad to enter into a state that Procopius described as "the antithesis of boldness".<sup>60</sup>

Behind much of this rhetoric is the ancient idea linking indecision and a fickle mind to unmanliness and vice. Procopius demonstrated that Theodahad's inability to be "steadfast", display a "fighting spirit" live an "active" life [δραστήριος] or to observe "justice" exposed him as "unmanly". Using Theodahad as an example of an "unmanly" leader allowed Procopius to lay bare the difficulties and the perils of amalgamating the "manliness" of a warrior-king with the finer refinements of Roman civilisation.<sup>61</sup>

According to Procopius, kind, yet "soft or effeminate" rulers were often too weak to face the rigors of war. Yet, this softness was not always due to one's *romanitas*. He described the Vandalic king Hilderich (ruled 523-30), as "easily approachable" and "altogether gentle" towards Christians and all of his subjects. However, when faced with battle, his "softness in war" [πόλεμον μαλακός] forced Hilderich to rely on his nephew Hoamer, the "Achilles of the Vandals", to fight his battles. It must also be remembered that Procopius frequently praised the manliness and fighting abilities of Roman generals like Germanus, an aristocrat who had almost certainly received a Roman education.<sup>62</sup> So too, as we will see below, does Procopius frequently praise other generals, Roman and barbarian, for displaying martial qualities based upon their *romanitas*. Thus, I reject the dominant modern view that posits that Procopius saw Theodahad's indecision, failure to grasp philosophy, and greed as necessarily "barbarian" traits, but more as tell-tale markers of his unmanly nature and a trait that could afflict Roman as well as barbarians.<sup>63</sup>

With Theodahad's "unmanly" reign, the "martial" Gothic factions' accusation that a Roman education made a leader unmanly seemed to have come true. Yet, like many themes in the *Wars*, the answer may not be so straightforward. Theodahad's inability to adhere to the virtues found in the literature he read was not necessarily a natural result of his "barbarian" nature. As we observed in the cases of Amalasuintha and the Gothic tutors, Procopius knew of "barbarians" who could master the finer nuances of a Roman literary education. Certainly, the

<sup>59</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 5.9.1.

<sup>60</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 5.7.11. I have changed the translator Dewing's "opposite extreme of unspeakable boldness" for ἀντικαθίστη θράσος to "the antithesis of boldness".

<sup>61</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 3.9.1.

<sup>62</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 7.40.9.

<sup>63</sup> E.g., HALSALL (cited n. 16) 106; LARocca (cited n. 42) 140.

ancient Greek and Roman literature that Procopius was familiar with provided examples of barbarians who had mastered a Hellenistic education.<sup>64</sup> I would suggest, then, that Procopius' portrait of Theodahad represented only the opening salvo in his exploration on the similarities and the differences between Gothic and Roman notions of virtue and manly courage. The remainder of his account of the campaigns in Italy tells the tale of Gothic kings who, on paper at least, represented the martial and manly archetype of the barbarian warrior-king espoused in these early rhetorical set pieces. It is to these "martial" Gothic leaders that we now turn.

### **Vitigis and Belisarius: the Fine Line between Manliness and Unmanliness**

Fed up with Theodahad's disastrous and unmanly leadership, the Goths replaced him with the celebrated warrior Vitigis (ruled 536-540).<sup>65</sup> Procopius explained that the new king faced a difficult political situation. An ongoing conflict with the Franks in the north, coupled with Belisarius' invasion in the south, meant that Vitigis needed to cope with the dangerous prospect of a two-front war (a peril that Procopius knew that the Byzantines would soon face themselves). Having replaced the inactive and unmanly Theodahad, Vitigis emphasised in a speech to his troops that his hesitancy to confront straightaway the Byzantine forces stemmed from tactical necessity rather than any effeminate fear of war:

The success of the greatest enterprises, fellow soldiers, generally depends, not upon hasty action at critical moments, but upon careful planning.... For the title of the coward [δειλίας], fittingly applied, has saved many, while the reputation for bravery [ἀνδρείας] which some men have gained at the wrong time, has afterward led them to defeat .... For a man's worth [ἀνδρὸς ἀρετὴν] is revealed by his deeds, not at their commencement, but at their end.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Procopius' familiarity with, and grasp of, classical literature is discussed in Greatrex, "Classical Past".

<sup>65</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 5.11.5. Vitigis had earned his military reputation with an important victory over a combined Gepid and Herul army in 530. The Goths murdered Theodahad in December 536 shortly after Vitigis' coup. For an account of these events, see WOLFRAM, *History of the Goths* (cited n. 27) 340-43.

<sup>66</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 5.11.12-22. This speech mirrors Vitigis' own propaganda, e.g. Cassiodorus *Varia* 10.31 (trans Barnish): "I was chosen not in the privy chambers, but in the wild open field. I was not sought among the subtle debates of sycophants, but as the trumpets blared" [Non enim in cubilis angustiis, sed in campis late patentibus electum me esse noveritis, nec inter blandientium delicate colloquia, sed tubis concrepantibus sum quaesitus]. The gendered aspects of this letter are discussed by LA ROCCA (cited n. 42, 141).

Other scholars have noted the importance of this particular speech for understanding Procopius' account of Vitigis' reign and the main themes of the *Gothic Wars*. Like many set-speeches in the *Wars*, this seemingly innocuous address allowed Procopius to foreshadow future events.<sup>67</sup> The speech contains two important Procopian themes in the *Gothic Wars* concerning masculine ideology and good leadership. First, an ideal leader needed to see the larger picture, and base his military decisions, not on furthering his own personal glory, but on what would, in the long-term, benefit of his soldiers and his cause. A man needed to remain steadfast—even if others labelled his strategy cowardly or effeminate. On numerous occasions in the *Wars* when leaders responded to attacks on their manliness with reckless displays of courage, disaster soon followed.<sup>68</sup> Second, like many ancient intellectuals, Procopius commented frequently on the fine distinction between rashness and courage.<sup>69</sup> In classical Greek θράσος describes either recklessness or valour. Aristotle had considered ἀνδρεία as “the attributes of a man whose actions demonstrate a moderate negotiation between ‘boldness’ [θάρσος] and ‘fear’ [φόβος]”. As Karen Bassi puts it, “the *andreios* man neither fears too much or too little”.<sup>70</sup> A man's capacity to maintain this precarious balance depended largely upon his ability to suppress his natural urges to either launch a rash attack or turn tail in a cowardly retreat. These distinctions regularly separated the manly from the unmanly in the classical literary tradition. Procopius used the term in both senses.<sup>71</sup> On the one hand, desperate circumstances often drove men to take reckless yet ultimately courageous and manly actions; on the other hand, unthinking acts of rashness revealed weakness and unmanliness, and led regularly to men's downfall.<sup>72</sup> These concepts certainly represented a primary theme throughout the *Gothic Wars*, in which Procopius went to great lengths to compare and contrast the leadership abilities of Belisarius and Vitigis and the martial courage and manliness of their men.

