

MISCHA MEIER – FEDERICO MONTINARO (eds), *A Companion to Procopius of Caesarea* (Brill’s Companions to the Byzantine World 11). Leiden – Boston: Brill 2022. 474 pp. – ISSN 2212-7429 / ISBN 978-90-04-49876-1

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This more than welcome volume is not a collection of disparate studies on Procopius, for the editors successfully coordinated the contributors to make them cover all the main aspects of his work, so that it provides an excellent state of the research. Moreover, the panel of renowned scholars writing under the supervision of MEIER and MONTINARO has not only paid due attention to previous work (there are no significant gaps in the bibliography — although the most recent publications could not be included) but also succeeded in presenting novel views and approaches in their corresponding chapters. I will try here to make a preliminary review of the content of their contributions, while occasionally pinpointing some minor problems and suggesting new insights. It goes without saying that my marginal comments do not affect the excellent level and high quality of the contributions of the present volume, which is already a milestone in the Procopian studies and will surely trigger a rise in the publications on this fundamental author.

Part 1, “Approaching Procopius”, consists of two introductory chapters. HARTMUT LEPPIN “The Eastern Roman Empire and Its Neighbours in the ‘Age of Justinian’ — An Overview” (pp. 9–27) provides a panorama of the main characteristics of the period, dealing first with the Persian empire, the Balkans and the Western kingdoms and describing then the internal functioning of the administration and the increasing importance of religious affairs. In this authorized overview Leppin pays attention to factors as climate change and seems to favour the idea that the centre of political power was situated in the East of the Empire, for instance when he affirms twice that Persia was at the hub of the Eurasian continent (p. 10 and 27), the main thesis of PETER FRANKOPAN in his book on *The Silk roads*, not quoted by the author.¹ However, his approach follows conventional lines as it offers a vision of the Empire centred in Constantinople and does

1. PETER FRANKOPAN, *The Silk Roads. A New History of the World*. London 2015.

not take into account the importance of the regions, particularly the south-eastern border (Red Sea and Horn of Africa), that were also a priority for Justinian's policies, as is made evident by the conversion of the Nubians and such a fundamental work as the travels of Cosmas Indicopleustes, to say nothing of the conversion of the 'Homerites', reflected in the later *Life of Saint Gregentios*. This may perhaps appear a secondary scenario for a necessarily short presentation of the history of the 6th century, but it was the place where a new power emerged in the 7th century that put a definitive end to the rule of the Empire in its richest lands of Syria and Egypt. Procopius was in fact sensitive to the events in this area, so close to his native land Palestine, as made evident in *Wars* 1.19–20. LEPPIN is certainly right when he affirms that the "distinction between inside and outside is often difficult to draw", but he could have perhaps developed a bit more this crucial idea and taken advantage of the concept of fluid border developed by JONATHAN SHEPARD in a seminal article.²

In the second chapter of this first part, BRIAN CROKE, "The Search for Harmony in Procopius' Literary Works" (pp. 28–58) approaches the key question of the unity and congruence of Procopius's works, which despite being written in a short amount of time by a single person present clear differences in purpose, content, and perspective. CROKE refers with some detail to the reception of the author, first in Byzantium—where he was frequently labelled as a rhetor and the question of his coherence was apparently never posed—and then in the modern age since the 16th century, where he reviews the reactions of many scholars who since the discovery of the *Secret History* approached this work as representing the real Procopius. This position was challenged by AVERIL CAMERON³, who tried to harmonize Procopius's works, but it found again an echo in the recent study of ANTHONY KALDELLIS⁴, who placed the *Secret History* above other works as a true witness of Procopius's beliefs, that the author would have concealed and misrepresented in the *Wars* and the *Buildings* (pp. 30–43). Then, after shortly reviewing the milestones of Procopius's life, CROKE poses the question of whether Procopius "actually wrote an earlier version of his history in the 540s and only came to update it for publication years

2. JONATHAN SHEPARD, *Bunkers, Open Cities and Boats in Byzantine Diplomacy*. In: DANIEL DZINO – KEN PARRY (eds), *Byzantium, Its Neighbours and Its Cultures* (Byzantina Australiensia 20). Brisbane 2014, pp. 11–44.

3. AVERIL CAMERON, *Procopius and the Sixth Century*. London 1985.

4. ANTHONY KALDELLIS, *Procopius of Caesarea. Tyranny, History and Philosophy at the End of Antiquity*. Philadelphia 2004.

later or whether various stages of writing can be detected” (p. 45). He thinks that Procopius developed the structure of his works as the opportunities unfolded between the years 550–553, thus implicitly accepting the early dating suggested by most of the scholars. He rejects the suggestion I made of presenting Procopius’s works as a common project pretending to have an encyclopaedic character, for, he says, “the notion that he was following a predetermined plan looks like a retrospective rationalisation” (p. 46, note 92). However, I did not suggest that this concept was predetermined, but rather the result of his serial publication and an increasing widening of interests. Allow me to quote myself: “Procopius most probably had no novel form of history in mind as he set to write the narrative of the *Wars* out of his experience in the campaigns under the command of Belisarius. But different circumstances, such as the events in 550 that led him to compose the *Secret History* or access to official dossiers such as the ones used for *Buildings*, made him widen his scope and conceive a «new History», embracing all possible fields of human interest”.⁵ In fact, as CROKE himself admits, there are cross-references between the different works by Procopius, that must be considered rather internal, that is between the different λόγοι of the same historical enterprise, which slowly attained its final shape as he was publishing them and including new historical matters. In fact, CROKE devotes some space to these cross-references, particularly to those present in the *Secret History*, also to prove that the text was not composed in two separate phases, as I argued (pp. 47–52). Therefore, if, as CROKE rightly put it, “carefully keeping separate files for the *Wars* and the *Secret History* as he progressed seems an unnecessary assumption” (p. 46), it seems unavoidable that both works were not only complementary—as already suggested by the proem of the *Secret History*—, but also dealt with same issues from different perspectives (pp. 52–53). However, when faced with the problem of explaining the almost contemporary composition of the *Buildings*, the *Wars* and the *Secret History*, CROKE dismisses the panegyric character of the *Buildings* as being just the result of personal motivations or an official commission, and puts instead literary genre in the centre of his considerations. It is obvious that literary conventions determine and limit Procopius’s choices in the *Buildings*, the problem, however, is how to explain that Procopius shifted to the panegyric in this final

5. JUAN SIGNES CODOÑER, One History... in Several Instalments. Dating and Genre in Procopius’ Works. *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici* 54 (2017) pp. 3–26, here p. 25. See also below my comments on the contribution of OLIVIER GENGLER and ÉLODIE TURQUOIS.

block of his history without looking for personal motivations, although we have not any real clues about what moved Procopius to change his mind (see however below the contribution of MICHAEL WHITBY). Fortunately, there are other parallel cases to compare with, for instance when Psellos's *History* dissolved into panegyric as he dealt with the Ducas family. Cleverly, Psellos gave us the reasons for the change of perspective he adopted in the final part of his work, for instance alluding to the favours he owed to Michael Ducas (*Chronographia* 7c, 8) or the κεφάλαια that this same emperor gently handed over to him as a guide for his narrative (ibid. 11). This also explains, as in the *Buildings*, the unfinished state of this work... It appears to me that different literary conventions may live inside the historical writing, as already made clear by Lucian's *How to write history*, for history integrated not only the rhetoric of the discourses or the ekphraseis, but also of the invective and the encomium. There is no need to consider these rhetorical approaches as independent literary genres, but rather literary conventions constituent of History.

The first contribution of Part 2, "Reading Procopius", is by GEOFFREY GREATREX, "Procopius: Life and Works" (pp. 61–69), who gives a short but precise summary of the life and works of Procopius. There are no special novelties (the problem of the identification of Procopius with the homonymous city prefect of 562 remains unsolved), but the erudite comments that accompany the evidence collected by GREATREX, one the greatest specialists on Procopius⁶, are highly commendable and represent the best possible introduction to the author. As some of the points he shortly approaches are dealt with in other contributions of the volume, it makes no sense to review them here.