<sup>67</sup> KALDELLIS, Procopius of Caesarea (cited n. 6) 32.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Procopius, *Wars* 1.18.13-29, 1.18.19-26.

<sup>69</sup> Some examples include, Procopius, *Wars* 5.20.8, 6.23.29-30. Cf. Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War* 2.40.3.

<sup>70</sup> Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics* 1228a26-30a37, 1230a26-33, quoted in K. BASSI, The semantics of manliness in Ancient Greece, in ROSEN – SLUITER, Andreia (cited n. 7) 25-58, esp. 52-53.

<sup>71</sup> For the influence of Aristotle on Procopius' writings, see KALDELLIS, Procopius of Caesarea (cited n. 6) 149, 212, 220. For the influence of Aristotle on Late Antique culture in general, see CHR. WILDBERG, Philosophy in the Age of Justinian, in CCAG, ed. Michael Maas. Cambridge 2005, 324-28.

<sup>72</sup> For a description of how desperation could evoke unprecedented deeds of manly courage, see *Wars* 6.21.30-33, 8.35.21.

An early example of these tests of our protagonists' manliness and courage came when Vitigis made his move on Rome with his revitalised army. Hoping to buy some time before reinforcements from the East arrived, Belisarius and his soldiers sought to stall the Gothic advance on Rome by making "a display of their own daring [θάρσους]".<sup>73</sup> Procopius' use of θάρσος here seems to signal to the reader that this first contest between the revitalised Goths and the Romans would represent a test of a less rational type of courage. Without a doubt, Belisarius acted somewhat out of character, and made the unusual decision for an early Byzantine general to fight like a common soldier.<sup>74</sup> Belisarius and his men made the dangerous decision to meet a group of Goths in a face-to-face trial of their martial prowess. In fact, Belisarius' intellectual prowess, which represented one of his primary advantages over his "barbarian" opponents, played a minimal role in this fighting.<sup>75</sup> It was probably no coincidence that in a contest based on θάρσος, the fighting was on foot, brutal, and hand-to-hand. Procopius seemed to be of two minds about this choice of combat; he admired Belisarius' courage, but, in the historian's own words, "The cause of the Romans was thrown into great danger, for the whole decision of the war rested with him".<sup>76</sup>

As another specialist on battles has noted, it is here that the narrative takes a very Homeric turn.<sup>77</sup> In Procopius' telling, any Goth with a claim to ἀρετή made a beeline towards Belisarius. As the focal point of the fighting and the narrative, Belisarius displayed all the martial skills typical of a Homeric hero; he slays enemies left and right. Yet, even the mightiest warrior at times needed assistance. Luckily, for the general, and for the Romans' cause, Belisarius' personal guards made a display of ἀρετή that, as Procopius somewhat hyperbolically described it, "had never been shown by any man in the world to this day". The "undermanned" Byzantines, according to Procopius, met the enemy on their own terms in basic hand-to-hand combat and showed that they were more than a match for the martial valour of the Goths. In Homeric fashion, the historian praised the fighting prowess and heroic conduct of the Goths as well as the Romans.<sup>78</sup> Procopius

<sup>73</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 5.17.18.

<sup>74</sup> The late sixth-century military guidebook, Maurice's *Strategikon* (2.16), advised against commanders fighting amongst the front ranks, preferring that generals should avoid battle and limit their actions to directing the formations "and adapting to the movements of the enemy".

<sup>75</sup> On the importance of a general's intellect in determining the outcome of battles, see Maurice, *Strategikon* 2.1.

<sup>76</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 5.18.5.

<sup>77</sup> WHATELY, *Descriptions* (cited n. 22) 304.

<sup>78</sup> Procopius made special mention (*Wars* 5.18.29-33) of the fighting prowess of Belisarius and a Gothic warrior, Visandus Vandalarius.

discussed the loss of many notable fighters on each side. Yet, in the end, Belisarius' and his men's superior ἀρετή won out, and the vanguard of "barbarians" fled back to their main army.<sup>79</sup> Belisarius and his men, however, were not yet quite out of danger because the Gothic cavalry remained unchecked. Here, in Procopius' mind, Belisarius made the more responsible decision; he fled back to the safety of Rome. Pursued closely by the enemy, Belisarius arrived at the gates of Rome only to find that the "Italians manning the gates of the city" thought that the general had died in battle. Accordingly, fearing a ruse, they refused the general and his men entry into the city. Only quick thinking on the part of Belisarius saved the day, and after one last dangerous skirmish, Belisarius and his men gained entrance into Rome.<sup>80</sup>

"Trapped" in the city of Rome, Belisarius and the Byzantines appeared to be at the mercy of the marauding Goths preparing to lay siege. Here, Procopius split the narrative's perspective three ways: Goth, Italian, and Byzantine. The Goths and the Italians saw the situation similarly—the Goths expected an easy victory, and the Italians dreaded what they saw as the inescapable storming of Rome and their inevitable punishment for their unfaithfulness to their "masters" the Goths.<sup>81</sup> On the other hand, Belisarius remained smugly confident. To build tension, Procopius took his time to explain Belisarius' optimism. In fact, everything seemed to point to an easy Gothic victory. Once again, however, not everything was quite as it appeared. Certainly, Procopius made it clear that the Romans could not trust their Italian "allies". Brimming with confidence, the Goths attempted to undermine the alliance and the confidence of the Italians guarding the Salarian gate by belittling the manliness of their "allies" in Belisarius' army:

He [Vacis] began to reproach the [inhabitants of Rome] Romans for their faithlessness to the Goths and upbraided them for the treason which he said they had committed against both their fatherland and themselves, for they had exchanged the power of the Goths for Greeks [Γότθων δυνάμεως Γραικούς] who were not able to defend them, although they had never before seen any men of the Greek race come to Italy except actors of tragedy and mimes and thieving sailors.<sup>82</sup>

Vacis' portrait of Belisarius and his men as "Greeks" reflected contemporary Gothic propaganda. This set-speech illustrates that perhaps one way that the Gothic leaders may have attempted to gain the Italian Romans' support in their

<sup>79</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 5.18.16.

<sup>80</sup> Procopius later (*Wars* 5.27.25) described this skirmish as a Byzantine defeat.

<sup>81</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 5.19.1.

<sup>82</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 5.18.40-1. On this passage and the pejorative use of the term *Graikoi*, see W. KAEGI, *Procopius the Military Historian*, *BF* 15 (1990) 79-81.

war against the Byzantine Empire was by trying to sever the Western and Eastern Romans' sense of a shared identity and history. By calling Belisarius' heterogeneous army "Greeks", Vacis not only split the two sides, but also played upon the traditional Roman belief that Greek soldiers were soft, lazy, and reluctant to fight in "a real man's war".<sup>83</sup> Vacis' suggestion that Greek culture produced only actors and mimes aroused another Roman prejudice. For the Romans, the performing arts represented the dangers of civilised luxury. Actors, singers, and dancers were considered particularly effeminate and representative of a weak and unmanly culture.<sup>84</sup> Procopius' version of Vacis' speech suggested, because of their warrior traditions, that it was natural for the Goths to presuppose that they were not only more valorous than the Byzantine soldiers, but, also manlier. Such rhetoric had defined the regime of Theoderic from the beginning.<sup>85</sup>

Though it is probable that Procopius' made up the details in Vacis' speech, its inclusion at this stage of the narrative appears purposeful. As one recent paper has suggested, Procopius seemed to have meant for Vacis' address to be "ironic and incongruous, in that a barbarian is accusing the citizens of Rome of that stereotype of barbarism, unfaithfulness".<sup>86</sup> While this argument may be true, I would suggest that Procopius' larger point appeared to have been an effort to highlight the Goth's dismissive conviction that they were facing an unmanly threat from Belisarius and his men. As we shall see the Goth's vision of the Italians as untrustworthy was largely accurate. In fact, in Procopius' telling, they were prone to switch sides and betray both the Goths and the Byzantines.<sup>87</sup> The statement that would soon be proven false was Vacis' contention that Belisarius

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<sup>83</sup> The Greeks' reputation in the Roman literary tradition for an unmanly love of luxury and the "soft" life is discussed by C.A. WILLIAMS, *Roman Homosexuality. Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity*. New York 2010, esp. 62-70, M. KUEFLER, *The Manly Eunuch. Masculinity, Gender Ambiguity, and Christian Ideology in Late Antiquity*, Chicago 2001, 47. Near the close of the *Gothic Wars* (8.28.2) another Gothic commander provides us with a more accurate picture of Justinian's forces, describing Narses' army as a "heterogeneous horde of barbarians".

<sup>84</sup> WILLIAMS, *Roman Homosexuality*, (cited n. 83) 135-9.

<sup>85</sup> As Jonathan ARNOLD has observed (*Restoration of the Roman Empire*, cited n. 14, 117) in his astute study on Theoderic's Italy, the Goths and Italians went to great lengths to paint themselves as "true" Romans, whilst depicting the Eastern Romans as unmanly Greeks. Arnold writes: "Goths and Gothicism represented martialism, the old Roman virtue of *virtus* (the very source of the term virtue), which meant "manliness" or "courage." *Virtus* was an ideal that the Romans had seemingly lost, becoming overly effeminate (perhaps even overly Greek), yet which until recently had been most Roman indeed".

<sup>86</sup> HALSALL, *Funny Foreigners* (cited n.16), 110.

<sup>87</sup> See, e.g., Procopius, *Wars* 7.4.16.

would not be able to protect the Italians. It was likely this misconception that Procopius sought to rebuff.

Clearly, Procopius rejected the notion that the Byzantines lacked the courage or the manliness to defend Rome. In Procopius' mind, it was the Italians who were the "true" non-martial people unable to protect their native land. In fact, throughout the narrative the Goths and the Romans at least agree on one point: the idea that the Italians were a soft and an unmanly people in need of protection.<sup>88</sup> As the situation in Rome deteriorated, Procopius noted that the Italians were completely unprepared for the rigours of a siege. Because the civilians and the Italian soldiers guarding the city were convinced that Vitigis' army would soon defeat Belisarius, fear took hold throughout the city. They railed against Belisarius and his men, questioning the general's decision to confront the Goths before reinforcements had arrived. The Italians ridiculed Belisarius for his advice "to take courage [θαρσεῖν], and to look with contempt upon the barbarians". So too did they scoff at the general's supreme confidence that he would easily conquer the Goths.<sup>89</sup>

In another set-speech, the Gothic ambassadors who met with Belisarius and the Roman senators shortly after this debate expressed Procopius' attitudes about the over-confident Goths and the meek Italians. Addressing Belisarius with a group of Roman senators looking on, the Gothic envoy, Albis, highlighted the two aspects of θάρσος. "Rashness [θράσος] is different from courage [ἀνδρεία]", he proclaimed, "for rashness, when it takes possession of a man, brings him into danger with discredit, but bravery bestows upon him an adequate prize in a reputation for valour [ἀρετῆς]". The Gothic diplomat suggested mockingly that if Belisarius and his men had attacked the Goths outside the gates of Rome because of a belief in their ἀνδρεία, then by all means they should take the opportunity to "play the manly man" [ἀνδραγαθίζεσθαι] in battle against the Goths. However, if, as the Gothic envoy believed, the Romans had been temporarily possessed by "rashness" [θράσει] when they decided to make that attack then the Goths would give them the opportunity to "repent ... the reckless undertaking". The emissary concluded his speech with a final attempt to get the Byzantines to capitulate by requesting that Belisarius "not cause the sufferings of these Romans (Italians) to be prolonged any further, men whom Theoderic fostered in a life not only of soft luxury [βίω τρυφερῶ] but also of freedom, and cease your resistance to him (Vitigis) who is master both of the Goths and of the Italians".<sup>90</sup>

<sup>88</sup> See, e.g., Procopius, *Wars* 3.3.10-13, 7.11.12-14.

<sup>89</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 5.18.42.

<sup>90</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 5.20.9-12. I have changed Dewing's "play the man" for ἀνδραγαθίζεσθαι to "play the manly man".

Belisarius' response made it clear that the idea that the city of Rome belonged to anyone but its rightful owners, the Romans, was ridiculous. Procopius showed Belisarius asserting that he was made of sterner stuff than the feeble Italians were, proclaiming in heroic language, "As long as Belisarius lives, it is impossible to relinquish the city."<sup>91</sup> According to Procopius, when the envoys returned to camp, Vitigis asked his representatives what sort of man they faced in Belisarius. The envoys replied that the Goths would never be able to make Belisarius give up the city by frightening him. With the description above, we can see how Procopius used seemingly trite rhetorical set battle pieces, repetitive vocabulary, and bombastic set-speeches to set up his reader for the combat and the "lessons" to come. The Goths who had met with Belisarius and his men had only just realised what Procopius and his readers already knew, the fact that Belisarius and his men were not the unmanly or "rash" men the martial Goths had been expecting to rout easily in battle. Once again, we find that the Gothic version of the situation given in a dramatic set-speech represented the polar opposite of the reality. In fact, we are soon to learn that the Goths are the rash side, and that Belisarius was motivated not by θράσος, but by a justified belief in his side's superior ἀνδρεία.

As the battle for Rome opened in earnest, the more intellectual and strategic Belisarius came to the fore. When the general noticed the approaching Goths' siege engines, he chuckled to himself and restrained his men from attacking until he gave the order. The Italians once again expected the worst, and accused Belisarius of feigned bravery and of purposefully avoiding battle. Belisarius knew, however, that his defensive position had given his archers a significant advantage over the Goths lumbering along with their siege engines. When Belisarius finally gave the go ahead to fire, his bowman decimated the Goths.<sup>92</sup> As Procopius explained, the calculating Belisarius had exploited the "simplicity of the barbarians."<sup>93</sup> Having been bested previously in brutal hand-to-hand warfare, the Goths proved even less of a match for the Romans' material, tactical, and strategic superiority. After Procopius related often-gruesome scenes of battle, Belisarius and his men emerged triumphant. Procopius painted a vivid picture of the shift in morale. Ebullient in victory, the Byzantines sang the praises of Belisarius and collected their spoils, while the humiliated Goths "cared for their wounded and bewailed their dead".