Three separate chapters devoted to the three works by Procopius follow in this Part 2. PHILIP RANCE, "Wars" (pp. 70–120) contains a detailed and systematic presentation of Procopius's major work. The first section describes the content and arrangement of the *Wars*, with reference to digressions and discourses that represent asides from the main narrative (pp. 71–90). Some interesting reflections follow, that develop ideas previously hinted at by CROKE, about the composition and publication of the work, taking into consideration possible changes of structure since Procopius first conceived the project ca. 540 ("the likeliest occasion") (pp. 90–95). RANCE then briefly considers the sources (including oral informants) used by Pro-

6. See now his bulky commentary on *Wars* 1–2: GEOFFREY GREATREX, *Procopius of Caesarea, The Persian Wars. A Historical Commentary*. Cambridge 2022.

copius (pp. 96–102) and the role played by the two main characters, Belisarius and Justinian in the Reconquest of the West (pp. 102–108). Particularly useful is the depiction of Procopius’s Classicism in the last section (pp. 108–119), although it focuses rather on structures and motives than on the features that characterize the Attizicing language of the historian — an aspect that is sadly not covered in the present handbook.

RENE PFEILSCHIFTER, ‘The Secret History’ (pp. 121–136) adopts a very personal and literary approach to the *Secret History*. He states in an initial paragraph that the *Secret History* is a ‘dull reading’, a ‘piece of gossip’, a ‘collection of all imaginable and unimaginable rumours’, a ‘seemingly endless screed’, and adds that ‘his extreme bias nauseates the modern reader’, for Procopius’s work is ‘not... very well written’ (p. 121). What follows seems to have been written to prove this point. Firstly, the author describes in pp. 121–124 the many unbalances and failures in the structure and ordering of the episodes. The author may be certainly right from the point of view of post-modern readers and their expectations, but his harsh verdict appears not less subjective than Procopius himself and not to proceed according to objective criteria. I think that any narrative, as Procopius’s here, cannot be judged only by the structure and logical order of its constituent parts but also by its effectiveness, and that modern reading practices (used to well-constructed thrillers and plots) should not be applied here as a criterion. On the other hand, the author does not take into account the unpublished and unfinished state of the work that he qualifies as a ‘mess’ (note 4 p. 123) and to be “in danger of falling apart” (p. 124). He certainly refers later to the fact that “Procopius never revised his draft” (p. 133) but does not consider here to which extent this could have affected the present form of the text. Precisely the fact that we have an unpublished draft explains the unbalances of the structure. This is, for instance, the reason why Procopius fails to describe the tragic end of the protagonists of the plot, particularly of Justinian, that should have come at the end of his previous recounting of their misdeeds: When he started writing, he relied on a soon and tragic end of the emperor (and he refers to it), but he did not have this hope any more when he dropped the pen at the end. Is this change of the situation not enough reason to explain the changing of plan in a work that was neither ever published nor, as usual, revisited before publication? PFEILSCHIFTER does not seem to understand the implications of this: In the section devoted to the date and audience of the *Secret History* (pp. 131–132) he does not find a convenient explanation of why Procopius, at the beginning of his work, mentioned Justinian’s death in

550/551 (a dating he accepts hesitatingly), 15 years before his actual death, and only remarks that the historian composed the work “quite carelessly”, “hastily” and “in a fury”. On the other hand, PFEILSCHIFTER, when dealing with the purpose and genre of the work (pp. 125–126), considers that it “was not planned as a stand-alone work” but as supplement of the *Wars*, thus suggesting that this can be the main cause of the constant jumping in time and place in its narrative. However, if the *Secret History* was then a part of Procopius’s historiographic enterprise, why does PFEILSCHIFTER question its genre? He concludes that the *Secret History* was not faithful to the Truth of History and was rather a pamphlet resembling “such infamous works as Lactantius’ *De mortibus persecutorum*”. Was it so as a part of the *Wars*? PFEILSCHIFTER deals then with the themes and characters of the *Secret History* in the same vein, always emphasizing Procopius’s lack of objectivity (pp. 127–130). He also superficially treats the value of the text as a Historical source (pp. 133–135), stating that many details are plausible but that their veracity cannot be “confirmed by independent evidence”, thus disregarding the confirmation provided to many of his statements by legal sources.