<sup>91</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 5.20.18.

<sup>92</sup> Procopius' focus on the prowess of Belisarius' archers and the advantage that it gave to the Byzantines in the Italian campaign is discussed in detail by WHATLEY, *Descriptions of Battle* (cited n. 22) esp. 264-70.

<sup>93</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 5.27.27.

Procopius described how this setback transformed Vitigis into an impetuous, and ultimately, an unmanly man. Made increasingly desperate by his numerous setbacks at the hands of Belisarius' forces during his siege of Rome, Vitigis launched a hopeless attack against the Byzantine army.<sup>94</sup> The Gothic king sent five hundred horsemen against the Byzantine commander Bessas' one thousand cavalry. Procopius explained that Vitigis had failed to "account for the difference between the two armies in point of equipment of arms and of practice of warlike deeds."<sup>95</sup> The battle ended in a rout, with only a few soldiers returning to the Gothic camp. Vitigis chastised the survivors, "insisting that cowardice [τῷ ἀνάνδρῳ] had caused their defeat". Three days later, continuing to fume irrationally, Vitigis selected another five hundred men and "bade them to make a display of valorous [ἀρετῆς] deeds against the enemy". The astute reader harks back to Vitigis' speech at the opening of his reign preaching the necessity of preparation before battle and the benefits of seemingly unmanly retreats. Inevitably, for Procopius, the Romans' numerical and tactical superiority allowed them to rout the imprudent enemy "without any trouble". While the Goths lamented that these defeats proved that "fortune stood against them", Belisarius provided a more mundane explanation for the Byzantine's victories. He suggested that the Romans' and their allies, the Huns, use of mounted bowman had provided their crucial edge over the Goths, who lacked experience in this type of warfare.<sup>96</sup> The reader knows that Procopius throughout his narrative has provided a third reason. He has shown that the Goths had underestimated both the martial capabilities and the manly virtues of their foes, the Byzantines.

After relating Vitigis' increasingly irrational behaviour, Procopius immediately exposed how the Byzantines' growing confidence made them susceptible to over-confidence. On the cusp of breaking the Goths' fighting spirit, Belisarius succumbed to his soldiers' pressuring.<sup>97</sup> Elated with their numerous triumphs over the Goths, the Roman army coaxed a reluctant Belisarius "to risk a decisive battle with his whole army". Belisarius replied that his hesitance to fight a decisive battle resulted, not because he detected any "softness" [μαλακίαν] in his men, nor because he "was terrified at the strength of the enemy" [τῶν πολεμίων

<sup>94</sup> Probably in an effort to create a more vivid didactic narrative, Procopius ignored several Gothic victories during the yearlong siege that began in February 537. These omissions are discussed by WOLFRAM, *History of the Goths* (cited n. 27) 344-45.

<sup>95</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 5.27.15.

<sup>96</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 5.27.15-29.

<sup>97</sup> Common tradition allowed Roman generals to solicit and accept advice from their commanders. G. GREATREX, *Rome and Persia at War, 502-532*. Leeds 1998, 179-80, n. 30.

κατορρωδήσας τὴν δύναμιν], but because his current strategy of skirmishing was going so well.<sup>98</sup> Belisarius opined, “When one’s present affairs are going to one’s satisfaction, it is inexpedient to change to another course of action”. However, after witnessing his men’s enthusiasm, Belisarius gave in:

Since I see that you are eager for this danger, I am filled with confidence and will never oppose your ardour [ὄρμη]. . . . I see that the present moment is also in our favour, for it will, in all probability, make it easier for us to gain mastery over the enemy, because their spirit has been enslaved by what has gone before. For when men have often met with misfortune, their hearts are no longer wont to thrill even slightly with manly valour [ἀνδραγαθίζεσθαι].<sup>99</sup>

The Romans went on to suffer a defeat on the plains of Nero. Belisarius’ lapse of judgment helped end any hopes for a quick victory over the Goths, indicating, that even at this early stage of his history, Procopius detected some flaws in Belisarius’ ability to lead men.<sup>100</sup> An ideal general did not care what his men thought of him, but rather based his tactics purely on what advantages might be gained for his forces and the Byzantine Empire.<sup>101</sup>

Like his earlier lapse against the Persians, Belisarius’ failure, however, proved to be temporary. Vitigis failed to follow up on his victory. Unable to penetrate Rome’s defences, and facing the threat of a Byzantine attack on the Gothic royal city of Ravenna, the Gothic king abandoned the siege in March 538. He retreated with his army first to Ariminum, and finally to Ravenna—where he would spend the next two years facing an increasingly deteriorating situation. Vitigis failed

<sup>98</sup> Belisarius avoided major engagements with the Gothic army. Of course, Narses ultimately defeated the Goths by seeking just such a confrontation.

<sup>99</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 5.28.6-14.

<sup>100</sup> Most scholars agree with CAMERON’s contention (Procopius and the Sixth Century (cited n. 20) 8, 15, 52-54) that as the Italian campaign dragged on, Procopius developed an increasingly negative attitude towards Belisarius. Kaldellis suggests, however, that an underlying negativity towards Belisarius is found throughout the *Wars*, see A. KALDELLIS, *Procopius’ Persian War: a Thematic and Literary Analysis*, in R. MACRIDES (ed.), *History as Literature in Byzantium*. Burlington, VT. 2010, 255-56. As CONOR WHATELY has suggested to me (pers. comm.) it seems Procopius’ opinion of the general shifted in terms of his military successes or failures.

<sup>101</sup> Procopius’ portrait of Belisarius as a man easily influenced by others is similar to his negative portrait of the general in *Secret History*. In this work, Procopius criticised Belisarius for allowing his wife Antonina to take on the masculine role in their relationship, claiming that he became her “faithful slave not her husband”. Procopius, *Secret History* 4.30-1. It is also possible that, similar to his account of battle of Callinicum, Procopius was trying to exonerate Belisarius by explaining a well-known defeat to his contemporary audience, as a momentary lapse of judgment from which he soon recovers.

in his attempt to secure allies against the Byzantines. His efforts to relieve his forces besieged in Auximum and in Faesulae came to naught as well.<sup>102</sup> Finally, in late 539, Belisarius and his army arrived at the gates of Ravenna. The besieger became the besieged.

Procopius showed how these events continued to change Vitigis from an esteemed soldier at the outset of his reign into a leader reviled by his former supporters for his “unmanly” [ἀνάνδρως] leadership and “ill fortune” [ἀτυχῶς] by its end.<sup>103</sup> Vitigis’ response to setbacks was markedly different from Belisarius’ usual quick recoveries from his mistakes or military setbacks. Fearing that their opponents might think the Goths had succumbed to ῥαθυμία,<sup>104</sup> Vitigis called on the Goths starving in Auximum and Faesulae “to endure manfully” [φέρειν ἀνδρείως].<sup>105</sup> Yet, when the Gothic leader faced his own peril, he acted in a decidedly unmanly manner. Instead of resisting Belisarius’ siege, Vitigis sought a way out of his predicament by seeking a truce with the Byzantines.<sup>106</sup> Finally, after a series of failed negotiations between the two warring parties, Belisarius managed to capture Vitigis and most of his entourage by feigning to accept the Gothic nobles’ offer to declare him emperor of the West.<sup>107</sup>

Procopius concluded book six with a rather melancholy description of the vanquished Gothic forces marching downtrodden through the streets of Ravenna in May of 540.<sup>108</sup> Procopius indicated the Gothic soldiers’ humiliation was

<sup>102</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 6.24.1-16, 6.26.2-13.