MICHAEL WHITBY, “Procopius’ *Buildings* and Panegyric Effect” (pp. 137–151) starts his contribution with brief considerations about the dating of the work and its unfinished state. Concerning the first question, he seems to give some credit to the dating provided by Theophanes 234.15–18 to the construction of the bridge on the river Sangarius, mentioned by Procopius, *Wars* 5.3.10, in the year 559/60 (there is a short appendix in pp. 150–151 devoted to this issue), but he does not connect this question with the existence of two versions of the work, that he mentions only by passing in p. 138 in relation to the second question, that is, whether Procopius finished or not his work. Moreover, WHITBY does not consider the fact that at the very end of the work Procopius encourages the reader to fill the voids left by him in his survey of the imperial buildings and to add them to the treatise (τῷ λόγῳ ἐνθεῖναι), so that the obvious possibility exists that the text could have been interpolated at certain points. WHITBY approaches the problem of the motive that caused the composition of the panegyric by Procopius and, in the lack of any concrete indication, he concludes that Procopius was simply repaying imperial benefaction as indicated in *Buildings* 1.1.4 (p. 139), without taking into account that the reference to the imperial pardon to the conspirators of 549 made a bit further on in *Buildings* 1.1.16 could be connected with Procopius’s motivations, particularly if we think that Germanus was apparently involved in it. Then WHITBY pro-

ceeds to a rapid survey of the contents of the book, paying attention to its geographical arrangement and to the different ethnographical, geographical and religious excursus included in the work besides the description of the buildings themselves. It ends with some considerations about the reliability of the work, based on some specific cases.

Part 3, “Procopius as a Historian” begins with BRUNO BLECKMANN, “Historiography in Late Antiquity before Procopius” (pp. 155–177). He wants to present the historiographical writing in Late Antiquity against the previous tradition and not as a prelude to the Byzantine age, the approach mainly followed by WARREN TREADGOLD.⁷ The article of MAREK JANKOWIAK further on in this volume will deal with the successors of Procopius. In fact, each period represents continuity and change from a literary point of view, and Late Antiquity was particularly innovative in this respect, as the author observes at the beginning of his contribution when referring to the prominent role played by religion and ideology in the historical texts of the period (pp. 158–159). Problematic is, however, the exclusion of the historiography written in other languages other than Greek (Syriac or Armenian, for instance) from BLECKMANN’s approach, with the exception of translated sources (as the history of Pseudo-Zachariah), not only because the literary conventions were the same, but also because Procopius might also have had access to some sources in other languages (as, for instance, in the case of the Armenian history quoted by him). In any case the detailed overview of authors and texts (Christian and pagan historians) that follows the initial remarks (pp. 160–177) offers a documented presentation of the main authors and is highly commendable as an introductory reading, considering the lack of general studies on the matter, except for the books of ROHRBACHER and MARASCO,⁸ to which we must now add a recent monograph by BLECKMANN himself on the historians of the 6th century.⁹

7. WARREN TREADGOLD, *The Early Byzantine Historians*. London 2007.

8. DAVID ROHRBACHER, *The Historians of Late Antiquity*. London – New York 2002 and JOHN MARINCOLA (ed.), *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography*. Oxford – Chichester 2007. See also JUAN SIGNES CODOÑER, *La historiografía en el Oriente del imperio romano desde el saco de Roma por Alarico hasta las invasiones árabes*. *Actas de las jornadas sobre “El final del mundo antiguo como preludio de la Europa moderna”* = *Cuadernos de literatura griega y latina* 4 (2003) pp. 115–172, with a detailed list of the main Late Antique historians writing in Greek and other languages.

9. BRUNO BLECKMANN, *Die letzte Generation der griechischen Geschichtsschreiber*. *Studien zur Historiographie im ausgehenden 6. Jahrhundert* (Historia-Einzelschriften 267). Stuttgart 2021.

LAURA MECELLA, “Procopius’ Sources’ (pp. 178–193) reviews in a systematic way all possible sources used by Procopius: classical works, his own autopsy, oral sources, archives and documentary evidence (including laws), as well as literary sources for the Persian, Vandal and Ostrogothic wars. Considering the silence of Procopius about his sources, most of the possible identifications made are not more than probable guesses, but the author always offers a reasonable explanation for her suppositions and is well informed about recent studies, for instance when dealing with the consultation of archives of Edessa (pp. 185–186) or the use of Jordanes by Procopius, crucial for understanding Procopius’s views on the Goths and his literary background (pp. 191–192).