<sup>103</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 6.30.5.

<sup>104</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 6.26.8.

<sup>105</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 6.26.13.

<sup>106</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 6.28.27, 6.29.2. For Procopius a man could not act courageously or manly when he was starving. See, e.g., *Wars* 8.23.15-16.

<sup>107</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 6.29.18.

<sup>108</sup> The pessimistic tone of this passage stands in stark contrast from the triumphant rhetoric of the earlier material on the first siege of Rome. Procopius here openly questioned the role that ἀρετή played in determining battles, which he attributed to the whims of “some divine power” [δαμόνιον]. KALDELLIS, *Procopius of Caesarea* (cited n. 6) 196, argues that this sentiment reflected Procopius’ “true” feelings concerning the supremacy of *tyche* over men’s ἀρετή. This passage seems to have been inserted to create a bridge between the shifting tones of books six and seven. In fact, it appears closely related to the ideas espoused by Totila (*Wars* 7.21.5-7) that were ultimately proven mistaken by Procopius. W. TREADGOLD (*The Early Byzantine Historians*. London 2007, 204-05) postulates that in 545, with the war dragging on, Procopius altered the end of book six by adding more pessimistic material, and in turn took material from book six to open book seven. Belisarius’ triumphal entry into Constantinople in 540 and Procopius’ subsequent encomium certainly seems somewhat out of place at the opening of book seven, and was probably meant to be the original finishing point for book six, and in fact the entire account.

made complete when their wives—seeing the small numbers and the ordinary stature<sup>109</sup> of the Byzantine soldiers who had captured the city—belittled their husbands for their “unmanliness” [τὴν ἀνανδρίαν], and spat in their faces.<sup>110</sup> The fact that Vitigis allowed himself and his army to be captured by the Romans seemed a particularly cowardly and unmanly way for a Gothic leader to meet his end. Before his victory over the Byzantines on the plains of Nero, Vitigis had exclaimed that “noble men [ἄνδρες γενναῖοι] consider that there is only one misfortune (in battle)—to survive defeat at the hands of the enemy.”<sup>111</sup> Vitigis even said that Theodahad had received a “blessed” [ὄλβιον] end to his life because “he was privileged to lose both his sovereignty and his life at the hands of his own men.”<sup>112</sup> Procopius probably used these earlier comments by Vitigis as a means of highlighting the ignominy of his end.<sup>113</sup> Vitigis suffered the dual disgrace of losing both his sovereignty and freedom at the hands of his enemies; even worse, he was led into captivity without even making a final stand. Vitigis’ assertion at the outset of his reign that a man’s worth was revealed by his deeds, not at their beginning, but at their end, had come back to haunt the Gothic king. The seeming martial and “manly” supremacy of the Goths had proven inferior to the tactical, the material, and the martial manliness of the Byzantine soldiers.

### **Totila: Theoderic Reborn or Barbarian Belisarius?**

Belisarius’ victory over Vitigis seems to have represented the original terminus for the *Gothic Wars*.<sup>114</sup> The narrative drives to what looks like a logical climax, with Vitigis’ defeat and Belisarius’ triumphal return to Constantinople. The theme of a “manly” and “heroic” Roman army defeating a worthy Gothic foe would have made a suitable ending to the *Wars*. Events on the ground seemed to have interfered with Procopius’ well laid out didactic tale. The year 540 marked a turning point in Justinian’s reconquest of Italy.

Despite their defeat, the Goths refused to submit to Byzantine rule. In 541, the Gothic nobility appointed Totila (ruled 541-552) as king. Totila, a relative

<sup>109</sup> It is worth emphasising that the Byzantine army had many Goths and other “barbarian” peoples fighting in it, so this emphasis on the size discrepancy of the men in the two armies seems to be more of a rhetorical flourish by Procopius to promote his views that the Goths viewed the Byzantines as unmanly.

<sup>110</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 6.29.32-4. I changed the translator Dewing’s “cowardice” for ἀνανδρίαν to “unmanliness”.

<sup>111</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 5.29.9.

<sup>112</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 5.29.6.

<sup>113</sup> It also foreshadows both Totila’s “shameful death” and Teias’ heroic death at the close of the *Gothic Wars*.

<sup>114</sup> TREADGOLD, *Byzantine Historians* (cited n. 108) 204.

of the Visigothic king Theudis (ruled 526-548), revitalised the Gothic army's fighting spirit. In a series of swift campaigns, he recaptured almost all of Italy. Procopius now had to deal with a resurgent Goth nation and the recall of his idol, Belisarius. How did the historian explain such a reversal of fortune? Without a doubt, the mercurial nature of *tyche* and the power of God to determine events play a greater role in books seven and eight than they did in books five and six.<sup>115</sup> I would suggest, however, that Procopius once again blamed Roman failure primarily in the familiar moralising terms. Procopius did not attribute the Roman defeats after 540 on the whims of fate or a lack of courage, nor did he suggest that they resulted from strategic failures. Instead, he treated these losses as arising from moral failures on the part of the Byzantine military high command and the imperial administration.<sup>116</sup> We must take Procopius at his word when he explained that the "insatiable" greed of certain members of the Byzantine high command in Italy and within the Byzantine treasury<sup>117</sup>—not the caprice of fortune—represented the primary reason "the entire fabric of Roman power was utterly destroyed in a short space of time".<sup>118</sup> Once more, in Procopius' mind, the "rightful" rulers of Italy would be the side that juxtaposed martial capabilities with a policy of restraint and justice towards the Italians. The tide of battle shifts to the Goths' favour as the Byzantine generals and administration succumbed to jealousy, greed, bickering, and injustice.<sup>119</sup>

Totila is the undisputed hero of book seven.<sup>120</sup> As Belisarius' and the Byzantine's fortunes decline, Totila's and the Goths' fortunes improve. Totila, in this part of the *Gothic Wars*, encapsulates nearly all of the leadership qualities and virtues found in Procopius' encomium on Belisarius at the opening of book sev-

<sup>115</sup> Discussed in KALDELLIS, *Procopius of Caesarea* (cited n. 6) 198-204.

<sup>116</sup> Procopius (e.g., *Wars* 7.12.1-11) too notes the seeming disinterest of Justinian in the Italian campaign as a reason for the Goths' resurgence. Modern scholarly consensus contends that for Justinian, the war in the Italy was as fairly minor theatre of war in comparison to Thrace, North Africa, and the troublesome eastern boundary with Persia. For a discussion of this point, see WHATELY, *Descriptions of Battle* (cited n.22) 259.