DARIUSZ BRODKA, “Procopius as a Historiographer” (pp. 194–211) examines Procopius’s understanding of the driving forces behind historical events, a subject he knows well, for his is the fundamental book on the matter.¹⁰ BRODKA, who takes for granted Procopius’s Christianity against KALDELLIS (see his short remark in p. 196, note 10), explains the historian’s concept of history both at the supernatural level, where not only God’s agency but the forces of Evil are considered, and as a result of the human decisions and acts, where the free individual wills combine with initial *καῖρός* to produce chains of events that are in many cases beyond human control, as determined by the *ἀνάγκη*. The meeting point between God and Human is Tyche, according to BRODKA, who quotes the famous passage of *Wars* 3.18.2, although he, following here perhaps too closely DEWING’s translation, makes Procopius state that “God sets a path for Tyche”, whereas in the Greek text our historian just remarks that the disagreement between God’s providence and human will merely paves the way for Tyche (ἵνα γένηται τῇ τύχῃ τρίβος).

TIMO STICKLER, “Procopius and Christian Historical Thought” (pp. 212–230) deals again with the concept of history in Procopius, but now by putting his Christianity at the centre of the analysis. STICKLER first collects a large amount of evidence from Procopius’s works (pp. 213–223) that, according to his evaluation of the findings (pp. 223–228), clearly speaks for his Christian framework for History, where Tyche appears to be devalued into a mere literary formula and is subjected to God, who, by contrast, is not subject to the human categories of causality and rationality. As

10. DARIUSZ BRODKA, *Die Geschichtsphilosophie in der spätantiken Historiographie. Studien zu Prokopios von Kaisareia, Agathias von Myrina und Theophylaktos Simokates* (Studien und Texte zur Byzantinistik 5). Frankfurt am Main 2004.

a consequence, STICKLER considers that Procopius is greatly influenced by ecclesiastical historiography that places God at the centre of human history, but also by contemporary hagiography. This aspect could have been even more prominent if Procopius would have fulfilled the promise he made in the *Secret History* and included episodes of Christian polemics in his historical work. The possibility that he could have intended to write a *Church History*, as a separate work, as argued by KALDELLIS, is to be discarded, for, as STICKLER rightly stresses, “there was no longer any need for a church history. One way or another, essential elements of this literary genre had found their way into Procopius’s historical writing” (p. 230). This conclusion also speaks for the polyvalence of Procopius’s works considered as a whole beyond the differences of subject matter existing among them. STICKLER is certainly right when he considers Procopius’s oeuvre “as a work in progress, a tentative exploration, an experiment that has been modified over the years” (p. 229), so that we cannot demand absolute coherence in a literary production that was published in instalments. But there is still a single purpose in all his historical writings, a single concept of History greatly indebted to Christian models.

MAREK JANKOWIAK, “Procopius of Caesarea and His Byzantine Successors” (pp. 231–251) offers an original approach to Procopius through his reception in the work of later historians. Whereas Agathias of Myrina, Menander Protector or Theophylact Simocatta usually distanced themselves from their famous predecessor (pp. 231–238), other authors such as Evagrius Scholasticus (pp. 238–241) and Theophanes (pp. 241–246) partially used Procopius as a source and a model. The influence of Procopius as a historian was not limited to his *Wars*, but also included the *Secret History*, that appears as a model for the vitriolic criticism of Justinian by Evagrius (p. 240) and was quoted by the *Suda* (p. 248); or the *Buildings*, that might have inspired the writing of three passages by Evagrius on the constructions of Justinian (p. 240) and, more convincingly, the minute description of the buildings of the Imperial Palace in Book 3 of Theophanes Continuatus (p. 249). Although Procopius was extensively excerpted for the *Encyclopaedia historica* of Constantine Porphyrogenitus (p. 248), it was not Procopius, as suggested by ANTHONY KALDELLIS,¹¹ but Theophanes who was used in the continuation of the *Chronicle of the Logothete* pre-

11. ANTHONY KALDELLIS, *The Byzantine Conquest of Crete (961 AD), Prokopios’ Vandal War, and the Continuator of the Chronicle of Symeon*. *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 39.2 (2015) pp. 302–311.

served in *Theophanes Continuatus*, as I argue in a paper in press.¹² In fact, JANKOWIAK himself admits that Constantine Porphyrogenitus quoted the Procopian *Wars* through Theophanes in the *De administrando imperio* (p. 248). Moreover, the Solomon mentioned as a hero in Theophanes Continuatus VI Rom.I 42 (p. 428 BEKKER) was certainly the Justinianic general recorded in Procopius (p. 247), but, as his deeds in Mesopotamia are not mentioned at all by the historian of Caesarea, we must rather think about an oral epic source.

Part 4, “Imperial themes” consists of three further contributions. CHARLES PAZDERNIK, “War and Empire in Procopius’ Wars” (pp. 255–274) analyses four different incidents and episodes taken from the *Wars* (the wavering sympathies of the Italians for the Imperials, the embassy of the Goths before the Persian Khosrow denouncing Justinian’s imperialism, the description of the peaceful occupation of Carthage, and the discussion on the legitimacy of Theoderic) in order to illustrate the attitude of Procopius toward legitimacy. According to PAZDERNIK’s interpretation, social cohesion prevails in Procopius’s views over the rights of the competent authority as a legitimating principle. Although Pazdernik considers the contradictory statements advanced by Procopius in his different works as “unbridgeable” from the point of view of the historical Procopius (p. 264), he also warns about the existence of limits to self-expression in the *Wars*, that was a public work, widely circulating at the time while the principal protagonists of the events were still alive.

HANS-ULRICH WIEMER, “Procopius and the Barbarians in the West” (pp. 275–309) deals with the problem of the characterization of the Western Barbarians by Procopius against the patterns of ancient ethnographic tradition, that is, whether Procopius copied from his literary models or adopted an empiric approach under a literary wrapping. Wiemer not only takes the ethnographic excursuses into account — these are reserved only for new peoples who had not yet been given a literary depiction—, but also speeches put in the mouth of the Barbarians, scattered remarks or descriptions of their actions. Goths, Vandals, Moors, Heruli, Gepids, Lombards, Franks, Sclaveni and Antes are separately dealt with in Wiemer’s exposition (which includes long quotes in English translation). Procopius com-

12. JUAN SIGNES CODOÑER, Les Excerpta Constantiniana et le métier d’historien au Xe siècle: le livre VI du Theophanes Continuatus et le poème de Léon le Diacre. In: MARIE-FRANCE AUZÉPY – ANNE-MARIE CHENY – PHILIPPE TRELAT (eds), Le destin d’un manuscrit. Du vice et de la vertu: de Constantinople à Tours via Chypre. Leiden (in press).

bines autopsy and the information provided by witnesses with the reading of written accounts to produce an image of the peoples involved that is far from uniform or modelled on simple *topoi*, but rather tries to reflect the conditions and circumstances of the different *ἔθνη* (also their origins and migrations) according to the interests of a Roman viewer. This explains the emphasis made on military capabilities or the use of some ethnographical descriptions as a means of political critique.

HENNING BÖRM, “Procopius and the East” (pp. 310–336) makes a detailed review of the information available to Procopius for the Persian East in matters such as the history of the Sassanians and their relations with Rome in the 5th and 6th centuries (pp. 311–318), the Persian monarchy (pp. 318–323), the aristocracy and the army (pp. 323–327) or even the physical and urban geography of the East (pp. 328–332). He also briefly deals with the predominantly negative and distorted image of the Persians and their rulers offered by Procopius (pp. 332–334). In all these aspects Procopius appears to have been well-informed and to have committed few factual errors, but he is by no means always reliable and impartial, as he uses his sources selectively, with specific purposes, including occasionally indirect *Kaiserkritik*. He curiously avoids any general excursus or *logos* about the Persians, as Agathias did. Moreover, it appears difficult to distinguish between the bias of Procopius himself and of his sources, for we cannot but guess as to their nature, as for instance in the case of the enigmatic Armenian History he relied on.