<sup>117</sup> Procopius explained (*Wars* 7.1.33) that the Byzantine treasuries' refusal to pay the soldiers in Italy was a primary reason for a decline in the Byzantine army's fighting prowess, not a lack of courage or the superior martial virtues or tactics of Totila and his men.

<sup>118</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 7.1.24. I thus disagree with KALDELLIS' claim (*Procopius of Caesarea* (cited n. 6) 198-200) that, in this section, the historian was seeking to reject the idea that wars were won, not by justice, but primarily by the whims of *tyche*.

<sup>119</sup> See, e.g., Procopius, *Wars* 7.3.15-22.

<sup>120</sup> Procopius' admiration for Totila is seen by most modern scholars to have been genuine. See, e.g., CAMERON, *Procopius and the Sixth Century* (cited n. 20) 190, 197; KALDELLIS, *Procopius of Caesarea* (cited n. 6) 198.

en.<sup>121</sup> Procopius certainly had much to say in this section about Totila's mastery of numerous political and martial virtues. Like many of his royal predecessors, Totila was formidable in battle.<sup>122</sup> Similar to Theoderic, Totila was also "energetic" and wise. Totila, however, exhibited some "civilised" qualities not typical in a barbarian king—even Theoderic. Procopius at various times in the narrative described Totila as "restrained" [σωφροσύνη], "humane", [φιλανθρωπίαν] "gentle" [πρᾶόν], and "just" [δίκαιος].

Totila also respected his enemy. In Procopius' version of his first address to his downtrodden men, though not overawed, Totila recognised that the Goths faced a "contest" [τὸν ἀγῶνα] for their very existence against a formidable and worthy Byzantine opponent. This speech contains little of the bravado, and none of the condescending gendered rhetoric found in earlier Gothic warriors' set-speeches denigrating the manliness and courage of his foes. Totila explained to his men, that in order to defeat the Byzantines, the Goths would have to match their "usual spirit of manly courage" [ἀνδραγαθίζεσθαι] in battle, with deeds of justice and acts of humane self-restraint in their relations with the Italians. He made it clear that earlier Gothic defeats against the Byzantines could be attributed to his predecessors' lack of concern for justice, which caused God to turn against them.<sup>123</sup> He too made an effort to treat his captured foes well; a shrewd policy that Procopius showed led many Byzantine soldiers to desert to the Gothic side.<sup>124</sup>

This strategy proved successful. The bulk of the first half of book seven focuses on the Goths gradual retaking of Italy. Instead of providing a detailed account of the various battles and sieges that decimated Italy over the next five years, Procopius concentrated instead on Totila's philanthropy and deep regard for justice. Two examples should serve to demonstrate this emphasis. Shortly after Totila's first capture of Rome in 546, Procopius reported how Totila felt obligated to protect Rome's aristocratic women from acts of revenge and from sexual violence:

Now the Goths, on their part, were eager to put Rusticiana to death, bringing against her the charge that after bribing the commanders of the Roman army, she had destroyed the statues of Theoderic, her motive in so doing

<sup>121</sup> As argued by KALDELLIS, Procopius of Caesarea (cited n. 6) 194. Amongst many other virtues, the historian described (*Wars* 7.1.1-21) Belisarius as "gentle" [πρᾶόν] "generous" [φιλοδωρότατος], protective of civilians' land, sexually "restrained" [σωφροσύνης], "courageous" [εὐψυχος], "daring" [εὐτολμότατος], and "steadfast" [ἀσφαλεῖ] in war, without being rash.

<sup>122</sup> For the fear Totila's fighting prowess evoked in the Eastern Roman soldiers, see Procopius, *Wars* 7.6.19.

<sup>123</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 7.4.10-18.

<sup>124</sup> E.g., Procopius, *Wars* 7.16.19.

having been to avenge the murder not only of her father Symmachus, but also of her husband Boethius. But Totila would not permit her to suffer any harm, but he guarded both her and all the Roman women safe from insult, although the Goths were extremely eager to have intercourse [κοίτην] with them. Consequently not one of them had the ill fortune to suffer personal insult, whether married, unwed, or widow, and Totila won great renown for moderation [σωφροσύνη] from this course.<sup>125</sup>

As a modern scholar notes, Totila's reputation for σωφροσύνη "is scarcely a virtue one would associate with a barbarian".<sup>126</sup> Totila's civilised σωφροσύνη definitely distinguishes him from typical barbarian leaders, and, I would suggest, even the manly and wise Theoderic. It is probably no coincidence that the women that Procopius chose to describe Totila protecting were none other than Boethius' wife and Symmachus' daughters—the two men that the historian had revealed earlier had been "unjustly" executed by Theoderic. Procopius would surely have expected his readers to remember these earlier "crimes". Totila, as described by Procopius, thus appears to represent a better version of Theoderic. Once again, we find Procopius deftly combining historical events with his own moralising themes to produce an edifying tale that interlocks each of his biographies of the Gothic royalty.<sup>127</sup>

We find further evidence that Procopius sought to differentiate Totila from a typical rough-hewn "Gothic" king or military man in another anecdote from the same period. An unnamed Italian accused one of Totila's bodyguards of violating his virgin daughter; the Gothic king imprisoned the soldier. This prompt punishment, in the words of Procopius, alarmed "the most notable men among the barbarians" [τῶν Βαρβάρων οἱ δοκιμώτατοι]. They requested that Totila release the soldier and dismiss the charges, since the assailant was an "active" [δραστήριος] man and "a capable warrior" [ἀγαθὸς τὰ πολέμια]. Totila, however, "gently and with no excitement" [πράως τε καὶ παραχῆ ὀυδέμιᾶ] refused, declaring that what they "called kindness [φιλανθρωπίαν] in reality was lawlessness [παρανομίαν]". The Gothic king proclaimed "the act of committing a sin and that of preventing the punishment of those who have committed sin, are in my judgment on the same plane". The nobles relented and the Goth was executed not long

<sup>125</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 7.20.29-31.

<sup>126</sup> J. MOORHEAD, Totila the Revolutionary. *Historia* 49 (2000) 382.