ANTHONY KALDELLIS, “The Classicism of Procopius” (pp. 339–354) inaugurates Part 5, the last section of the book: “Procopius as a writer”. KALDELLIS starts briefly discussing the “literary aspects” of the classicizing history of Procopius (pp. 340–348), that is, the formal elements that, as the narrative, discourses, *ekphraseis* and excursions, modelled the classicizing history of Procopius and were learned, along with the grammar of Classical Greek, by means of the school *progymnasmata*. KALDELLIS shortly deals here, without using the word, with the mechanisms of the *μίμησις*, through which Procopius employed old episodes transmitted by ancient historians (such as the Thucydidean plague or the Melian Dialogue) to colour or reshape new events, thus providing them with a learned background and a second reading. This obviously means that ancient history was read as a repository of events — exactly in the same way, I would say, as Constantine Porphyrogenitus conceived the *Excerpta historica*, where the matter of history was divided among 53 topics. But, at the same time, as KALDELLIS rightly remarks, this was also a subtle way to convey criti-

cism indirectly without being detected by unlearned readers, not as a mere stylistic resource. In the second part of his contribution KALDELLIS focuses on Procopius's views on gender roles, warfare and politics, where he is supposed to display classical attitudes and values, to the point that KALDELLIS qualifies him as a republican for his defence of the *Politeia* (pp. 348–354). In my opinion, the contrast with the official Christian mentality of the time may perhaps appear striking, but this does not mean that Procopius was a pagan or, as KALDELLIS puts it: “If it were not for the *Buildings*, we might conclude that he was unacquainted with Christian theories of divine kingship or the Christian moral virtues of extreme humility, sinfulness, and ascetism” (p. 352). Leaving aside the fact that Procopius's Christian mentality, as proved by BRODKA and STICKLER in their above contributions, was integrated into his concept of History, we may perhaps imagine that our author had different moral standards than those prevailing among the popular classes, a contrast that is already known through the famous letter 105 of the Neoplatonic thinker Synesius, written before his appointment as a bishop. Procopius's classicism or nostalgia of the past could not have been very dissimilar to that of Nonnus of Panopolis, who wrote the bulky *Dionysiaca* with an underlying Christian concept,¹³ that was only made more explicit in his *Paraphrase* to the Gospel of Saint John.

UMBERTO ROBERTO, “Procopius and His Protagonists” (pp. 355–373) approaches the problem of Procopius's characterization of the protagonists of his work under three premises: 1) Procopius did not always have direct and reliable knowledge of the facts; 2) the persons are portrayed not only corresponding to their historical truth but also to their symbolic dimension; 3) the characterization is determined by the nature and purpose of the different works and therefore greatly varies from the *Wars* to the *Secret History* and the *Buildings*. All these three premises converge notably in the portrait of the main characters, Justinian and Theodora, who are always characterized in their symbolic value but very differently according to the purpose of the corresponding work, and frequently by hearsay and not on the basis of personal experience. The same is valid to a certain point for figures of the emperor's entourage, such as Peter the Patrician, John of Cappadocia and Tribonian, which are negatively portrayed. Different is the case of Belisarios, Procopius's hero in the *Wars*, whose portrait, how-

13. See ROBERT SHORROCK, Christian Themes in the *Dionysiaca*. In: DOMENICO ACCORINTI (ed.), *Brill's Companion to Nonnus of Panopolis* (Brill's Companions in Classical Studies). Leiden – Boston 2016, pp. 577–600.

ever, blackens in the *Secret History*, where he is presented as a slave of his wife Antonina who acts as an agent of the wicked Theodora. Prejudice applies also to Procopius's description of the Barbarians, although we find here, again, examples of virtue (for instance among the Ostrogoths) that are conceived as a hidden criticism of Roman decadence. ROBERTO deals extensively with Totila in the final pages of the contribution (pp. 369–373) but does not analyse the key role played in Procopius's narrative by Germanus through his marriage with the Amalian Matasuntha, although he briefly refers to him in p. 362.