<sup>127</sup> Totila's reputation for restraint in protecting the Italo-Romans from his army's retribution when he captured Rome for the third time in 549 is discussed in the sixth-century *Liber Pontificalis* 61.7. Cf., however, the less positive views of Totila found in Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicle* 49-50, Gregory, *Dialogues* 2.14-15, 3.12.13.

afterwards.<sup>128</sup> Procopius had no qualms in presenting Totila as a man willing to follow justice and “lawful order” over the concerns of powerful members of the Gothic hierarchy. This desire to protect the Italians from harm was a trait that Totila shared with the other Gothic ruler who appreciated Roman law, Amalasuintha. It certainly distanced him from the Gothic “hardliners”.<sup>129</sup>

Soon after the capture of Rome, one senses a gradual modification in Procopius' idealised characterisation of Totila.<sup>130</sup> Though still capable of great deeds of moderation, the king also lashes out more frequently against the Italians and those he perceived as his enemies.<sup>131</sup> In Procopius' telling, Totila's long-line of victories over the Byzantines appeared to have eroded some of his previous respect for his foes, as well. In my view, the shift prepares the reader for the re-emergence of Belisarius and the gradual revival of Byzantine fortunes to come in the second half of book seven. Once again, Procopius utilised a set-speech to mark this change. Shortly after his storming of Rome, Totila gathered all of his men for an address. The king explained to his men that at the outset of the “contest, the Goths had gathered a well-supplied host “of two hundred thousand most warlike soldiers....Yet, with all this in our favour, we were vanquished by five thousand Greeks [Γραικῶν], and for no good reasons were stripped of our power and everything else that was ours”.<sup>132</sup> “But now”, he continued, “though reduced to a small numbers” and meagrely armed, they had defeated an enemy “twenty-thousand strong”. Totila pondered how this inexplicable event had occurred. Whereas, in his previous set-speech, he had attributed success in battle to a combination of martial prowess and just behaviour, Totila now claimed that the Goths' superior ἀρετή, numbers, and armament and supplies had played little part in their resurgence. Instead, he proclaimed that God had supported the Goths because under his rule they had paid a “greater honour to justice” than in previous times. He concluded the speech with a warning that the Goths needed to continue to act justly, “for if you change your course, God too will instantly change his favour and become hostile to you. For it is not His wont to fight with

<sup>128</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 7.8.12-25.

<sup>129</sup> It also seems to undermine Narses' claim (*Wars* 8.30.5) shortly before the battle of Busta Gallorum that Totila had no regard for justice or Roman law.

<sup>130</sup> There are earlier signs of a less-controlled and more “barbaric” Totila even before the siege of Rome. Procopius related (*Wars* 7.15.13-16) that Totila had become so agitated with the bishop Valentinus during an interrogation that he chopped off both of the bishop's hands.

<sup>131</sup> A further example of his dangerous fury is found in his desire to destroy Rome, which was only thwarted by a letter from Belisarius, see *Wars* 7.30.20-24. Cf. *Wars* 7.20.23-25.

<sup>132</sup> Procopius' use of often widely discrepant troop numbers as a narrative device is discussed by WHATELY, *Descriptions of Battle* (cited n. 22) 350-54.

a race of men or a particular nation, but with such as show the greater honour to justice".<sup>133</sup> Immediately after giving this stark warning, however, Totila called on members of the Roman senate and, in Procopius' words admonished them "as an angry master might be expected to say in upbraiding men who have become his slaves". He reprimanded them for allowing "the Greeks to attack their fatherland" and forgetting the prosperity they had attained under Gothic rule.<sup>134</sup>

Totila's less conciliatory attitude, the power of God, and the whims of *tyche* represent only some of the elements of causation at play in this section. The reader soon learns that Belisarius with "courage" [τόλμα] and deeds of ἀρετή retook Rome from the Goths. The Byzantines then successfully defended the city from Totila's furious counter-attack.<sup>135</sup> Procopius plainly rejected Totila's assertion that ἀρετή and courage played no part in deciding events. Once again, he had rebuffed Totila's dismissive suggestion that the Goths were better fighters than the "Greeks" were. Though the reader will have to wait until the end of book eight, Totila's further claim, that the Goths' small numbers and lack of armament were actually beneficial to their cause, would also be undermined. As the reader will eventually learn, the Byzantines' superior weaponry, greater numbers, and superior ἀρετή ultimately turn out to be Totila's undoing.<sup>136</sup> Moreover, by the close of book seven, and throughout much of book eight, it was the Byzantine soldiers fighting "manfully" [ἀνδρείως] and the Goths acting disgracefully and forgetting their "courage".<sup>137</sup> The major turning point in the Italian war originated from Totila's need to engage the Romans at sea, a form of combat that, Procopius believed, put the Goths at an extreme disadvantage.<sup>138</sup>

Despite his faults, and his deteriorating military position, Totila retained his military prowess. When describing Totila's display of martial skills before the

<sup>133</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 7.21.4-12. I have changed the translator Dewing's "Greeklings" for Γραικῶν to "Greeks".

<sup>134</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 7.21.12-16.

<sup>135</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 7.24.1-26.

<sup>136</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 8.32.7-11.

<sup>137</sup> See, e.g., the acts of Byzantine ἀρετή and ἀνδρεία at *Wars* 8.23.34 (Roman soldiers fighting "manfully" [ἀνδρείως]), 8.29.22-23 (Roman soldiers make "display of valour" [δήλωσιν ἀρετῆς] that surpasses all others), 8.32.11 (Romans and "barbarian allies" at the battle of Busta Gallorum show a common προθυμία and ἀρετή), 8.30.1. Whilst examples of Gothic cowardice are found at *Wars* 8.23.36 (Goths make a "disgraceful" [αἰσχρὰν] retreat), 8.24.3 (Goths in fear after suffering disgraceful defeat) 8.30.7 (Gothic soldiers terrified before the battle of Busta Gallorum), 8.32.19 (Gothic soldiers make a panicked retreat at Busta Gallorum).

<sup>138</sup> So too did Justinian's decision to refocus on the Italian campaign after years of "neglect" contribute to the Byzantine's resurgence, according to Procopius (*Wars* 8.26.7).

fateful battle of Busta Gallorum, Procopius did little to hide his admiration for the bellicose king's prowess and intimidating persona. He wrote:

He was not reluctant at all to make an exhibition to the enemy of what manner of man he was. The armor in which he was clad was abundantly plated with gold and ample adornments which hung from his cheek-plates as well from his helmet and spear were not only of purple [the colour of the Roman emperors] but in other respects befitting a king, marvellous in their abundance.

Attempting to delay the Romans while he waited for his reinforcements to arrive, Totila performed a "dance" upon his horse and "hurled his javelin into the air and caught it as it quivered above him, then passed it rapidly from hand to hand, shifting it with consummate skill". Totila displayed many of the martial skills one would expect from a man raised for battle. Procopius remarked that Totila was "like one who has been instructed in the art of dancing from childhood".<sup>139</sup>

This display of fighting prowess before the battle, however, did Totila and the Goths little good against the well-supplied and supremely confident Byzantines. The intelligent Byzantine eunuch-general Narses alertly refused to accept Totila's ruse that he would fight in eight days hence; Narses correctly prepared his men to fight the next day. Narses made it clear to his men before battle that his side held all the tactical and strategic advantages. They had greater numbers, better equipment, and superior ἀρετή.<sup>140</sup> Although generals in Procopius' set-speeches often over-stated their side's advantages before battle, these comments by the eunuch Narses prove prescient. In the battle, the Byzantine army overwhelmed the Gothic forces, slaying the king and most of his men.<sup>141</sup> In Procopius' description, *tyche* and/or God play little role in deciding the outcome of the actual events on the ground.<sup>142</sup> The immediate cause of the Goths' defeat was, in fact, straight forward; Procopius attributed the trouncing to Totila's "folly" in risking his men in battle when the Byzantines held all the material and tactical advantages. Moreover, Totila's decision to forego using bows and any other weapon except spears also proved critical. In contrast, Narses' army made use of a variety of weapons, and thus were able to adapt to the shifting circumstances of combat.