OLIVIER GENGLER – ÉLODIE TURQOIS, “A Narratological Reading of Procopius” (pp. 374–416) considers in detail three narratological strategies used by Procopius to structure his story, namely the role of the narrator, the construction of narrative time and the focalisation, understood as the shaping of the information through the perspective of the narrator or a character. The authors pay at first more attention to the *Buildings* in the section dealing with the narrator, where the different ways of intrusion of Procopius into the narrative are presented. When dealing with the time construction in Procopius's works, the authors consider forward and backward references as well as the ordering and frequency of the episodes. The first seven books of the *Wars* reproduce three times the sequential narration of the same span of time but with a different geographical focus, so that it appears unavoidable that some key episodes are repeated in the three scenarios and that the pace of the narration is accelerated or slowed down according to the emphasis of the story. As a contrast, the *Secret History* has no general timeline, but is a simple succession of episodes and the *Buildings* present a thematic, not a chronological account. Finally, examples are given of focalisation, for instances the strategies used for representing the internal fears of John of Cappadocia in *Wars* 1.25.6–8 and of Belisarius in the *Secret History* 4.21–22. The authors suggest not only examining Procopius's works more systematically from the narratological point of view (what would be certainly be revealing for establishing the unity of Procopius's works) but also applying this kind of analysis to other historical works, which could be certainly productive. Accordingly, I would just mention here the striking similarities between the strategies developed by Procopius in the *Buildings* with the ways the different dossiers on edifications are introduced in *Theophanes Continuatus* III.42–44, V.78–94 and VI.18–27 (see also above the contribution of JANKOWIAK).

Addendum: The book could not consider the recent article of FLORIAN BATTISTELLA, Zur Datierung von Prokops Geheimgeschichte. Byzantion

89 (2019) pp. 37–57, explicitly mentioned by the editors in the introduction. BATTISTELLA argues for a dating of the *Secret History* of Procopius ca. 553 —and not, as is now generally accepted, 550— and considers that the work was composed simultaneously to Book 8 of the *Wars*. The 32 years of Justinian’s power mentioned by Procopius in the *Secret History* would have started not at the very beginning of Justin’s reign in 518, but rather in the years 521–522 around the time of Justinian’s first consulate, when Justinian’s influence under the reign of his uncle Justin was already firmly established. According to BATTISTELLA’s analysis, the events referred to by Procopius happening in these 32 years span of time seem in some cases to have occurred only from 521–522 onwards. In support of his thesis BATTISTELLA also revisits some arguments already advanced by BRIAN CROKE and ROGER SCOTT for a dating ca. 558 of some episodes mentioned in the *Secret History*¹⁴. The strongest point in BATTISTELLA’s argumentation, that is cleverly structured and based on a detailed and careful analysis of the data, remains, however, the mention of Pelagius as archdeacon in the *Secret History*, a position he did not hold before 553. Neither the dating of the other historical events is conclusive, nor is there a reference in Procopius to Justinian’s consulate as the start of his 32-year-reckoning. In fact, some of the events taking place during this period of 32 years do not appear to support Procopius’ views about Justinian’s activities during this period. An explanation could be that Procopius appears to attach to the number 32, which he repeatedly uses, a symbolic value or a special significance that we cannot precise at present, but that is undoubtedly connected with his beliefs in prophecies,¹⁵ so that we must not look for absolute coherence in the events happening during these 32 years. More importantly, the simultaneous writing of the final version of the *Secret History* and *Wars* 8 is problematic, for *Wars* 8 was written when *Wars* 1–7 were already edited and it reuses the proem of *Secret History*, where no reference is made to *Wars* 1–7 as already published. It is clear to me that the *Secret History* was written *before* *Wars* 8 was even conceived, for it was thought of as an appendix to *Wars* 1–7 and does not take any event mentioned in *Wars* 8 into account. Be that as it may, this stimulating debate about the dating of *Secret*

14. BRIAN CROKE, Procopius’ *Secret History*. Rethinking the Date. *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 45 (2005) pp. 405–431; ROGER SCOTT, Justinian’s Coinage and Easter Reforms and the Date of the *Secret History*. *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 11 (1987) pp. 215–221.

15. See JUAN SIGNES CODOÑER, “One History...”, p. 12, note 25 for a reign of the Antichrist lasting 33 years.

History, to which BATTISTELLA has made a very important contribution, must consider also the fact that the text never circulated in Procopius' own times and could have been occasionally updated, revisited, annotated or corrected by the author after he finished the main draft. It may appear that all these variables and *caveats* are the result of modern hypercriticism and make a final clear dating impossible, but they are by no means useless, as far as they constitute an excellent philological exercise that can serve as a model for approaching other texts and authors that have not yet merited such close scrutiny.

Keywords

Procopius of Caesarea; Justinian; historiography; Ostrogoths