<sup>139</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 8.31.18-21. This anecdote appears to be another reference to the Goths' focus on providing a martial education to their children. As Philip RANCE (Narses and the Battle of Taginae (552 AD): Procopius and Sixth-Century Warfare. *Historia* 30 [2005] 424-472, here 451) aptly warns, however, we should not see this display as an example of Totila's "barbarian" martial manliness. Byzantine military officers in this era were well versed in such displays.

<sup>140</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 8.29.8-10; 8.30.1.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. Procopius, *Wars* 7.35.2.

<sup>142</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 8.32.22-30. Though, at the end of the battle, Procopius agreed with Narses' attribution (*Wars* 8.33.1) of victory to God.

The manner of Totila's death, however, clearly shocked Procopius. For a historian obsessed with causation, he provided a somewhat incoherent explanation for the Gothic king's seemingly ignoble death.<sup>143</sup> In Procopius' most reliable version of the Gothic king's demise, Totila died while escaping the frontlines. Procopius saw Totila's conduct as a cowardly act.<sup>144</sup> His somewhat muddled attempts to find a palatable explanation for Totila's cowardly behaviour encapsulates the anxieties of a man unable to understand such behaviour in a man, who, though not perfect, had always faced danger with courage. Procopius made it clear that such seismic shifts in human nature or secular events troubled him. They were only comprehensible if one saw them as acts of God, demons, or *tyche*. Certainly one can agree with Procopius that Totila's end "was not worthy of his past deeds". Though undeserving, once again, a "martial" Gothic king had failed to obtain a glorious death in battle.

### Teias' Manly Death

For some modern readers, the *Wars* end on a tragic note.<sup>145</sup> Procopius' depiction of the final battle in the *Wars*, Mons Lactarius, was certainly sympathetic to both sides. Surprisingly, it was the defeated Gothic leader, who earned Procopius' praise as the "ultimate man" [ἀνδρὸς ἀρετῆ]. After Totila's death, the Goths' desperate situation, explained Procopius, forced them to seek a "virtuous death" [θανατιάω ἀρετῆ]. Their "despair of the situation" was the primary reason for the Goths' "extraordinary courage" [εὐτολμίαν].<sup>146</sup> Although he praised both sides' conduct during the struggle, Procopius saved his highest acclamation for the Gothic king, exclaiming that Teias' actions compared to those of "heroes of legend" [λεγομένων ἡρώων]. Meeting his end like a true hero, the Gothic leader, "easily recognised by all, stood with only a few followers at the head of the phalanx". Teias slew so many Romans that he needed to keep replacing his shields as they filled with enemy spears. Finally, after fighting continuously for several hours, Teias was slain as he attempted to exchange another shield with his bodyguard.<sup>147</sup>

With his heroic death in battle, Teias finally obtained the type of noble and manly demise that had eluded all of the previous Gothic kings in the *Gothic Wars*.

<sup>143</sup> For Procopius' befuddlement at the "cowardice" [δειλίαν] of Totila, see *Wars* 8.32.28-30.

<sup>144</sup> Procopius provided two versions of Totila's death. In the first account (*Wars* 8.32.22-28), Totila fled during the rout, and subsequently he was mortally wounded from behind. In the second and, according to Procopius, less credible version (*Wars* 8.32.33-36), Totila was struck by a missile while fighting as a common soldier.

<sup>145</sup> E.g., KALDELLIS, *Procopius' Persian War* (cited n. 100) 257.

<sup>146</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 8.35.20-21 (my trans.).

<sup>147</sup> Procopius, *Wars* 8.35.21-30 (trans. Dewing).

This ideal death may suggest that Procopius and his Byzantine readership may not have viewed Teïas' demise or the Goths' defeat as heart breaking. Procopius appeared to follow traditional literary models that made it clear that defeat in battle was not shameful or tragic as long as one faced it with honour.<sup>148</sup> Procopius' account clearly has a literary ring to it. It also suspiciously ties up some of the loose threads in his narrative. First, Teïas' death in battle finally allowed Procopius to show a member of the Gothic royalty dying as Vitigis said they wished, in battle. Second, a gallant final clash featuring two worthy opponents fighting, in the words of Procopius, "with the fury of wild beasts", made a fitting terminus for an account that strove to describe and compare the martial and the manly virtues of the Goths and the Romans. While appreciating the fighting qualities and, indeed, the manliness of the Goths, the historian had confirmed the Byzantines as the superior and the manlier side. In the end, the martial prowess of the Goths had proven inferior to the organization, leadership, weaponry, and manly ἀρετή and ἀνδρεία of the Byzantine soldiers. Finally, though unspoken, Procopius had fulfilled his stated purpose at the outset of the *Wars*, which was to relate the worthiness of the martial deeds and the prowess of the contemporary Roman soldiers to his Byzantine audience. By defeating a martial and heroic foe like the Goths, Procopius had succeeded in establishing that Justinian's soldiers were at least the equals of their ancient counterparts. One should consider Procopius' depiction of the battle of Mons Lactarius, and indeed, the entire *Gothic Wars* in this context.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> For this concept in Polybius, see A.M. ECKSTEIN, *Moral Vision in the Histories of Polybius*. Berkeley 1995, 42-43.

<sup>149</sup> Of course, it is important to emphasise that the individual who had achieved these two dynamic victories over the Goths, Narses, was a eunuch. For some of my readers, the presence of a eunuch in such an essential military role may seem to undermine the connection made throughout this essay between martial virtues and hegemonic masculinity. In Procopius' telling, however, Narses' identity as a castrate did little to hinder his military acumen. Though Procopius depicted Narses, at times, as vain, jealous, inordinate, and petty, the historian generally respected Narses for being a successful and resourceful commander. Though Procopius perceived Narses as an anomalous example of a eunuch (e.g. *Wars* 6.13.16-17), he certainly sees him as a man. Indeed, Procopius reported with little sense of irony that Narses' supporters in the officer corps hoped that the eunuch would achieve his own fame through "deeds of wisdom and manliness" [ἔργα ξυνέσεώς τε καὶ ἀνδρείας, *Wars* 6.18.7]. Procopius' presentation of Narses does not indicate that just any eunuch could become an able military commander, only that in certain instances, just as one can find manly women and restrained barbarians, one can find a vigorous, and indeed, a manly eunuch.

## ABSTRACT

Much of the recent work on gender constructions in the writings of the sixth-century Byzantine writer Procopius have focused on his *Secret History*. Yet, the crucial role that gender constructions play in his other writings has garnered far less notice. This essay concentrates on one theatre of war, Italy, and examines how in the *Gothic Wars* Procopius used the field of battle as a means to comment on the role that courage and manliness played in determining the outcome of the war. The conflict, in Procopius' telling, offered the Byzantines the opportunity not only to regain Italy, but also to test their military and manly virtues against a worthy enemy, the Goths.